

“Can’t Miss a Sunday: Worship Zone”

Psalm 86:8-13 (NLT)

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It seems there was this United Methodist pastor who just loved to play golf, but he had been very busy for many months and had not been able to get away to go golfing. Well, one Sunday morning he woke up and felt he just HAD to go golfing. The weather was just beautiful. He called up his Associate Minister and claimed he had a really bad case of laryngitis and couldn't preach, so the kind and loving Associate Minister told him to rest for several days. She would take care of preaching that morning.

He then got out his clubs and headed off for the golf course. He set up at the first hole, making sure no one was there to see him playing hooky, and blasted the ball with his wood. It was a beautiful shot! It went straight and true. It bounced and bounced (right up onto the green) and rolled its way closer... and closer... a hole-in-one! The pastor jumped up and down in his excitement, praising the Lord and shouting hallelujahs!

He struts off to the green, collects his ball, and tees off at the second hole, repeating his performance on the first hole, much to his astounded delight. Unbelievable---a second hole-in-one.

All this time St. Peter and God have been watching him from the gates of heaven. St. Peter has finally seen enough to pique his curiosity. "Lord," he says, "this pastor seems to be a real trouble maker. He missed church on Sunday, he ignored his congregation and even lied to go golfing. Now you reward him with not just one hole-in-one, but 2!!! Why?"

God smiles, looks over at St. Peter, and says, "I'm punishing him." St. Peter looks very confused and asks God for an explanation. God replies, "Well, after he finishes his game making hole in 1's on a Sunday by himself instead of going to church---who is going to tell!!!!"

Now friends you can worship at the golf course---it is 'hole-y', you can worship at the beach, or at the park. In fact, I hope you do. I want you to worship every day somewhere! But on Sunday we have the opportunity to worship together---what we in churchdom call Corporate Worship. But I would want everyone here to have individual worship every day and maybe several times a day.

Individual worship can be those glimpses of God sightings we have throughout the day. Where we see God's hand at work. Those times of individual prayer, devotions, and Bible reading. I highly encourage that---but something special happens on Sunday morning when we all gather together to worship.

Now perhaps you have seen these signs: **School Zone (image)**

**Hospital Zone (image)**

**Quiet Zone (image)**

**Work Zone (image)**

**Kid Zone (image)**

**Construction Zone (image)**

**Danger Zone (image)**

or maybe even (**Twilight Zone image**)--- You are traveling through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind. A journey into a wondrous land whose boundaries are that of imagination. Your next stop, the **WORSHIP ZONE (image)**

And in many ways, we are all of those zones. A School Zone as we have the ministries of Westlake Christian School, The Robin's Nest, Stars and Comets. As we have Small groups--- Sunday School where Christian Education is being done. We have Vacation Bible School beginning in a couple weeks. 545 children coming. I hope you will grab a donation slip at the display outside of the Multi-Purpose Room and bring it back the donation as soon as possible.

A Hospital Zone in that we give congregational care and pastoral care and prayers for those who are sick.

A Quiet Zone as we have times of silence as we remember, as we pray as we meditate and reflect.

A Work Zone, yes, this place is a Work Zone as we have work to do for the Kingdom.

A Kid Zone---children are welcome at all of our services. In the pew with you. I love seeing parents holding their baby swaying with them as they might be a little fussy. This is a Kid Zone. We have a family room for parents to take their children to if they need to...video monitor, sound, and window to see worship. We have a nursery. Tomorrow we have Camp Cubber ministry starting for the summer. The largest Christian Day Camp in Florida. Enrollment this year is around 500 per week. And how many for Vacation Bible School!!!! Yes, we are a Kid Zone.

A Construction Zone in that we are asking God to help us build His kingdom.

And even a Danger zone. Yes, this very place is where I pray you encounter the living Jesus. "Danger Will Robinson!" You see when you encounter Jesus you are in danger because your life will change, you will never be the same. A life changer. A game changer.

