Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Worship – Week 20

Focusing on something larger than ourself.

Day 134: Worship

According to the Oxford Dictionary, worship is "the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity."

Just as the physical building has an intentional architecture, the Anglican worship service itself is intentionally **architected**. We'll explore that a bit this week. Our adoration may be emotionally spontaneous when we are by ourself, but as a community our adoration follows a specific pattern. Let's look at the reasoning behind that first, and then at the pattern itself.

First, why do we worship?

What if I don't worship?

I think everyone worships something. If we don't worship God, we will worship something else – frequently ourselves. We are created to worship. Without worshiping, our lives shrivel and decay; our true selves perish.

But if I don't recognize a deity, according to the Oxford Dictionary, I don't worship?

Perhaps you are replacing the deity of "God" with something else. It may be fame, fortune, or power. It may be yourself. It may be an ideal or a concept. Anything that you revere, adore, pursue, or serve can be said to be what you worship.

So if I'm pursuing being a millionaire, or avoiding climate change, or a more just and equitable society, I'm worshiping those things?

Maybe, maybe not. Idolatry (worshiping an idol) is when you place whatever you are pursuing in such a high regard that you reverence it, indeed, worship it. It becomes a consuming passion. You may pursue a just and equitable society because God is leading you to, and it is part of your worship of God – and that is perfectly all right. For example, pursuing a just and equitable society may lead you to accept and reject aspects of capitalism, communism, socialism, etc., all the while seeking to love your neighbour because that is what God asks. However, having your whole identity revolve around **being** a capitalist or a communist, etc., could mean you've slipped from recognizing them as useful approaches to loving your neighbour, into them being the be-all and end-all – i.e., worshiping them. A common one throughout history is identifying to a specific people – whether it be a family, tribe, country, and having your worldview oriented through that instead of through Christ. Some people really do worship their nation.

If everyone worships something, what do you worship? Putting it a different way, what do you serve with your life?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 135: What is worship of God?

From Kennon L. Callahan:

"Worship is:

- *Mission – the purpose of worship is to help people discover what God is calling them to and how to live that in the world. It is as we worship God, hear the Gospel, and share the sacraments that we discover the path to which God is calling us. Worship is healthy, helpful, and effective when:*
  - *The mission is richly and compassionately shared*
  - *The worship is corporate and dynamic*
  - *The Gospel is helpfully and rightfully preached*
  - *The sacraments are fully shared*
- *Grace. Worship is the breath of God. When we worship, we feel God's grace surrounding us, permeating our life -- our very being. We discover peace, confidence, assurance. We know our sins are forgiven and we are renewed through the grace of God. We know Jesus is with us, and we are with Jesus. We receive the grace of encouragement and hope.*
- *Praise. We praise God and discover who we are and whose we are. In that discovery, we find we are God's mission people – we discover the mission that God has prepared for us.*
- *Power. We worship to discover power for the week to come, to launch the week ahead, to enter a sense of confidence, hope, and inspiration for what lies before us.*

God invites us to live lives of mission, grace, and praise, and power. Worship empowers that."

Worship is loving Christ, uniting with Christ, walking with Christ.

As you've observed or joined in worship recently, have you found it to be a place of mission, grace, praise, or power? Why or why not? What change(s) would make them become places of mission, grace, praise, and power for you? How do they encourage or discourage you in loving Christ, uniting with Christ, or walking with Christ?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 136: A gift

Providing worship is a *gift* (or historically, a 'public work' or 'liturgy') offered for a community to express their need to worship. As a gift, it is best if it enables the worshiping community in meeting the needs of the wider community – it is part of the mission of those who provide it. Worship is a gift provided as part of a mission of service from a smaller community to a larger one.

Everything in a worship service should focus on assisting the mission of the community: the music, the preaching, the prayers, and most definitely the Eucharist / Holy Communion. Everything should facilitate this. When the worshiping community engages the wider community in service, that service becomes an extension of its worship – by serving the wider community, it is serving God.

How does the worship you participate in / observe enable the worshiping community to meet the needs of the wider community, to prepare it for its mission/purpose? What change(s) would you suggest for the worship you've experienced to better empower the worshiping community?

