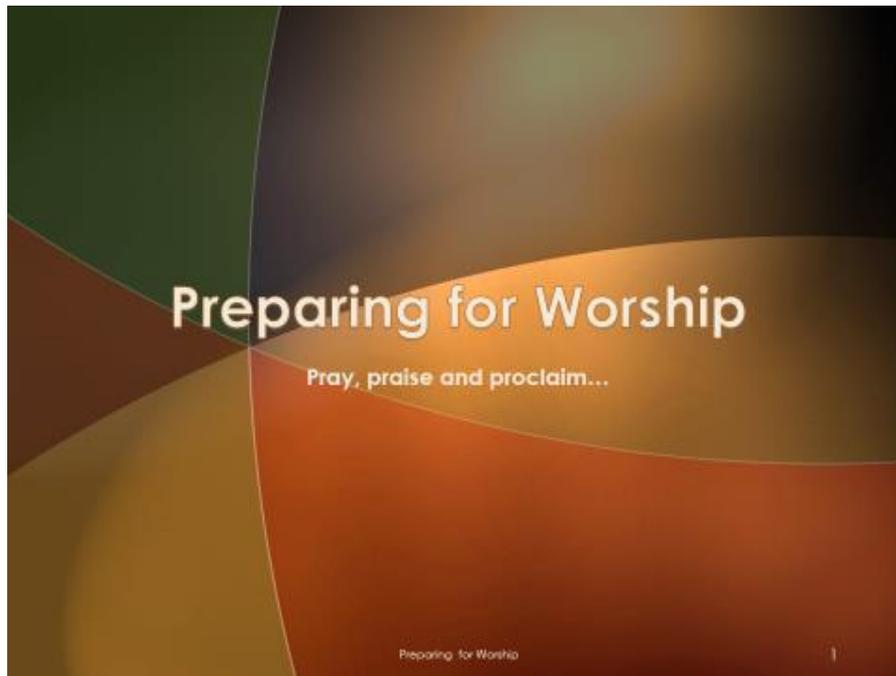


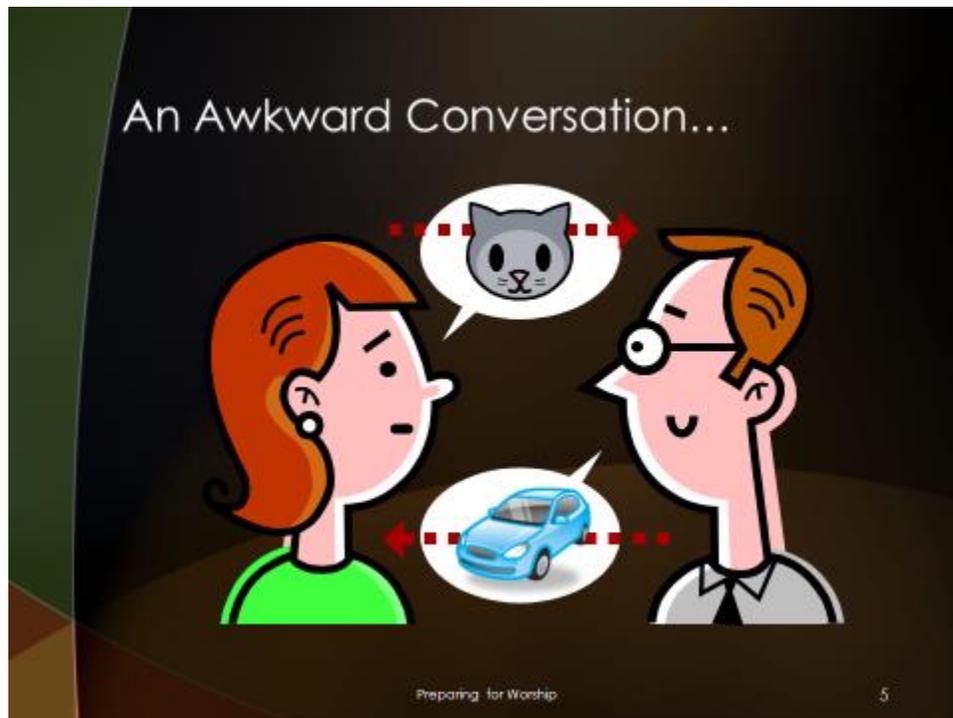
① [Slide 1. - Title]



