

Worship Matters

All to the Glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:31

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All to the Glory of God

Scripture

For the next several Sunday Evening Worship Services, I plan to preach on the subject of *worship*. My purpose in delivering these messages is to help us understand what worship is and how to worship in private, in families, and in public. I have preached some of this series before, but I would like to do so again, although with some added material.

Today, however, I simply want to lay a foundation for this series on *worship* in a message titled, “All to the Glory of God.”

Let’s read 1 Corinthians 10:31:

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Introduction

Years ago the *Chicago Tribune* reported the story of a New Mexico woman who was frying tortillas when she noticed that the skillet burns on one of her tortillas resembled what she believed to be the face of Jesus. Excited, she showed it to her husband and neighbors. They all agreed that there was a face etched on the tortilla and that it did bear a resemblance to Jesus.

So the woman went to her priest to have the tortilla blessed. She testified that the tortilla had changed her life. Her husband agreed that she had become a more peaceful, happy, and submissive wife since the tortilla arrived. The priest, not being accustomed to blessing tortillas, was reluctant at first but finally agreed to bless it.

The woman took the tortilla home, put it in a glass case on piles of cotton to make it look like it was floating on clouds, built

a special altar for it, and opened the little shrine to visitors. Within a few months, more than eight thousand people came to the shrine of *Jesus of the Tortilla*. All of them agreed that the face in the burn marks on the tortilla was the face of Jesus—except for one reporter who said he thought it looked like the face of former heavy-weight boxing champ Leon Spinks!

It seems incredible that so many people would worship a tortilla, but such a distorted concept of worship is not really unusual in our contemporary society.

Consider another example of a church described in an article in *The Wall Street Journal*. This church wanted “to perk up attendance at Sunday evening services.” And so the church “staged a wrestling match, featuring church employees. To train for the event, 10 game employees got lessons from Tugboat Taylor, a former professional wrestler, in pulling hair, kicking shins, and tossing bodies around without doing real harm.”¹

No harm done to the staff members, perhaps, but what harm does this do to one’s view of God and our worship of him? And lest you think that this wrestling match took place in some backwoods church that no one has ever heard of, let me tell you that this wrestling match took place in one of America’s five largest churches!

The tragedy is that though the Bible is clear about the principles of worship, little true worship takes place today. Pastor John MacArthur writes, “Worship is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in all the Scriptures.”²

As I mentioned earlier, it is my intention to preach several messages on the subject of *worship*. I want us to come to a clearer understanding of the Bible’s teaching on worship.

Today, I want to look briefly at the topic that *all of life is worship*.

¹ *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 May 1991, A6.

² John F. MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 2.

Lord willing, in the coming sermons I shall preach on the principles and practices of personal, family, and public worship. I hope that we will be able to be as helpful and as practical as possible so that we will grow in our worship of God.

Lesson

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:31: **“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”**

Today, I want to show briefly what is involved in worshipping God with all our lives. Or, to put the issue slightly differently, I want to show what it means to **do all to the glory of God.**

Let’s use the following outline for today’s message:

1. The Definition of Worship
2. The Importance of Worship
3. The Kinds of Unacceptable Worship
4. The Kind of Acceptable Worship

I. The Definition of Worship

First, let’s define the word *worship*.

John MacArthur has a simple, sound definition of *worship*. He defines *worship* in the following way: “worship is honor and adoration directed to God.”³ That simple definition is a good place to start. In the coming sermons that definition of worship will fill up with richness.

The New Testament uses several words for worship. Two of them are particularly noteworthy. The first word for worship is *latreuo*, which suggests “rendering honor,” or “paying homage.”

The second term is *proskuneo*, a term commonly used in the New Testament that literally means “to kiss toward,” “to kiss the

³ John F. MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 14.

hand,” or “to bow down.” This word for *worship* is used to signify humble adoration.

Now, both of these terms carry the idea of *giving*, because worship is giving something to God. Even our English word has this connotation. The English word *worship* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *weorthscipe*, which is tied to the concept of worthiness. Worship, then, is ascribing to God his worth, or stating and affirming his supreme value.

We are people who continually receive both our life *and* our redemption from God. Our worship of God then is a response to him for who he is and for what he has done. We give of ourselves, and then of our attitudes, and then of our practices—until worship is way of life for us.

II. The Importance of Worship

Next, let’s look at the importance of worship.

There are many reasons why worship is important, but I would like to stress just one reason why worship is important. The reason worship is important is because Scripture is dominated with the theme of worship. In fact, God’s word emphasizes the theme of worship hundreds of times, but I want to pick out just two selected passages.

A. *The First Table of the Law*

The first four commandments, known as the First Table of the Law, stress the importance of worship in Exodus 20:1-11:

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying,

² “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any

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likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

The First Table of the Law stresses that God, and God alone, is to be worshipped. That is our ultimate priority.

B. *Romans 12:1*

In the first 11 chapters of Romans, Paul talks about the marvelous gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, his redemptive purpose and plan for the world, and his mercy on sinful people. Then, in Romans 12:1, Paul says:

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

After 11 chapters of doctrine defining the Christian and all of the marvelous benefits that God has graciously bestowed on him, Paul says in effect, “In response to all of this, God wants

something from you.” Do you know what it is? Worship that is holy and acceptable to God. Simply put, God saved us so that we might truly and acceptably worship him with all our lives.

III. The Kinds of Unacceptable Worship

Now, before we look at worship that is acceptable to God, let me mention four kinds of worship that are unacceptable to God.

A. *The Worship of False Gods*

The first kind of unacceptable worship is the worship of false gods.

