

I've been doing some thinking this week about time. Time is the one thing we spend every day; time is the one thing we can never add to, or stockpile. Time is a gift from God. As I thought about how we spend our time, I made some general calculations that will apply to most of us.

Every week, each of us are given 168 hours and I have created a few pie-charts that map out how we might spend our time in any given week. The first pie-chart depicts the average, red-blooded 15 year old male: the anecdotal evidence I've gathered from both parents and students suggests that they will spend about 150 hours a week playing video games...which leaves just 18 hours to eat, sleep, practice good hygiene, and go to school.

For the rest of us, the pie-chart might look something more like this one. Now the time allotments might look a little different from person to person but the average adult will spend about 56 hours a week sleeping, 50 hours working, 28 hours with family or friends, 14 hours watching tv/online or reading, I've allotted 10 hours for miscellaneous, 8 hours for hobbies or sports, and that leaves about 2 hours on a Sunday morning to engage in this thing we call *worship*.

And here's the problem: the Bible says that worship is what we were created for. If this is true, if worship is such a great priority, then spending two hours out of a possible 168 seems a tad little low, don't you think?

The enthusiasts among us might say, "Let's divide up the pie differently...I can sleep a little less, play a little less, work a little less so that the worship slice can grow a bit." This kind of approach has some merit; it is a healthy exercise to take stock of how we spend our

time and then reapportion based on our values and priorities. But I want to suggest a different course of action this morning, and over the next 6 Sundays.

relationships. work. play. music. money. What do all these words have in common? I want to suggest that they are all connected to the wide world of worship. Now obviously, I'm not talking about a 1-dimensional, slimmed down, non-fat, decaf version of worship...I'm talking about a full-bodied 3-dimensional kind; worship that is big enough to encompass our lives.

I don't think I can say this too strongly: we do violence to the biblical definition of *worship* when we reduce *worship* to a style of music, or to a time slot on Sunday morning. If we let it, 3-dimensional worship will take over our lives.

I begin this morning by setting this word, "*worship*," within the context of the Old and New Testament's before we come back to this idea of 3-dimensional worship.

Let me start by giving us a very basic definition of the word "*worship*". The dictionary defines worship as "the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity". To "worship" God is to ascribe to Him "worthiness" and "honour".

a) The Old Testament: worship was central to life among the people of Israel quite simply because they saw God, Yahweh, as central to life. He was both Creator and Sustainer, Protector and Provider, Father and Helper; all of life revolved around Him. The book of Exodus chronicles the rescue of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. And you may remember that when Moses went to Pharaoh

with Yahweh's demand, "*Let my people go*," Yahweh expressed a clear reason why His people were to be released. "*Let my people go so that they may worship me.*"¹

After the exodus, Yahweh brought His people out into the desert to Mount Sinai and there He gave them the gift of the law. The law, also known as the Torah, outlined how to live in relationship to a holy God. We might expect to find details in the Torah about worship, about sacrifice, about offerings, about specific religious festivals, and as we read through the law we are not disappointed...it's all there.

But what might confuse us as modern, or postmodern, readers is some of the extraordinary and expansive detail found in the Torah; on the surface these details have nothing to do with "worship". We find instructions about food, about cleaning, about work, about sex, about rest, about money, about how to treat our neighbours, and so on.

The more you study these details, the more you begin to realize that Yahweh's definition of worship is more far-reaching than we first imagined. Worship wasn't confined to the sabbath, it wasn't confined to certain religious festivals, nor was it confined to a holy location like the Tabernacle or Temple. All of life was to be set apart to and for God.

To paraphrase Deuteronomy 6:7-8, *When you're with your kids, when you're at home, when out for a walk, while your working, when it's time to go to sleep, see your life as set apart for Me...let your life be an act of worship to Me.*

In Psalm 86:11-12, David, who is elsewhere described as a man after God's own heart, prays the following: "**11** *Teach me your way, Yahweh [LORD], that I may rely on your faithfulness; **give me an undivided heart**, that I may fear your name. **12** I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.*"

b) New Testament: when we approach the New Testament, we might be surprised to note that while there is a lot of talk about worship, the New Testament spends very little time talking about worship services.

Instead we read grand statements like these:

- "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*" (1 Cor. 10:31)
- "*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*" (Col. 3:17)
- "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.*" (Col 3:23)

Is the picture becoming clear? All of life is wrapped up in this word we call "worship". All of life can be lived in the name of *Jesus*, energized by the *Holy Spirit*, to the glory of God our *Father*.

Our definition of worship needs to be blown up and out. The bible doesn't talk about a 1-dimensional, slimmed down, non-fat, decaf version of worship; it talks about a 3-dimensional kind of worship...one big enough to encompass our lives.

¹ C.f. Ex. 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3.