① [Slide 2. - Sub-Title]



① [Slide 3. - An Awkward Conversation]



Have you ever had one of those awkward moments where you and another person were engaged in a conversation without realizing that you were each speaking about a completely different topic? You begin talking and going back and forth, until that “aha!” moment when one of you realizes that something’s not connecting and says “Are we talking about the same thing?” And assuming it’s not a serious conversation, it usually ends in a good laugh.

This evening’s text drops us into the middle of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. And while this is the familiar passage, we should consider that all is not as it seems. This conversation is unusual and awkward on several levels. First, the Jews despised Samaritans. You see when the northern kingdom was captured, they intermarried with gentiles and adopted foreign religious practices. When they returned to the land of Israel, the Jews who had remained pure viewed the Samaritans as tainted and half-breeds. They were the same, or perhaps even worse than Gentiles. This cultural hatred ran deep and they avoided each other whenever and wherever they could. It was also awkward because Jewish rabbis typically did not speak to women. So this encounter was not just culturally awkward, but it was doubly awkward because of their genders.

Notice that it is Jesus who initiates the conversation. Imagine the Samaritan woman’s surprise that a Jewish man would speak to her or ask her for water to drink. She understood that by her touching the water it would be defiled to him. We would understand her caution and suspicion. This was not an everyday conversation. “Who was this man?” she had to wonder. With the heat of the midday sun bearing down upon them, Jesus begins to reveal to her the good news that he is the true Messiah.

As the conversation begins Jesus talks about spiritual realities. But the Samaritan woman is hearing in the context of physical realities. She's just not getting what he is saying. It is here that our evening's passage picks up at that awkward moment in the conversation. Because Jesus has just pointed out to the woman the uncomfortable fact that she has had five husbands and the man she is living with now is not her husband. It is at this revelation that the Samaritan woman realizes she's not talking to just anyone. This man has knowledge and understanding she has never seen before.

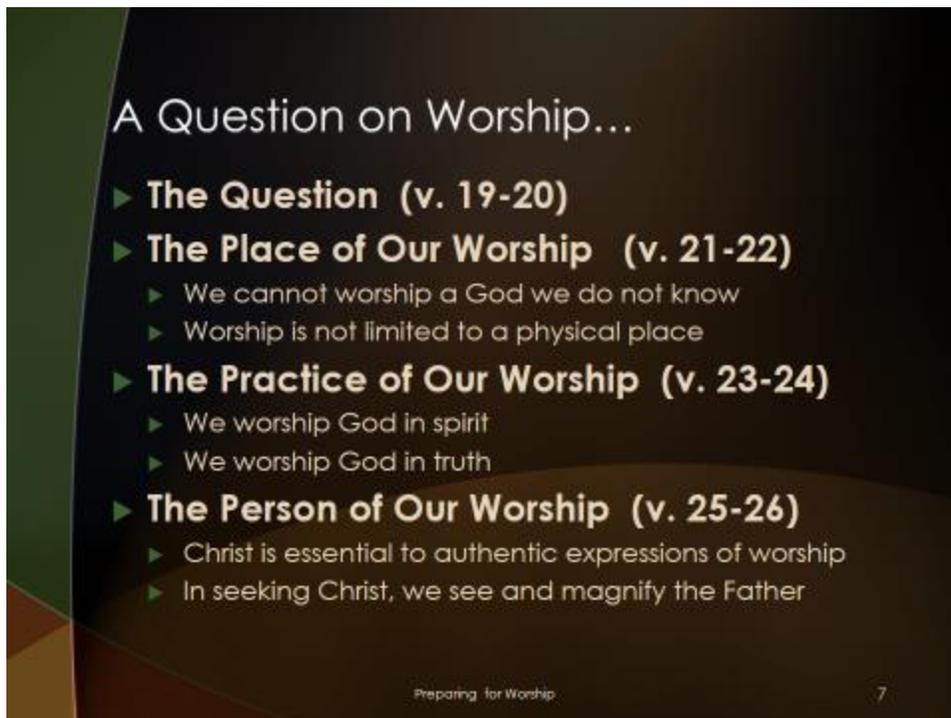
Again, imagine the Samaritan woman's surprise that Jesus would tell her this. The awkward conversation just became uncomfortable. Her apprehension goes up several levels. How does he know these things? She concludes that he is a prophet. And while she still hasn't grasped what Jesus is talking about, in that moment she realizes they are not talking about the same things. And this is probably not a direction she wants the conversation to go.