Exodus 20:3 says: “You shall have no other gods before [or besides] me.” The world worships false gods. A false god is anything or anyone other than Jehovah God. A false god may be material objects, supernatural beings, nature, possessions, power, oneself, one’s spouse, children, Satan, etc.

The only true God is Jehovah and he alone is to be worshipped.

B. *The Worship of the True God in the Wrong Form*

The second kind of unacceptable worship is the worship of the true God in the wrong form.

The kind of unacceptable worship is stated in the Second Commandment: “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve [i.e., worship] them” (Exodus 20:4-5a).

God is not to be worshipped in the wrong form. God is not

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to be represented in worship in a visible form. You recall how God punished his people when they reduced him to an image of a golden calf. God does not accept worship when he is reduced to an image of any kind.

C. The Worship of the True God in a Self-Styled Manner

A third kind of unacceptable worship is the worship of the true God in a self-styled manner.

King Saul, for example, took upon himself the duty of offering up sacrifices to God (1 Samuel 15). Now God had specifically commanded that only the priests and Levites were to offer up sacrifices to God. But Saul disobeyed God and offered up to God what he thought was acceptable to God—and, of course, it wasn't, and it never is.

God does not accept worship when *we* decide how we are going to worship God. Frank Smith, in his book titled *Worship in the Presence of God*, gives the following illustration.

Imagine a hill country war-hero, a man who led his troops victoriously in battle, who is going to be honored by his men after their return from war. His fellow officers, however, are from Lake Forest, IL, Malibu, CA, and Short Hills, NJ; and they don't exactly understand their leader's tastes. As they prepare a great banquet in his honor, they think of how he enjoys listening to music, eating, and drinking. So, they have the best chamber music, caviar, and champagne that money can buy, all prepared for him and his wife whom they have flown in from his beloved hills.

Now, what's wrong with all this? Well, yes, the leader enjoys music, but he would prefer stomping his feet to the sounds of a banjo, guitar, and a fiddle. Yes, he enjoys eating, but what's this stuff called "caviar"? It's black-eyed peas, grits, cornbread, and venison or squirrel that are his pleasure. Yes, he enjoys drinking, but champagne? His specialty is "Mountain Dew" (and I don't

mean the product from Pepsi-Cola)!⁴

The obvious point is that, if they had really wanted to honor their hero, they would have found out about those things that pleased him and provided those for him, rather than trying to please him in their own way. In the same way, we are not to please God in our own way. We are to find out what pleases God and provide that for him.

Fortunately, God has told us in his word what pleases him, and it is our duty then to discover how God wants to be worshipped. That is partly the reason for this series of messages.

D. The Worship of the True God in the Right Way but with the Wrong Attitude

The fourth kind of unacceptable worship is the worship of the true God in the right way but with the wrong attitude.

This is a subtle kind of false worship. If we eliminate all false gods, all images of the true God, and all self-styled modes of worship, our worship will still be unacceptable if our attitude is wrong.

Think of Cain and Abel. They both brought an offering to God. But the Bible says that “the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.” (Genesis 4:4b–5a).

You see, God looks at the attitude. And he saw that Cain was merely going through the motions. He was merely going through the externals. His attitude was not right, and God saw that. God looks through all the externals to see what is in the attitude.

That should cause us to stop and examine our attitudes to see if our worship, like Cain’s, is unacceptable to God.

⁴ Frank J. Smith, *Worship in the Presence of God* (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992), 15-16.

IV. The Kind of Acceptable Worship

Finally, let me conclude with a few words about the kind of worship that is acceptable to God.

Worship that is acceptable to God is worship that is **all to the glory of God**. It is worship that is “holy and acceptable to God.”

All of life is worship. And we live either in obedience to God or in disobedience to God. Another way of saying this is that there are only two kinds of people in the world: *true* worshippers and *false* worshippers.

Now, I am *not* saying that only religious activities are to be considered acts of worship. Normal, everyday activities are actually ways of worshipping God. Author Robert Morey calls activities such as eating, sleeping, digging a ditch, writing a paper, changing diapers, washing dishes, or walking the dog *passive, unconscious* acts of worship.⁵ *Active, conscious* acts of worship are of course those times set aside to read the Scriptures, pray, meditate, sing, give, etc. Worship is therefore not limited to a few religious activities. In fact, everything from working to eating to praying is worship, and it is either glorifying to God or it is debasing to God.

True worship begins with a recognition that God calls us to honor and adore him alone. We honor and adore him when we come to him through Jesus Christ. There is no other way to the Father except through Jesus Christ. True worship recognizes that worship is not merely what I do on Sunday morning but that all of life is worship. True worship recognizes that private, family and public worship are building blocks that are laid on top of the foundation stone that acknowledges that all of life is worship.

⁵ Robert A. Morey, *Worship Is All of Life* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1984), 15.

And when it comes to public worship, God is glorified *only* when we worship him in the way he has prescribed. God is glorified when we worship him in the way he has commanded in Scripture. I'll explain that more fully in an upcoming message.

Conclusion

John MacArthur said, "Perhaps the greatest need in all of Christendom is for a clear understanding of the Biblical teaching about worship."⁶

Much of the world engages in worship that is false or worship that is not acceptable to God. There is a focus on tortillas and wrestling matches, on worship that follows a self-styled form or demonstrates a wrong attitude. God will not accept it.

In order to worship God in a way that is holy and pleasing to him, ask yourself:

- Have I offered myself up to God as a living sacrifice?
- Do I understand that all of life is worship?
- Am I committing myself to do all to the glory of God?

May God help all of us to understand what worship is, and do it. Amen.

⁶ John F. MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 12.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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