

Series: Side by Side
Message Title: ***The Practices of Our Worship***
Date: Sunday, February 18, 2018
Scripture: Philippians 3:3...
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Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

Over the past few weeks, we have been discussing the subject of worship. Today you have come to a service of worship. We gather in this building and these facilities to worship. Worship is vital to the life of each believer individually and to the church as a whole.

Worship is not only part of our walk with Christ here and now, but it will be the active service of heaven.

“Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created” (Revelation 4:11 ESV).

Having opened the chapter with our first glimpse into heaven, this is what is going on!

“I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.”

—A.W. Tozer

Repeatedly in recent days, I have said to you, “We are better together in worship!” God has called us side by side in worship and we have been tracing this through Philipppians.

While the theme of joy and rejoicing dominates this book, the actual word, *worship*, only appears once in the book. It follows yet another reference to *joy*. The Apostle Paul presents this as an indestructible quality in his life and faith. Yet Paul quickly clarifies something regarding this joy and worship.

“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Philipppians 3:1-3 ESV).

Worship is done by the Spirit, and it is aimed at giving all glory to Christ and Christ alone.

Christ is the treasure of the Christian life and He is the treasure of the Christian church. Our greatest task and shared experience together is worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want us to grow in worship—the corporate expression and experience of the living Christ with us and in us.

In this passage, Paul references worship in contrast to the rituals and practices that many engage in to prove their self-righteousness. In particular, Paul refers to many of the practices we studied in Galatians last fall—efforts to make people more Jewish in ritual before they become followers of Jesus.

Many lean into Old Testament practices and rituals, but without understanding. The purpose of Old Testament law is to point out our brokenness, weakness and wickedness and to point us to the only One who can fulfill the righteousness of God. (Gods perfect standard)

Paul mentions “dogs”—scavengers who are in the streets barking false doctrine and looking for prey.

He mentions evil workers—those who want to offer God their best rather than recognizing that all our righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight.

He mentions “mutilation”. This is an actual reference to those who force compliance with circumcision as if a physical, external sign would affirm salvation. But none can—not this, baptism or any other external sign.

“Works-righteousness” is the religion of the world without God (I do good, I improve myself, and God approves of me). There are many forms of works-righteousness; it is the do-it-yourself mode of religion.

By contrast, the Apostle Paul lets it be known that the righteousness we need is a “gift-righteousness”—one given by God through the work of Christ for us.

“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count

everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (Philippians 3:7-10 ESV).

We do not come to worship or gather as worshipers to impress God or improve ourselves, but to express the gratitude and joy of God’s grace active and effective in our hearts.

Our standing before God is not based on us, but on Christ and His work for us. We worship from gratitude, not guilt. We worship in Spirit, not form. We worship from the heart.

“Christian worship is not a thing of ritual or of the observation of details for the Law; it is a thing of the heart. It is perfectly possible for a man to go through an elaborate liturgy and

yet have a heart that is far away from God. It is perfectly possible for him to observe all the outward observance of religion and have hatred and bitterness and pride in his heart. The true Christian worships God, not with outward forms and observances, but with the true devotion and the real sincerity of his heart. His worship is love of God and service of men.” —William Barclay

Our boast is Christ, and His joy is our strength. So all of worship is to be an expression of the application of grace in our lives.

Gratitude and grace are seen in these practices in worship:



1. Praying

Praying—understanding our access and acceptance before God.

“Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the

Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV).

Because of who Christ is and what Christ has done, we have an "all access" pass into the presence of God with every need.

To this end, the book of Philippians is marked with references to prayer. Paul expresses his prayer for the people:

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11 ESV).

And Paul is comforted by their prayer for him:

“For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:19-20 ESV).

Then Paul references the power of prayer to give protection and peace in our lives. Not a place of terror and guilt, but of gratitude and rest:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7 ESV).

This is why prayer is one of the practices of our gathered worship as a church. You can trace prayer through the church beginning in Acts 2:42:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42 ESV).

“We don’t pray to get God’s attention; we pray in response to God’s invitation.”

Jesus taught this in Matthew 6:7-8:

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:7-8 ESV).

Prayer is a vital part of our worship because we are invited and encouraged to come into the presence of Christ together and petition heaven for our needs.

Prayer matters to the church and prayer matters in the church because we matter to God and God cares about what matters to us.

2. Singing

I want to spend a little time here. I'm not sure there is a reference to singing in the book of Philippians, but the entire message of this book is presented against the backdrop of joy, and this joy was expressed in singing:

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25 ESV).

That's a practical faith and a practicing faith.

Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi, and the church was birthed through song. One of the unique features of the Christian faith is that we sing! Some of the greatest music has come from Christian tradition through song.