While this evening's passage must be understood in light of the greater context of Jesus opening the eyes of a gentile woman and revealing himself to her, we also find instruction and insight into the nature of worship. In many ways, her questions are our questions. And I believe that Jesus' answer to her is helpful to us both in understanding worship and how to better prepare our hearts for worship and offer our prayers to Him.

The more I have studied and understood this passage, the more I have come to believe that it is one of the most significant passages on worship in the Bible. I believe this because it clearly connects and transitions worship from the Old Testament and bridges it to the New Testament. And while there are many scriptures that speak to worship, there are few that do it as completely as we see here.

Let's ask the Lord's blessing upon our time in his word this evening.  
[opening prayer]

 **[Slide 4. A Question on Worship]**



Please open your copies of God's word to the book of John, chapter four and the 19<sup>th</sup> verse. This is where we will pick up in the text this evening. Again, note that we are jumping into the middle of the conversation Jesus is having with the woman at the well. Follow along as I read.

*19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*

At first glance, it appears in verses 19 and 20 that the Samaritan woman is trying to change the conversation. This would be understandable given the uncomfortable truth that Jesus has just revealed about her personal life. But I agree with several commentators who note that there is probably something more going on here. The Samaritan woman has just realized that Jesus is not an ordinary rabbi, but that he is a prophet. She is speaking to someone who possesses extraordinary knowledge and authority.

Imagine if you found yourself on a plane and discovered that the person you were talking to in the seat next to you was the lead system designer working for Facebook. Suddenly all the small talk would seem unimportant. Dozens of questions would roll around in your head until you came upon that one thing you really wanted to know. I believe that is what is happening here. Seeing that Jesus is someone of authoritative knowledge, she asks an important question. One that stood as a point of controversy between the Jews and Samaritans. So rather than changing

the subject, perceiving Jesus to be a prophet, she is probably just seeking the answer to something she really wants to know. And what was the one thing that she really wanted to know? **Where is God to be worshipped?**

The main point of this controversy was that Jews believed that worship centered around the temple in Jerusalem. This was the God-ordained place of worship and sacrifice. The Samaritans on the other hand, believed that Mount Gerizim was the place where God should be worshipped. Mount Gerizim was the first location where Abraham built an altar after entering into the promised land. According to Samaritan tradition, Gerizim was the place where God chose to place his name and it was there that they built the temple and worshipped. Of course each group disregarded the other's claim and it was another point of division between them.

**Jesus responds to the woman by first addressing her immediate question about the place of our worship.** Look at verses 21 and 22. *"Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. When You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."* Jesus comes down squarely on the side of the Jews. What the Samaritans worshiped in ignorance, the Jews worshiped in knowledge. You see the Samaritans limited scripture to the first five books of the Old Testament. Their understanding of God was incomplete and kept them from truly worshipping Him. We also see here, that Jesus speaks to the fact that salvation is to come from the line of the Jews.

But while affirming Old Testament worship, Jesus also notes that a time is coming when the physical place of worship will not matter. What Jesus will do at the cross will make the place of worship irrelevant. The time of temple worship was nearing its end. By fulfilling the law and sacrificing his life for us, Christ provided a way for us to boldly approach the throne of God with all of our worship. His resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit means that the presence of God is not restricted to a place, because he now dwells within us. We are free to worship him at any time and in any place.

