Spiritual Disciplines: Worship

John 4:19-24, Acts 2:42-47, Romans 12:1-2

[based on the sermon preached on 12-03.23 – available on the church app or at https://lwac.org.au/sermons]

KEY IDEAS

1. We are created to worship God
2. Worship has a tangible expression, a physical reality in our lives
3. The leader of our worship is Jesus Christ, not any human person
4. True worship results in the fruit of changed lives and transformed living

CONNECT

- Think of the most intense worship event or the most meaningful or powerful worship experience you have ever had. It could be a corporate church experience or communing with God all alone out in nature. What was that experience like? What did you feel in that experience? Why was it so amazing and moving? Share as you are able.

STUDY

Read John 4:19-24

- After Jesus confronts the Samaritan woman with the truth that the man she is living with is not her husband, she tries to redirect the conversation, so she points out a major difference between Samaritans and Jews: Samaritans worship on Mount Gerizim, near Shechem, while Jews worshipped at Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. She points out that Samaritans and Jews are very different people because they worship differently, in different places.

- In response, Jesus says “a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem” and challenges her assumptions about what worship is all about.

When Jesus declares “true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth,” he is stating that where you worship (the outward form) will soon be irrelevant because true worship will not be an outward, formal matter of the correct ritual in the correct location, but an inward matter of the heart and spirit. Jesus goes on to explain that this is logical; as God is spirit, his worshippers must also worship him in spirit and truth.

- Review as you are able some of the rituals associated with the Jewish tabernacle and temple worship with its animal sacrifices and grain offerings, outer and inner courts, holy of holies and priests. What do Jesus’ statements here mean for this Old Covenant worship system?

- Paul writes in I Cor 6:9 that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and in Ephesians 1:13-14 that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, as a deposit. What might these truths mean for our ability to worship the Father in spirit and in truth? Given that the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out on all believers (which would happen at Pentecost, after Jesus’ death and resurrection), could the people of God under the Old Covenant actually worship “in spirit and truth?” Might this explain why Jesus said “a time is coming,” meaning in the future, when this true spirit worship would be a possibility and become a reality, but not quite yet?

- In light of all this, describe in your own words “worship in spirit.” What features distinguish spirit worship as true worship? Is this a reference to a specific act of worship (singing, hand raising, clapping, etc.) or does it refer to the attitude in our hearts?

- If worship in spirit originates in our heart and spirit, are there any limitations to where and how and when and for how long we worship?

- What does all this mean for the worship segment in our Sunday services? Is it rendered irrelevant? If not, why not?

- Jesus also says we will worship in truth. What is this or what might this look like? To help understand this, what do you think is the opposite of worship that is done “in truth?” Would this be false worship or ignorant worship or what? Why is this important?

Read Acts 2:42-47

- We read in v. 42 of four components which comprised the earliest church’s worship experience: teaching, fellowship, communion/worship and prayer. Does any one of these four stand out to you as of greatest importance, or are they all equally important? How should this ranking of importance or equality be reflected in our corporate worship experience today? How are you doing with balancing these four components in your own life?

- In verses 43-47, the writer of Acts, Luke, records 8-10 effects or changes resulting from or following this four-fold corporate worship experience (teaching, fellowship, worship, prayer). List as many of the effects and changes as you can find in these verses.

- Do you think this four-fold corporate worship experience is a helpful pattern for our corporate worship experience today? Why or why not?

Read Romans 12:1-2

- In these verses Paul introduces a rather radical concept or understanding of worship: that it includes the offering of our whole bodies - and thus our entire lives - as living sacrifices (contrasted with the Old Covenant animal sacrifices where the animal had to die) to God.

- Have you ever thought of worship this way, that it included your entire life and everything you do with your body?

- If lived out consistently, how might this passage change our approach to worship and transform our lifestyles and behaviour?

- How might this whole-body-as-an-act-of-worship understanding coincide with worshipping God in spirit and in truth? Are they different or complimentary? If complimentary, how so?

APPLY

- In what ways has your understanding of worship been challenged or changed as a result of this study?

- What is one way this understanding of worship in spirit and truth and/or whole body/life worship might help lead to transformation in your life?

- How might this understanding of worship help prepare you for corporate worship at church?

- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?

- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.

  1.

  2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.