We don't just recite, chant and light candles. We sing! This was one of the greatest points of theological and ecclesiastical recovery in the Reformation when religious form was again interrupted through congregational song.

500 years ago, Martin Luther, known as a theologian to us, was also known as a hymn

writer. He believed any truly biblical church would have every worshiper participating in every part of the service, including singing.

“Let God speak directly to His people through the Scriptures, and let His people respond with grateful songs of praise.”

—Martin Luther

Many of Luther’s enemies believed the practice of congregational singing to be a heresy and feared Luther’s hymns more than the man! They knew the power of music in the hearts of the people.

To this end, “There is no part of worship life more in need of reformation today than congregational singing.” —Ligon Duncan

It is vital for the church to sing! What we sing, how we sing, and why we sing are all a very important part of the practice of worship.

Many of you know the works of Keith and Kristen Getty. Their songs have marked our worship in our years together. Their song, *In Christ Alone*, is probably the best known and the most shared.

Recently I have been reading the wonderful little book, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family and Church*, by the Gettys. This book was written to encourage and challenge the recovery of congregational singing in our churches.

In recent decades, we have had much emphasis on musical excellence, musical performance and musical experience. However, what continues to be lacking is the collective voice of the congregation in singing to the glory of God.

Singing is an expression of our joy and gratitude for God's amazing grace in our lives and we need to learn and love to sing.

The great issue of music in the church must transcend styles and cause us all to focus on the substance of every song—Christ, His matchless grace, and His overwhelming glory.

You were created to sing! Do you realize how amazing this is in God's creation? Birds sing and people sing! Many other animals groan and snort and grunt (some singing may sounds that way), but we have this amazing,

incredible ability to not just communicate through speech, but to move speech to singing.

I could spend hours reciting the many prompts and calls to praise in the Psalms. In fact, Psalms is a songbook within the Bible. It has lyric, emotion, instrumentation, ballads, and more.

“To sing is written in our DNA; it’s part of God’s design. Our desire to make musical instruments to accompany our singing is as old as our desire to fashion tools to aid us in our daily work. Throughout Scripture and through history, we see God’s people using this gift of song to praise Him, the Giver of it.” —Keith Getty

You may be thinking, “But I can’t sing!” It’s true you may not be choir or solo material, but that’s okay. Do it anyway! We are not here to act as judges, but to create a chorus where those who can do, and those who can hum!

Remember, Christian singing begins with the heart and not the lips, and all of us need to have songs in our hearts.

Last week we examined Phil 2:2, and learned that Paul was calling us to unity and be in “full accord” symphonically in our hearts and minds. Singing does this to a congregation. You may only be like a cymbal (something that clangs a few times) or you may be like a violin or guitar that carries throughout the song. Either way, it doesn’t matter. You need to sing and the church needs to sing together. And, we are better together when we sing TOGETHER!

We are actually commanded to sing: “Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, His praise in the assembly of the godly!” (Psalm 149:1 ESV). And there are many more verses I could point out.

“What we sing is guided not by our emotions, but by God’s revelation.” Worship comes in response to God’s revelation in His Word:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16 ESV).

Let's consider some of the benefits and blessing of singing:

1. Singing declares God's grace and truth to all who gather in worship. It is not just my job to share the gospel; it is yours before I speak!

2. Singing takes Sunday's truths into Monday. Songs help us remember Scriptures, shape our prayers and remind us of God's presence.

3. Singing sustains you in every season of life. We have different loves in song because we have lived in different seasons of life. We need to respect and appreciate, but not coerce and condemn (beauty of the Psalms).

4. Singing reminds you of what God has done in your life. Songs can testify vital, foundational truths of God's Word to our hearts and provide assurances He has given. (Example: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*)

5. Singing keeps your mind on eternity. You not only hear the "drumbeat" of the earth, but the sublime hope of heaven.

6. Singing creates memory and legacy for your family and your church.

For all the things we want our kids to remember, songs are among the things they will remember best.

We are better together when we worship through song!

“The best most perfect way that we have of expressing a sweet accord of mind to each other is by music.” —Jonathan Edwards

We need to intentionally and practically focus on creating a community of people who sing with joy.

A third practice of worship involves...

3. Giving

And I am out of time—I know that may disappoint some of you! :)

I told you early in this study that the book of Philippians was written in response to the visit

of a man named, Epaphroditus. He came to Paul in prison:

... for he [Epaphroditus] nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me... And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only... I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God" (Philippians 2:30; 4:15, 18 ESV).

I'll close for now because I know the mind can only absorb what the seat can endure, and this is not a Bible conference. However, I pray you are and have been prompted to consider the practices of our worship together.

We are better together in worship!