There are at least two implications in preparing our hearts to give praise. **First, Jesus makes it clear that we cannot worship a God that we do not know.** If we do not understand his Word or what he has done for us, we worship in ignorance. If you want to gather with God's people and praise Him, then you must prepare your heart by knowing and studying his word. Please hear me when I say there is a direct correlation between how deeply you know God and what he has done for you and how deeply you worship Him. Knowing God and praising God go hand in hand. The single most important thing you can do to prepare your heart for worship is to be in the word, listen to it, and let it engage your heart.

The second implication is that we must understand that **worship is not limited to a physical place.** While our gathered worship is precious and Biblical, it is not the only time and place we meet with God. He is present with us no matter where we are. As believers, there is no where we can go to be away from Him. Our lives are to be lived as a sacrificial act of worship to our Lord. If you want to be prepared to give Him praise when we gather on Sundays, then live in a way that worships him throughout the entire week.

You cannot come to church and simply turn on your worship switch when you have been neglecting to worship Him all week long. Imagine if you told your wife or husband that you were only going to love them on Sundays. What would they think of your affections on Sunday when the rest of the week your heart was far from them? It is a heart that is inclined to worship God in the mundane and everyday places of life that will find even greater joy in worshipping as a gathered people.

Jesus continues to answer the question on worship in verses 23 and 24. **Not only has the place of our worship changed, but he moves on to address the practice of our worship.** He says, *“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* Again, Jesus repeats that a time is not only coming, but He adds to this that it is now here. No longer will God’s people worship him through the ritual ceremonies and physical sacrifices of the old covenant. Jesus will soon fulfill the law and inaugurate a new covenant where God’s people will worship in spirit and in truth.

**So what does it mean to worship God in spirit?** It means that to worship God the Holy Spirit must dwell in you. Simply put, you must be a true believer to be a true worshipper. True worship occurs on a spiritual level. You cannot manufacture real praise. At the Worship God conference this year, Craig Cabaniss said this. *“Worship results from something God does; not from something we do.”* You cannot worship without a heart that has been changed to see Christ and the gospel.

In this passage, Jesus also reminds us that the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. You see, it is God who initiates our worship. And it is God who sustains and fills our praise by His Spirit. When you come to worship, prepare your heart by developing an awareness of your presence with God. Because worship at its very essence, is communication with God. You are expressing to Him a sense of value and worth for who He is and all that He has done. As you sing, discipline your mind to reflect on the words and respond to God from your innermost being. Authentic worship happens when what we see and hear, intersects with what we know to be true, and is released as praise and thanksgiving to our God.

I believe that we need to regularly be reminded that God now dwells in His people through His Spirit. We are joined together as we worship in the unity of the Spirit that both draws us to God and to one another as the body of Christ. The power of the Gospel is manifest clearly in the gathering of people with a diversity of backgrounds and circumstances to sing in unity with one voice, as one people, to the one true God. The weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the joyful and the sad all join together to magnify and exalt their greatest treasure. Such worship not only honors and pleases God, but declares the Gospel and magnificence of Christ to the lost around us.

**We are also to worship God in truth.** I know of no better way to put this than to say that what we say to God in our praise matters. The words we saying, we are saying to God and to one another. This is not a casual conversation. The words of our songs must reflect the truths of God’s character found in scripture. In other words, they must be doctrinally sound. The songs we sing have the power to carry truth or error as we hear them and over and over again in all

our minds. We only need to reflect on the story of Cain and Abel to be reminded of the importance that God places upon right worship.

While the centrality and priority of preaching the truths of the Word are essential to our gathering, the words we use in our worship are no less important than those we use in our preaching. What we say in worship we are saying to God. Do we really believe that what we say to God is somehow unimportant? Do we really think that God does not care what we say or do as long as we have good feelings? Do we believe that the personal experience of worship is more important than the glorious thoughts and truths we are expressing to our great God?

I know this goes against much of what is going on in modern worship. But worshipping God is not about having an emotional spiritual experience. Worshipping God is not about enjoying the songs and music. Worshipping God is not about a performance or being entertained. True worship flows out of a heart that responds with thankfulness and joy to the truths of God's character and our salvation. When our worship places emotion and experience before truth and knowledge, we delight more in the act of our worship than in the God of our worship. We must be careful not to become like the Israelites of Isaiah 29:13 where God says, they are a people who draw near him with their mouths and honor him with their lips but their hearts are far from him.

