

Real Worship
May 1, 2016

Mother's Day is next Sunday. I just thought I would announce that so you could all prepare this week. I want to suggest how you should recognize your mother on Mother's Day. I suggest you sit down and think about all she has done for you. Think about how hard she worked, maybe is still working, on your behalf. She provided food, clean clothes, shelter, band aids, comfort, and taught you right from wrong.

If you are grown, and not living with your mother she is likely still supporting you with encouragement and prayer. If your mother has passed, you can still stop and recall how hard she worked to provide such things for you when she was alive, and thank God for her. And in her name you might show honor to another mother, maybe one whose children do not live nearby.

If your mother is still living, you should do something personal to let her know you have given some thought to all she has done for you, what she means to you. You might get a card for her, picking out just the right one that says what you feel. Or you may write a note that expresses your thanks and thoughts of her. You might get flowers, take her to lunch, fix lunch, or other such gifts. But whatever you do, you need to communicate what you really feel. Make it something from your heart. The amount you spend doesn't make it more meaningful. Expressing what you feel is more meaningful. And taking the time to communicate those feelings is important.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have more than mothers and fathers to honor. We have God to honor as well. We call this worship. We see an example of worship in Luke 17.

Luke 17:11-14 (NIV) Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

The men Jesus met had leprosy. Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a long term infection caused by certain bacteria. Leprosy is spread between people much like a cold is, through you taking in cough or runny nose germs from the infected person. But in those days they had no idea how it spread or what caused it. They rightly discerned that the best thing to do was to separate the infected person from everyone else. Hence, lepers tended to live outside of town. They lived mostly on donations from family, friends, and strangers from whom they begged. The only people they could hang out with were other lepers.

They call out to Jesus asking for healing. We know from this book that Jesus had healed at least one other leper and had probably healed others as well. As word got around of Jesus healing the blind, the deaf, and the lame, word got around too of Him healing lepers as well.

The men ask Jesus for healing. But Jesus doesn't heal them. Instead He tells them to go and show themselves to the priest. This is what was expected. In the book of Leviticus God commanded the Jews to present themselves to a temple priest when they developed a skin condition or a change in a skin condition. The priests served as a kind of health inspector in

such cases to determine if and when the person was healed and could be declared ritually "clean". You had to be clean in order to enter the temple for worship. You had to be clean in order to be with other people, with family. Even if you were not a leper, if for some reason you became unclean, you had to purify yourself ritually or you would make others unclean by touching them. So for any reason you were unclean, you had to keep a distance between you and others.

What is interesting is that Jesus did not heal them and then send them to the priest. He just says to go and show themselves to the priest. We don't know what they were thinking. Maybe they thought He had already brought some improvement in their condition. Maybe something cultural is lost in our translation. But they went, just as Jesus told them to do. If Jesus had healed them first, they would have then needed to go and be inspected by a priest. But He doesn't heal them first. He doesn't grant their request first. He gives them something to do first. After they began to obey, then they were healed.

There is a lesson here for us. They obeyed and then they were healed. It may be that you are currently seeking something from the Lord. You have some need to be met and you have asked God to meet your need and He has not. It may be that He has told you to do something and you have not done it. He may have told you to change some sinful habit in your life and you have been resisting Him. It may be He has told you to sacrifice something for Him and you have not. It may be that He has told you to help someone else, and you did not. You have been ignoring what He told you to do. And by resisting His will, you are preventing Him from blessing you as you have asked.

Not every failure to receive what we ask for is due to some unrepentant sin. But sometimes this IS the case. It may be the case with you today. You know what God has been wanting you to do and you have not done it, are not doing it, and so God does not meet your request. This attitude of rebellion is sin and must be addressed. It stands in the way of your relationship with God. I encourage you to stop hardening your heart towards God.

Jesus says to go and they went. And after they began their obedience, they were healed. No doubt they saw it first in each other. They noticed that the others were healed. And then they realized they too were each healed. They stopped and stared and laughed and were shouting and pointing and hugging each other. And then they continued on their way to the priest, for they still needed to be declared clean before they could go home to their families.

Luke 17:15-18 (NIV) One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

We don't have any of the details of what they said or did when they realized they were healed. All we know is that one turned around and came back to Jesus, praising God and thanking Jesus. This says something of his heart.

He returns to Jesus, joyfully praising God, throwing himself down at the foot of Jesus, and giving Him thanks. In this we see his heart. We see what he was feeling towards God and Jesus. I am sure the others were happy too, but they did not respond like this man did. They did what most people would do. He went beyond that.

