

We are a Worshipping Community Church, a Community on Purpose-- part 1

August 8, 2021

DAY 1: What is worship?

1. The Hebrew word for worship is *shachah* which literally means “to bow down.” It was originally used when someone entered the presence of one to whom reverence was due. *Shachah* expressed homage, duty and respect to a higher authority; bowing signified all those qualities.
2. In David’s days worship included celebration of the feast days, animal sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, and Passover. In our day, worship takes on outer expressions of singing, scripture, prayer, preaching, and the life of the community of worship.
3. Worship occurs in the heart. Though worship has outward expression, the outward expression is not to be seen as “ritual.” Performing the ritual of worship does not mean you worshipped.
4. Under the following verses jot down what purposes are expressed in worship. Here is a list to draw from: Gratitude, Thanksgiving, Giving, Reverence, Service, Praise, Submission, Humility, Repentance, Contrition, Brokenness, Prayer.

John 4:24 ...those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth.

Deuteronomy 26:10 ...and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.” Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him.

Joshua 5:14 Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

Nehemiah 8:6 Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Psalms 51:17 (RSV) The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

5. Idolatry is the opposite of worshipping God. It is a serious offense that creates misery.

Exod. 20:5 You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them;

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional regarding worship?

DAY 2: Why is worship done in community?

Psalm 95:6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

1. “I don’t need to go to church to worship God. I can worship alone under a tree.” We used to equate that thinking to lost people as an excuse not to go to church. More and more this is even said by some well-meaning Christians.

2. One theme in the psalms is the people of God doing life together as a community of worship. Corporate worship does something solo worship cannot do. It magnifies our seasons of rejoicing and blessing and it makes bearable our seasons of difficulty and hardship.

3. Every aspect of our lives, from heartache to hallelujah, from suffering to security, from maddening trials to mountain tops, is a life we share together. It is the worship of God that unites us through high water or holy water, and through hell on earth or heaven on earth.

4. When worshippers gather together there is opportunity for vital redemptive work to occur.

- **We are a community in distress together**

5. Do you ever feel like you’re a sheep with wolves all around you? Confused? Uncertainty?

Psalms 120:1, 5 I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me. ⁵ Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar!

6. Psalm 120 is a short psalm about worship. Their worship was under difficult conditions. They were not in the temple or Jerusalem. They didn’t have the OT scrolls with them.

7. *Woe* means catastrophe has fallen. God’s people are in exile in Babylon. Imagine being taken captive and sent to Russian Siberia. Everything you loved about your homeland was a faint memory, for many years.

- **We are a community that rejoices together**

Psalms 122:1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

8. Notice how rejoicing occurs. Rejoicing began by anticipating going to worship together. Others valued this. Joy is caught. You do not need to generate your own joy. You can piggyback on someone else’s joy!

9. Why are they rejoicing? God provided for His people. There is stability in the country. Rejoicing is not just a solo affair. Praise to God is multiplied when done together. A rejoicing community adds joy to our lives. We piggyback on the joys of others and share in their joy!

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

10. What strikes you from today’s devotional on why we worship together?

DAY 3: Why is worship done in community? (part 2)

- We are a community rooted in hope.

1. During a long dry spell the people of God find a different kind of joy—hope. Hope is not the kind of joy in what one has, but in what one sees! Faith is fortified when that for which we long and hope finally comes to be!

2. In Psalm 126, there is joy when the nation once captive in Babylon is freed from captivity!

Psalms 126:1 When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. ² Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

3. After a long time in “the desert” there is rich joy. But notice, joy is not a solo affair! In Psalm 126:1-5 there are eight plural pronouns! What are we to make of this? The power of shared joy: it multiplies when it is shared.

Psalm 126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. ⁴ Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev.

4. The Negev is in southern Judah. It is arid desert. There are streams that becomes gully washers after a huge cloudburst. They sweep up every dirty and vile thing and cleanse the river bed.

Psalm 126:5 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. ⁶ He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

5. There are seasons of life where we do “sow in tears,” and where we do “go out weeping.” What keeps the Christian going? That circumstances will quickly change? That I feel better about my difficulties? Neither last for long. Depression follows that method of dealing with seasons of great sadness.

6. What anchors the Christian is the pattern of hoping in God. Over and over again we’ve had our backs up against the wall, without any clue as to how to move forward. Yet, day-by-day, God allows us to soldier on in hope, remembering that God is true to His promises. He will walk us through difficulties, sometimes He changes our difficulties, but **He will always redeem our difficulties**, and that is the bottom line of our hope!

- We are a community of the broken.

7. There is another aspect where being a worshipping community is invaluable—in our failures. There are different methods people use to try to deal with their failures: Denial, trying harder, “medicating,” pretending, rationalizing, justifying, and explaining. None of these work for very long. They leave us in a downward cycle toward anxiety, fear and depression.

God’s gift to us in our failure is repentance, restoration, rebirth, and redemption!

8. God’s method, though humbling up front actually DEALS WITH the FACT of guilt!

Psalms 130:1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; ² O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. ³ If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But with you there is forgiveness; therefore, you are feared.

9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: A case study of worship

1. In Isaiah 6 the prophet Isaiah got a glimpse of God's holiness. Try to imagine yourself in his shoes. What did he see of God? What did he see about himself?

Isaiah 6:1 "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple."

Isaiah 6:2 "Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying."

Isaiah 6:3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Isaiah 6:4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

2. The passage is filled with imagery, meant to give us pictures of God. Below, jot down what each of these images may mean:

- a. A high and exalted throne.
- b. The train of His robe fills the temple
- c. "Seraphs" = literally, "burning ones." Angelic beings: faces, feet, wings, hovering around the throne.
- d. Why did they cover their faces?
- e. What were the seraphs calling to one another?
- f. The temple was shaken, and filled with smoke.

3. What strikes you about God, from Isaiah 6:1-4?

Isaiah 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried, "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

4. What does Isaiah realize about himself?

5. What strikes you personally about seeing God in this vision?

DAY 5: The “surprising” end of worship

1. Let’s continue our story in Isaiah 6. There are times in our lives when we see the ugliness of sin in our lives, in our hearts, and from our words. Isaiah is broken.

Isaiah 6:6,7 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

2. The seraph flies to Isaiah with a live coal in his hand. Why?

3. What did the seraph tell Isaiah?

4. How was Isaiah forgiven for his sin? How was guilt expunged? How did atonement happen?

5. What *prompted* the seraph to fly to Isaiah with the live coal in his hand?

6. What did Isaiah “do” in order to be forgiven? What does God do to make forgiveness happen?

7. For a story full of surprises, the ending may be the most surprising. Think about a time when you have been deeply aware of your sin, and like Isaiah, broken over it. My tendency is to wallow in self-pity, “punish” myself, wallow in discouragement over my stubborn self.

8. Here’s what’s surprising. Isaiah may have felt some of those things, but notice what God’s NEXT WORDS are to Isaiah!

Is. 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

9. The question is directed at Isaiah! What do you think Isaiah thought when he realized God wanted to use his life for God’s purposes?

10. What would have been your response to God’s questions?

11. Here is Isaiah’s answer.

Isaiah 6:8b And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

12. The question, “How could God EVER use me, after what I did?” doesn’t register with God!

13. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

14. We’ve looked at worship this week. What stands out to you the most about worship?