Let's look at the last two verses of this passage. In verses 25 and 26, the comments of the Samaritan woman bring us to the person of our worship. *"The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'"* Whether or not the Samaritan woman is beginning to recognize who Jesus is or simply understanding the Messianic implications of what she has just heard, we know from the end of the account that she and many in the town believe. She is beginning to see that this man is not just a stranger, but one who has revealed himself as the Messiah. The One who has come to save.

While it is my own speculation, I think it is at this time that the Samaritan woman begins to connect the dots and understand the conversation and its spiritual context. This man is the living water. This man knows the secrets of her heart. This man speaks with knowledge and authority. And this man has revealed himself to be the Messiah. It is such an irony that here early in the book of John, Jesus first reveals himself not to the Jews, but to a lowly Samaritan woman. And those who receive this truth and believe, will rise up and worship their Redeemer.

Christ is essential to authentic expressions of worship both as an individual and as a gathered church. He has enabled our worship by His sacrificial death. He has given us access to God both in terms of giving spiritual sight to blind eyes and allowing us to draw near having been purified by His blood. And it is through Christ and the Gospel that we are being transformed into worshippers of God who honor, obey, love, and give ourselves to Him. In short, there is no worship without Jesus Christ.

As you prepare for gathered worship set your thoughts upon Christ and the gospel. Make Christ the focus of your worship and make much of God's work to redeem His people. In seeking Christ, we see and magnify the Father. By turning your heart's affections upon things above, you engage

with the Spirit in bringing glory and honor to God. Remember that Christ is present in our worship. Our worship should never say, "Look at me!" It should always and only say, "Look at Christ!"

There is nothing other than Christ that will draw you into deeper worship than His redemptive power and work. The gospel confronts us with our desperate and sinful condition. It reminds us of our utter dependence upon Christ for salvation and righteousness. It contrasts our insignificance with the greatness and goodness of an almighty God. It drives us to humility and thankfulness for all that God has done. And it moves us to affection and devotion toward a God who saves.

**① [Slide 5. - Reflect and Respond]**



So how do we better prepare our hearts to enter into praise and worship as we gather together as God's people? And while I'm going to answer that question in a moment with some practical ways you can do this, the answer to the question of how you enter into vibrant, passionate, God-honoring worship is, "You can't." The answer is that "God can!" This does not mean you should throw up your hands and give up. But the essential fact is that true worship is about how you respond to Christ and the gospel. It begins when you value the worthiness of God, appreciate the beauty and majesty of the sovereign King, and love of the One who gave His life so that you might live. These things are brought about by the transforming power of Christ within us.

But if you are a believer, and God is at work transforming your heart and your worship, what are some practical things that you can do to give Him the praise He is due? I thought it would be helpful to provide a progression of a few steps that takes us from the worship of everyday life to our gathered praise as God's people on Sunday. So in light of this evening's passage, let me

conclude by leaving you with several points upon which you may reflect and respond to as God would have you.

First, let me say that perhaps the most important thing you can do, is to **prepare for worship by praying**. Pray that God would work in your heart to see Him, know Him, and love Him; that you might worship him more. Pray that God would transform the affections of your heart giving you a greater passion for Christ and the gospel. Pray also for your worship leaders, musicians, and for our gathered worship. Pray that God would be exalted and the gospel magnified to the Glory of His great name.

Another important thing you can do is to **prepare for worship by developing a heart of praise**. And work hard at being grateful, thankful, and joyful in all of life. Do not grumble and complain. But rather, choose to rejoice and give God praise in all things. Remind yourself of who you are in Christ and all that was accomplished for you on the cross. Feed your mind with gospel thoughts throughout the week so that your heart will be ready to receive truth and respond with praise.