Share your answers with others whom you trust

Day 137: Worship spans time

In the Anglican church we do not worship alone nor only with those gathered around us in our worship centre. We join with those who have worshiped God since time began, a great cloud of witnesses who worshiped God then, and, we believe, still worship God around His throne room – they may not be with us physically, but they are spiritually. We therefore try to incorporate their worship by maintaining their worship practices. Here are three examples:

Pliny (a non-Christian), Governor of Bithynia, writing to the Emperor Trajan (AD 107):
They declared that all the wrong they had committed, wittingly or not, was that they had been accustomed on a fixed day to meet before dawn and sing a hymn to Christ as a god, bind themselves by a solemn pledge not to commit any enormity (wrong), but abstain from theft, pillaging and robbery, and adultery, to keep their word and not to refuse to restore what had been entrusted the them if demanded…. (and) share a meal of innocent food …

The Didache (a church teaching written when the New Testament documents were being recorded) (AD 80-100):
… on the Lord's day gather together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no one (having dispute with their fellow) join until they have been reconciled … for this sacrifice it was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and at every time offer Me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great king, and My name is wonderful among the nations."

Apology of Justin Martyr (~ 140 AD):
We offer up prayers in common for ourselves, the baptized, and all people. Then we kiss each other. Then is brought a loaf of bread and a cup of water, and mixed wine; the Presider takes it and offers praise and glory to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and gives thanks to Him at great length … give to each person a portion of the bread, wine, and water (over which thanksgiving has been said), and carry away to the absent. This food we call the Eucharist (Thanksgiving), which no one may receive except those who believe in the truth of our doctrines, who have been baptized for the remission of sins, and who live according to the commandments of Christ.

On Sunday, (we) assemble together, the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets are read as long as time permits. The Presider exhorts us to the imitation of these worthies. Then we stand up and pray, and when prayers are done, bread and wine are brought up as I have described; and the Presider sends up prayers and thanksgivings with all their might, and the people say "Amen."

What does it feel like to ponder that you are worshiping in conjunction with others who have done so for 2,000 years? That they knelt like you, listened to the same scriptures, and prayed in much the same way? That, in effect, they join with you in your prayers?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 138: Worship has structure (part 1).

The Anglican church has had two basic structures of worship for the past 500 years, which were simplifications modelled on worship done for the previous 1500 years. The two structures are Daily Prayer (Morning and Evening), and Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion. Daily Prayer may be communal or individual and is intended to start and end each day. Holy Communion is always communal. Each has a definite format. First, let's look at the structure of Holy Communion. For the detail of each item, please refer to the relevant prayer book.

From the Book of Common Prayer (this layout has been in use since 1662):

Order	Purpose	Item
1	Preparation	The Lord's Prayer, Collect for Purity
2	Conviction	The Ten Commandments
3	Learning	Scripture Readings
4	Application of Scripture to our daily life	Sermon
5	Renewal of commitment / belief in response	Nicene Creed
6	Offering ourselves and what we have been gifted with	The Offertory
7	Reconciliation	Prayers of Intercession, Confession and Absolution, Comfortable Words
8	Thankfulness	Prayers of Thanksgiving
9	Remember and consecrate	Prayer of Consecration
10	Reconciliation	The Peace, Prayer of Humble Access
11	Union	Holy Communion
12	Commitment	The Lord's Prayer, Prayer of Commitment
13	Joyful Abandonment and Gratitude	Glory to God
14	Blessed and Released	Blessing and Dismissal

So, we prepare, are convicted, learn, renew our commitment and offer ourselves, are reconciled, express thankfulness, are re-united with Christ, re-commit, express our joy and gratitude, then depart to minister in the world.

How does the above structure facilitate lives of mission, grace, and praise, and power?

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 138: Worship has structure (part 2).

From the Book of Alternative Services (published in 1985):

Order	Purpose	Item
1	Welcome	Gathering of the Community
2	Joyful Abandonment	Glory to God
3	Learning	Scripture Readings
4	Application of Scripture to our daily life	Sermon
5	Renewal of commitment / belief in response	Nicene Creed
6	Reconciliation	Prayers of Intercession, Confession and Absolution, The Peace
7	Offering ourselves and what we have been gifted with	The Offertory
8	Remember and Consecrate	Eucharistic Prayer
9	Commitment	The Lord's Prayer
10	Union	Holy Communion
11	Blessed and Released	Blessing and Dismissal

Notice the change: the older version begins with conviction, learning, offering, reconciliation, commitment, culminating in union and then joyful abandonment. The newer version *begins* with joyful abandonment, then goes into learning, commitment, reconciliation, offering, and culminating in union. The two reverse the order of reconciliation and commitment.

What do the two service structures say about their understandings of humanity, and about God? Which speaks better to your spiritual needs?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 139: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.