This is the second lesson for us today. We see this pattern all through Jesus' ministry before the cross. It was the pattern that many, many people came to investigate Jesus. Some came with a hope for healing. Others came to hear what He had to say and how He said it. Word had gotten around that Jesus taught unlike all the other religious teachers. But His method and message set Him apart from the others. Many, therefore, wanted to hear Him for this. Others came because they were dragged by parents or spouses.

All heard Jesus speak the good news of the arriving of God's kingdom. All heard Him speak as one who had authority from God. All saw the power of God in the miracles He did. And yet... very few followed Him.

I think that if you heard about a miracle cure for diabetes or heart problems, you would go and check it out. Anyone with such conditions would do so. If I heard of a real cure for arthritis, I would be checking it out. Everyone wanting to be healed of something came to Jesus hoping to be healed. Everyone interested in the Kingdom of God came to Jesus to hear what He was teaching about the Kingdom's arrival. Yet very few became His followers.

Jesus hoped for something more than He got. Most people did not meet the expectations of Jesus. He expected them to respond to the message and power of God and turn in repentance to God the Son He had sent. But they did not.

This man met Jesus' expectations. Are you? Are you meeting Jesus' expectations of you? After being healed, this man came back and worshipped. After being blessed by Jesus are you coming to Him with worship?

What is it that you think Jesus expects of you? It may be that you think Jesus expects you to go to church on Sunday. And so you come. You come and sing the songs and listen to the sermon and go home and think you have worshipped. Yet, these things are not worship. Songs are not worship. Sermons are not worship. If you are going to come on Sunday mornings you need to know what worship is.

The word worship means "to give worth to".

We give someone worth when we speak well of them, when we compliment them, when we brag on them to others, when we give them our time, our attention. We give them worth when we express in some way how important they are to us.

One thing that hinders us from understanding worship is our setup here. We have a platform. We have lots of chairs, in rows, facing the platform. We have people on or in front of the platform who are facing the chairs. We see this set up in many places outside of churches.

We have all been to a concert, a play, or to hear someone give a presentation. In such a setting the people out in the rows of chairs are the audience. The person or persons at the platform are the performers. When the performer is finished the audience typically applauds.

Then we come to church and have the same set up, not realizing that the dynamics are different. **In group worship God is the audience, the people are the performers, and the speaker/singer is the prompter.**

The choir is not singing to entertain us. That is why we do not clap after they sing. They are not entertaining us. They are trying to lead us into the presence of God. They are singing words of spiritual truth, encouraging us to respond with that truth to God. The same is true of my sermon, or of a prayer. Worship happens when each individual responds to God with what is said. Worship is not you singing a hymn. Worship is you singing a hymn to God.

Let me give you several truths about worship.

Worship is a feel thing, not just a think thing.

If you send your mom a Mother's Day card. She will think, "He thought of me." But if, in that card you express your feelings of appreciation for her, she will think, "He did not just think of me. He appreciates me."

Worship is more than thinking about God. Worship is feeling toward God. It is appreciating Him, rejoicing over Him, treasuring Him.

Worship is a prayer thing, not a watch or listen thing.

You have to communicate something. You listening is not worship. You watching is not worship. You watching someone else worship is not worship. Sure, you are giving up this hour. That doesn't mean you have given it to God.

What all this means is that you are not worshipping by being here. Sitting there listening to a sermon is not worship. Standing and singing a song is not worship. It only becomes worship when you express the words to God from your heart, expressing to Him how important He is to you.

The words of the song may be expressing confession. But if you are not confessing your sinfulness it is not worship. The words may be expressing commitment to Jesus, but if you aren't speaking your true commitment of yourself to Him then it is not worship.

When someone is praying and says something you agree with, silently say so to Jesus. Let their prayers prompt your prayer. When a song says what you feel about Jesus, say so in your heart to Jesus. Let the song prompt your prayer.

When the sermon reveals what you recognize as truth, respond in that truth to Jesus. Let the sermon prompt your prayer of worship.

God is not glorified by your presence here. God is glorified as you express your heart to Him.

We are here to worship. So worship with us. Give God worth. Connect to God by expressing to God in prayer what is in your heart.

Invitation

Our faith in Jesus is the foundation for all of our worship. The lepers had faith that Jesus could heal them of their leprosy.

To become a Christian requires faith to believe that Jesus died for all of your sins. God promises He did. Put your faith in the promise of God today. Step out in that belief and receive Jesus as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord.