

SERMON: "ABOUT WORSHIP ... ALL THE TIME & EVERYWHERE"

**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT PSALM 96 and ISAIAH 6:1-8
NEW TESTAMENT ROMANS 12:1-8**

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INTRODUCTION

Since I still owe you a few minutes for going late last communion Sunday we will skip the middle hymn and go straight from the sermon to a moment for ministry from the nominating committee. We have a few openings
We work to fit new elders into the right place in the body of Christ
We ask them to serve as an elder with a particular committee in mind

One of the openings this year was on the worship committee. We found someone for that. Thinking about that fit, about this new sermon series about worship – why we worship the way we do ... and about this passage from Romans about presenting our bodies as “a living sacrifice”
I could not help but think I’m a pretty good fit for what I do

I’m not saying so with a big ego looking in the mirror. More so, I am looking back I think I would have been a good fit as an Old Testament priest.
It was their job to lead worship and to offer animal sacrifices to God
part worship leader, part cook/chef, part butcher. Sounds like a good fit to me. Better yet if the Old Testament had named chickens for sacrifice

That is how they did worship. They made sacrifices. A sacrifice
(a thank you to God) is the oldest and most basic form of worship.
It is still a part of our work and worship today – Sacrifice
This is what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of
God’s mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy
and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship.
Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing
of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what
is good and acceptable and perfect.**

What does it mean to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice?
It is certainly not like the animal sacrifice of old. Quite differently really
I went to some of my oldest resources, commentaries by William Barclay,
given to me by a dear friend of my grandmother to describe what is
meant by a living sacrifice. William Barclay wrote ...

A BIG PICTURE VIEW

The true worship, the really spiritual worship, is the offering of one's body, and all that one does every day with it, to God. Real worship is not the offering of elaborate prayers to God; It is not the offering to God of a liturgy, however noble, and a ritual, however magnificent. Real worship is the offering of everyday life to God. A person may say, "I am going to church to worship God," but they should also be able to say, "I am going to the factory, the shop, the office, the school, the garage, the mine, the shipyard, the field, the barn, the garden, to worship God."

That's how I need to begin a series of sermons on worship ... with a wide lens, with a big picture view. Worship is something we can do (and are called to do) all the time and everywhere.

The psalm this morning, Psalm 96, calls us to that kind of everyday and every way approach to worship. It begins like this ...

O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD; bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare God's glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; God is to be revered above all gods.

Worship is from day to day and day after day, and among all nations, all peoples Every day we have reason to and opportunity to be grateful, to worship to give thanks and sing God's praise. Praise is also contagious. It spreads to all nations, all people even to creation itself. The psalmist continues

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar and all that fills it; let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for God is coming, coming to judge the earth. God will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth.

The fields exult. The trees of the forest sing for joy. We've seen nature do that the colors that get our attention, the sunrises and sunsets, the amber waves of grain and the purple mountains majesty, the fruited plain. Talk about worshipping God all the time and everywhere. Nature certainly sends out that invitation. "Come, join us in singing God's praises."

When we first started talking about a series of sermons about worship, my thinking was to walk through how we worship, explain our order of worship. There is a theological reasoning behind it. It is more than "This is how we have always done things round here."

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO WORSHIP

Before we go there, we must begin with that big picture worldview of worship everywhere and all the time because we don't want to fall into the trap of thinking we have a monopoly on the truth

Like going to spend the holidays with the special someone for the first time. You see how they do things and you think, "Where are these people from? Who put sauerkraut on the table and thought it was a good idea? And why isn't the football game on?" Then you marry that special someone and you learn why the sauerkraut is there and you learn to appreciate it ... and eat just enough to pass muster with the in-laws.

I absolutely love how Presbyterians have historically 'played well with others' and still do. We'll do just that this month and later this fall as we welcome a visiting congregation (the UCC church) one week and then worship in the park (a jazz music service with St. Luke's) the next week, then in November visit Jubilee United Methodist as we have the last few years

As we do so I trust you will be reminded that there are lots of ways to worship
Some formal, some quite casual. Some loud, some quiet (even silent)
Some with kneeling, some with standing and holding your hands up high
Some with bulletins, some without (tried that here for a month -
You liked that less than I liked the sauerkraut at Thanksgiving)

Okay, I've overplayed the sauerkraut thing. What I want you to see and appreciate is the diversity of the many ways we can and do worship. As is true across the board, diversity is not a threat ... it is a beautiful gift.

However, wherever and whenever we might worship there is one common thread
When we worship we are in the presence of the living God. With that in mind, let's walk through the passage from Isaiah, the story of his call. We can see how the movement in the story is reflected in the order of our worship.

Let's say you stay later and help with lemonade on the lawn.
You're helping put things away and you open a door downstairs near the kitchen, back near the back stairs. Next thing you know, like Isaiah you're standing before the throne of the Almighty.

I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of God's glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

SUMMARY

So there you are before the living God on the throne, high and lofty
There are winged creatures flying and singing God's praise
The foundation shakes and the house is filled with smoke
Kind of overwhelming. What do you say, what do you do?

Maybe you try and play it cool. A slight nod, a "what's up"
Maybe you reach out your hand to introduce yourself, say 'hello'
Most likely thing you might say given who you're talking to is 'O, my God!'
Literally. An expression of awe. You're in the presence of God

Worship is meant to begin with that sense of awe, with adoration
That is why we try and make sure the first hymn is one you know well
A song of praise is a good way to express ourselves in front of God
We know who's who here and we are grateful to be in this place

Recognizing who's who, worship continues. Like Isaiah we realize
(especially in the presence of God) that have not lived as God would have us

Isaiah confesses his sin ... "I am a man of unclean lips." Notice how the focus
is on his lips, on what he says. That says a whole lot about how we too
fall short – with unclean lips, with our words. And you see what God does
how God deals with our sin. God touches Isaiah, God touches us
and our sin departs. Like Isaiah our sin is blotted out. We are forgiven!

After that cleansing, that good news of forgiveness ... God speaks
That is how we order our worship – from awe at being in God's presence
to a humble recognition of our shortcomings to good news of forgiveness
Now we can listen to what it is that God has to say to us
Scripture readings, children's sermon, music and sermon follow

In Isaiah chapter six, God speaks as to send. It is rather brief and to the point.
I think that is what you want in a sermon (I'm almost finished with this one)
God asks the question, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah answers that call
The same thing happens in our worship. That's why the sermon is in
the middle of the service. It is meant to be a springboard to our response

We hear God's word so we sing God's praise some more, and we pray
for ourselves and for others. We make an offering, (a sacrifice without
all the fire and butchering). We gather round the Lord's table.
After all that, then we go. We are sent out to do God's will.

Doing so, doing what God sends us to do, we go out to serve
Then God calls us back here next week to worship some more
to worship all the time and everywhere