As we travel through these dimensions of sight, sound, and soul we are indeed the Worship Zone. Oh, to be in the Zone in the Worship Zone.

Worship is not something done to us, but is what we are participants in. There are many ways to worship---bow head, lift hand, lift both hands, kneel, stand, close eyes, and certainly a variety of types and styles of music enhance our worship.

An important realization is that it's not primarily about your physical posture or even the music, but your heart. Is your heart open and receptive and ready to worship God?

In scripture the Hebrew word in the Old Testament for worship is Shachah which means to bow down face to the ground. The Greek New Testament word is Proskuneo which also means to bow down.

Now some may not bow down physically---but are you bowing your heart. Scripture tells us several things we can do during worship.

### **Singing**

**Ephesians 5:19 New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>19</sup> singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.**

### **Bowing down**

**Psalm 95:6 New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>6</sup> Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,**

### **Raising Hands**

**Nehemiah 8:6 New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>6</sup> Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.**

### **Clapping**

**Psalm 47:1 New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>1</sup> Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise!**

### **Dancing**

**Psalm 150:4 New Living Translation (NLT) <sup>4</sup> Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes!**

Friends in the worship zone you have to be free to worship how you feel led. Not everyone is going to clap or raise their hands. I have seen people that are more like sponges, even some being outwardly expressionless but have come to me later saying something about how meaningful the worship service was. What matters is not the how you worship, but that you worship, because this is a Worship Zone.

**Hebrews 10:25 Common English Bible (CEB) <sup>25</sup> Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.**

Worship as a habit...yep. David Mathis, executive editor for desiringGod.org and author puts it this way: "While I cannot commend one keystone habit that will make the difference for every believer, I do want to speak up on behalf of one weekly habit that is utterly essential to any healthy, life-giving, joy-producing Christian walk: corporate worship. And it is all too often neglected, or taken very lightly, in our day of disembodiment and in our proclivity for being noncommittal. In fact, I do not think it is too strong to call corporate worship the single most important habit of the Christian life."

And that's why I say, "Can't Miss a Sunday." "Don't want to miss a Sunday!"

Looking at our scripture let's see the highlighted portions that remind us of why worshiping together is critical.

**Psalm 86:8-13 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>8</sup> No pagan god is like you, O Lord.**

**None can do what you do!**

**<sup>9</sup> All the nations you made**

**will come and bow before you, Lord;**

**they will praise your holy name.**

**<sup>10</sup> For you are great and perform wonderful deeds.**

**You alone are God.**

**<sup>11</sup> Teach me your ways, O LORD,**

**that I may live according to your truth!**

**Grant me purity of heart,**

**so that I may honor you.**

**<sup>12</sup> With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God.**

**I will give glory to your name forever,**

**<sup>13</sup> for your love for me is very great.**

**You have rescued me from the depths of death.**

Corporate worship is where we find encouragement in all the other spiritual habits vital to the Christian life. Believers are meant to be together, to learn together, worship together, to pray for each other, and encourage each other

Quoting David Mathis again, "The reason corporate worship may be the single most important Christian habit, and our greatest weapon in the fight for joy, is because like no other single habit, corporate worship combines all three essential principles of God's ongoing supply of grace for the Christian life: hearing his voice (in his word), having his ear (in prayer), and belonging to his body (in the fellowship of the church)."

"And just to be sure, the reason to make corporate worship a habit is not to check the box on perfect attendance, and not because corporate worship alone is enough to fully power the Christian life, and not because mere attendance in worship will save your soul. This is not a call for legalistic going-through-the-motions. The hope is not just to show up and be a shell. Rather, this is a summons to harness the power of habit to rescue our souls from empty excuses that keep us from spiritual riches and increasing joy. Negligence and chronic minimizing of the importance of corporate worship reveal something unhealthy and scary in our souls. Let's resist it with fresh resolve."

I don't want to miss a Sunday. Can't miss a Sunday. In the zone at the Worship Zone.