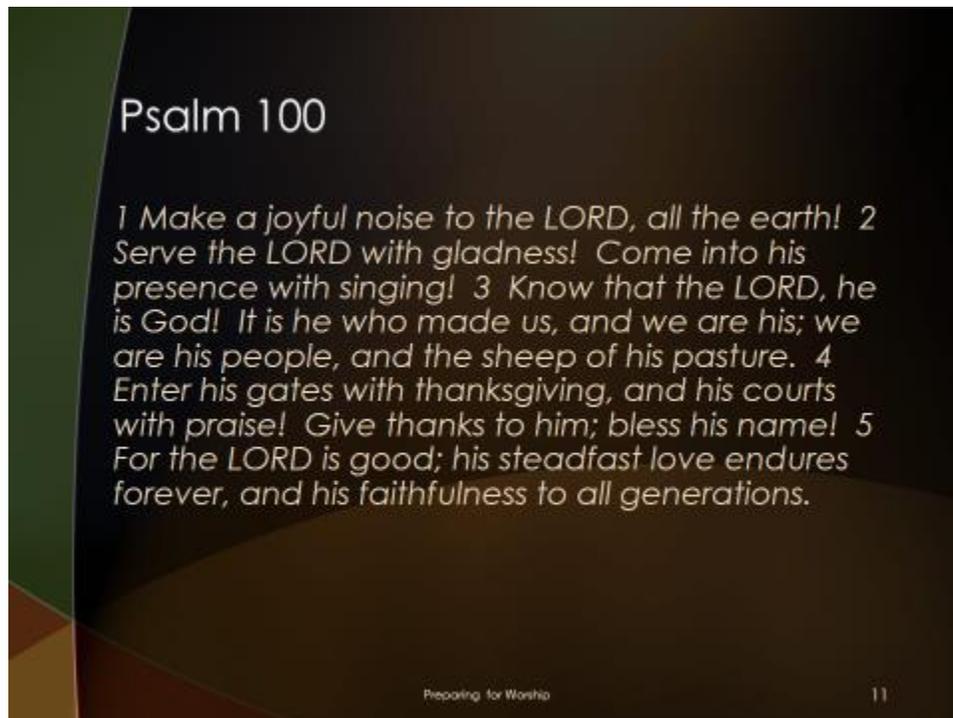
My next point, is that when you arrive and find your seats, **prepare for worship by focusing your thoughts on Christ**. Quiet your thoughts, repent of any unconfessed sin, and humble your heart as you consciously remind yourself of His presence. Whether you bow your head and close your eyes or quietly meditate as you wait for the service to start does not matter. Doing this sets aside the distractions of the day and turns your attention to the One whom you've come to worship. At the opening scripture is read, listen to the words and let them frame your heart and mind for worship.

My last point is to **prepare for worship by being ready to engage in worship**. If you find that it is hard to worship or that you were unwilling, confess this to the Lord and ask him to help you. Whether you are a good singer or a poor singer. Whether you raise your hands or keep them at your side. Whether you love the song or wish we were singing another one. Engage your heart in worship.

I find it interesting that many of us will go to a sporting event and cheer loudly, clap our hands, and otherwise engage in loud expressions of joy. But when we come together in gathered worship, our celebration of Christ and all that he has done is far more subdued. I know that some of this is cultural and is not a true reflection of the joy that is in our hearts. Maybe I am biased as a worship leader, but I believe that we should challenge ourselves to grow in that area and be less constrained in the worship that we bring. May our participation in worship and praise reflect the great grace and mercy that God has poured out upon us.

Sing heartily to the Lord. Reflect on the lyrics of the songs. As the songs speak to great truths, let them bless you and release great praise from your heart. Do not worry about what others think of you as you worship. Whatever your expressions of joy, be it loud praise, hands raised, tears, or quiet reflection, offer them to the Lord as a sacrifice of worship.

① [Slide 6. - Psalm 100]



I'm going to close with the words of Psalm 100. *"1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! 3 Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! 5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."*

Here is the heart of worship. Making a joyful noise. Serving the Lord with gladness. Coming into his presence with a song on our hearts. Knowing who He is and being humble in our relationship to Him. Entering into worship with grateful hearts and blessing His great name. However, unlike the Israelites, we come to God not outside the temple or through the sacrifices of a priest, but as living temples. Our gathered worship is always before the face of God and is enabled through the presence of His Spirit given to us by the redeeming blood of Christ our Lord. May our God so inhabit our praise here at the Chapel.

Let's close in prayer.

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