Getting back to our pie-chart...the goal is not necessarily to increase the worship slice of the pie (though that may be in order); instead, God invites us to see every different slice of our life as the place where worship can take place.

So the questions becomes: how can meeting a friend for coffee, or pounding a nail on a job site, or opening our wallet become an act of worship? It is these questions that will to occupy us over the next 6 Sunday mornings. Here's a brief rundown of where we'll be journeying.

We are going to look at how our relationships can result in praise to God, we'll look at how to worship in the workplace, how to magnify God with our money, and we'll look at the intersection between music and worship. We're look forward to journeying with you over these next weeks leading to Christmas.

So with this series introduction out of the way, now I'm ready to give us a new definition of worship followed by a brief look into two key texts that have everything to do with moving our whole life into this circle of worship.

1. Definition: Let's begin with a definition worship, written by William Temple, the former Archbishop of Canterbury: ***Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God.*** *It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His*

truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose. And all this, gathered up in adoration, is the greatest of human expressions of which we are capable.

2. Matthew 22:37

If you have your Bibles with you this morning I want to invite you to turn with me to our first text; it can be found in Matthew 22:37. Here Jesus is being tested by the religious leaders of His day; they're not particularly fond of Jesus and are hoping He will say something they can use against Him.

One of the experts in the law, who specialized in devotion to God, asked the following question: "*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*" Now remember, the law was not a list of arbitrary rules; the law told Israel how to live a life of worship before God. Jesus answered the expert's question saying, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*"

Now I want to encourage you not to read too much into these words of Jesus; His three-part heart, soul and strength wasn't an attempt to pioneer modern psychology. This way of speaking is a "rhetorical device for speaking about the whole person."²

² Craig Blomberg, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, 80.

In the Old Testament, the heart was understood as the location of the will, intellect and intentions. The soul represented the inner self, complete with desires, emotions, and what we might term “personality”. And “the word ‘strength’ is translated from a word that typically means ‘greatly’ or ‘exceedingly’.”³

One Bible scholar thus paraphrases Jesus’ words in the following way, “Love the Lord your God with total commitment (heart), with your total self (soul), to total excess (strength).”⁴ When it comes to worship, love is always at the centre. We can bow down before another with no love in our hearts, we can obey or follow orders without love, but without love, there can be no worship.

Love the Lord your God with total commitment (heart), with your total self (soul), to total excess (strength). In other words, we are to love Him without holding anything back.

Let’s move on to our second text, Romans 12:1-2.

3. Romans 12:1-2. *“1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

For those of you who are learning to study the Bible, here is something to keep in mind. Anytime you come across the word “therefore” in the text, you need to stop and go back to the chapter or chapters that preceded it, in order to find out what it’s there for.

In this particular case, along with the words “in view of God’s mercy,” the apostle Paul is summing up the previous 11 chapters. He’s been outlining the fact that with the coming of Jesus, this world has received some very good news.

In the Ancient world, animal sacrifice played a central role in life and worship. A sacrifice was required to atone for sins; the word “atone,” translated literally means: “to cover over”. In a symbolic way, the blood of the animal made payment for a person’s rebellion against God; it acted as a substitute, life for life. But as Hebrews 10:4 points out, *“It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* And so, says Hebrews 10:12, *“When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”*

Since we were separated from God because of our sin, Jesus came to redeem us and restore us to our Father in heaven. Jesus died in our place, He was our substitute, He paid the penalty for our sin and rebellion. And now, because of what Jesus has done, we can be forgiven, and restored to our rightful place as sons and daughters of God.

³ Blomberg, 80.

⁴ Blomberg, 80-81.

“Therefore,” says Paul, in light of the mercy of God, demonstrated by the sacrifice of Jesus, here now is your appropriate, acceptable, reasonable act of worship, “*offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God*”.

It’s an interesting phrase isn’t it? A living sacrifice? The offering of our bodies is plain enough; we bring ourselves to God. But a living sacrifice? What is Paul getting at?

I’ve worked through various translations, with some help from the experts in order to come up with the heart of what I think Paul is saying...here it goes:

“Take your everyday, ordinary life⁵,” your work, your relationships, your playing, your money, your priorities, and offer them to God. Your act of worship is to live for God in these things. “*Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person⁶*” by giving you His thoughts, and thus changing the way you think.

Take your everyday, ordinary life, your whole life, and offer it to God. We are to be a living sacrifice...God is worshipped as we live out each moment with His glory in mind.

And so, we’re right back where we started. All of life is wrapped up in this word we call “*worship*”. All of life can be lived in the name of *Jesus*, energized by the *Holy Spirit*, to the glory of God our *Father*.

“Love the Lord your God with total commitment (heart), with your total self (soul), to total excess (strength).”

True worship takes place as I set apart all of me, all for Him, in all of life. And if you think this sounds like hard work, let me correct your thinking: it’s not hard, it’s impossible.

Illus: There is only one reason why David prayed for an undivided heart; it was because his heart was divided: divided loyalties, divided passions, divided priorities. The reason we resonate with this prayer is that we’re all too aware of the division within our own lives.

When I turned 20, I began to take this life of worship seriously. At the time I was training to be a pastor and I knew that some parts of my life were out of sync with the vocation I was stepping into. Lust, impatience, anger and pride were often bubbling just under the surface of my life. I wanted to set apart all of me, for all of Him, in all of my life and I developed a rigorous plan that would get me there.

If the truth be told, I developed dozens and dozens of plans, each one more strenuous than the next. My plans were perfect...unfortunately, I was not, and after 10 years of trying I gave up and gave in.

There is only one man who has ever lived with an undivided heart before God and I suspect you know His name: *Jesus*. He was tempted in every way, just as we are, and yet He was without sin.

⁵ Romans 12:1, The Message translation.

⁶ Romans 12:2, New Living Translation.

Empowered by the Spirit, He set apart His life as an offering to the Father.

He did what none of us could ever do: from His first breath in a manger, to His final breath on the cross, Jesus loved the Father with total commitment (heart), with His total self (soul), to total excess (strength). This is what made His living, and His dying, an acceptable sacrifice on our behalf.

Now this is the part of the sermon where you might expect me to say something like: *Come people, why can't you be more like Jesus? Come on now, look at Jesus and try harder! Surrender more!*

My dear brothers and sisters, not only would that be cruel, that would be dumb. Living the Christian life isn't about copying Jesus; how could that be good news? Jesus is the one who saves us from our sins; He is also the one who makes us holy. We don't copy Jesus; we invite Him to come and live in us and reproduce His life within.

This life of worship that God calls us to is the life Jesus intends to live out within us. And the sooner we give up trying and give in to Him, the sooner we will begin to experience the life the Father has planned for us.

It's not that we are inactive in the process, it's that we aren't the managing partner. Helmut Thielicke once said, "We can never put too much trust in Jesus and we can never put too little trust in ourselves."⁷ I said this last week but it bears repeating: *the life God calls us into is a supernatural life, one that requires Jesus to live*

again in us by His Holy Spirit. We do not make this life happen, we embrace what God is doing within us.

Some of you might be saying, "Well that is good news, so where do I begin?"

Illus: I want to answer that question as I conclude this morning, and to help us along I want to borrow an analogy from the world of poker. I hesitate to use the analogy for a number of reasons: first, I know that gambling has ruined many people's lives; second, I don't play poker because I'm too cheap to bet my own money. But this analogy has come to mind so many times over the last few weeks that I'm trusting that there may be a few of you who need to hear this.

Four or five years ago, poker became incredibly popular. Sports channels like TSN and Rogers Sportnet began to broadcast it regularly, and millions of people from all over the world began to go crazy for online poker. And you just know something is mainstream when you can buy it at Costco...a number of my friends went out and bought their own silver case filled with poker chips.

Now, I'm no expert but the whole point in poker is to be the last man or woman standing; the goal is to play your cards right and to eliminate every last player around the table by winning all of their chips.

If you've ever watched poker before there is one moment that makes even the strongest poker players a little weak in the knees. It's that

⁷ Helmut Thielicke, *Our Father In Heaven*, 129.

moment when a person takes their chips and moves all in. Now obviously, to move all in is an all or nothing play; you commit every last chip you have in order to win the hand, the game, or the title. When you move all in, you are utterly committed; there's no going back.

So where am I going with this? This life of worship that the Father invites us into is not about being perfect. Jesus, the perfect Son of God has already accomplished that on our behalf. When the Father extends this invitation to us, He's after something very specific: *He's after our hearts.*

Every chip the Father had was put on the table when He sent His Son to die for us...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit went "all in" through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Here in the West we toy around with so many things; half-hearted and uncommitted, we like to keep our options open. In this part of the world, living with a divided heart can be seen as a badge of honour; it shows that we are well-rounded people with a broad array of interests.

Can you hear the whisper of God this morning? *I want all of you, all for Me, in all of life.* For many of us, the time is now, now is the time to move all in...to bet every chip in our life on the one who lives within us. Now is the time...

We start by taking our everyday, ordinary life, our work, our relationships, our playing, our money, our priorities, and we offer all of it to Jesus.

If you're wondering where to start, ask the Father; He'll tell you. He is patient with us, and the Holy Spirit will guide us as we go.

Worship: I'm going to invite Brad and the worship team to come, and as they sing I want to invite you to be prayerful. You might want to respond in song, or you might want to just sit and soak. Today friends, hear what the Spirit is saying to you.

Blessing