

# The Honor of God: Worshipping a Weighty God

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*The Honor of God*

By Grant Castleberry

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## Capital Community Church

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The following sermon is by our Senior Pastor Grant Castleberry of Capital Community Church located in Raleigh, North Carolina. Capital Community Church is a people awakened to a holy God. If you are searching for a new church home, or from out of town looking for a church to worship with, or simply seeking for answers, please join us for worship at 9 o'clock AM every Sunday morning. If you have any questions, please email us at [info@capitalcommunitychurch.com](mailto:info@capitalcommunitychurch.com). We pray this sermon will help you grow deeper in your walk with Jesus Christ.

I invite you to open your Bibles for Romans 12 picking up again right where we left off last time in verse 1, Romans 12:1. On my way back from California, I was sitting next to a guy on the plane and the inevitable question comes up, "What do you do for a living?" And I told him, "I'm a minister of the gospel. I'm a pastor and a preacher." He said, "Oh well, what type of preaching do you do?" So he was curious so I said, "I do Bible exposition." He said, "What's that?" I said, "Well, it's where you sequentially go through a book of the Bible, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and then you pick up with the very next verse that you leave off with the week before." He said, "I've never heard of that before." He said, "You do that?" I said, "Yeah, that's what we do." He said, "Have people been preaching that way for a long time?" I said, "Yeah, a long time." He went in for more, he said, "How long?" I said, "Well, since the apostles basically." He goes, "Oh wow."

So is it was an experience for him. But if you're new to Capital, that's what we do is we preach sequentially through books of the Bible and we are going to get back to John just in a couple weeks. We're going to return to John 7. Right now we are finishing a series on "The Honor of God," the honor of God, and two weeks ago I made the argument that for the Christian, all of life is meant to be lived for the honor of God. In other words, our worship is not contained to this building, but the Bible teaches that all of life is meant to be lived in worship to God, everything that you do for every minute of the day is worship. And the key verse for that, of course, is Romans 12:1-2. Paul says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice," hear that language of worship, "holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Now how are we to worship God? How are we to do this moment by

moment? He says two things, first negatively, "Do not be conformed to this world," so don't let the world form you into its image, but then positively, "be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." In other words, you live a life of obedience to God. Your obedience to God's commands is the visible manifestation of your worship to God. It's not just coming here. Remember, Saul made the sacrifices when he wasn't supposed to, and Samuel showed up and said, "Saul, Saul, Saul, what have you done?" He said, "I've made the sacrifices." Do you remember what Samuel said? "Obedience is better than sacrifice." So it's this obedience to God that is our act of worship, and if you look, what is the grounds of our obedience as believers? Is it to try to earn God's favor? No, it's not. Look what he says in verse 1, underline that phrase if you haven't already, "by the mercies of God." By the mercies of God. Obedience in the Christian life is grounded in what God has done for you in Christ Jesus. This is what so many don't understand about Christianity is that we work, we do good works. We desire to please God not out of a desire to earn our salvation but because we've already received it freely in Christ. That's grace. That's explicit grace.

So that's an overview of worship, right there. all of life is to be lived in worship and honor to God but here's the thing, we must not stop there. We can't stop there and sadly, many Christians do, many Christians do. We have to go further, and what I mean by going further is something very important, in fact, I would argue it's the most important thing that you will ever do in your life. The most important thing that you will ever do in your life, and it will be central in your existence forever. What am I talking about? I'm talking about what we're doing right now, corporate worship, sometimes called public worship. Yes, all of life is worship but there's something very important about the public honoring of God in corporate worship, and I think one of the great problems in the evangelical church is that no one talks about worship. We talk about singing, I know you talk about preaching when you leave. We talk about aspects of worship, but we don't talk about worship itself like we should. We don't think about worship like we should, its importance in our lives, its influence in our lives, its importance to God, the meaning that it is to play in motivating us to live the Christian life. And that's a problem because corporate worship is so vital to your discipleship as a believer. It is fundamental as a disciple to attend corporate worship with the gathered church.

One of the things that I saw during COVID when people weren't coming together for worship is a lot of depression. I saw a lot of issues in people's lives and they just said, "You know, I can't really discern God's will right now. I feel so dry. I don't know what's going on." And I would tell them, "I know exactly what's going on with you. You haven't been in worship for four months." You see, God designed this right here. It's for him. It's primarily for him, but he also designed it to rejuvenate your soul. And this is what the world doesn't understand. I mean, you pick up a self-help book, talk about the psychology of happiness, nobody talks about corporate worship. People don't understand this, but God designed this, what we're doing right here as a way for you to meet with him in a very powerful way that's life altering and life changing.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who was a pastor in London, people would come to him all the time with their problems and they'd say, "You know, I'm dealing with this. I have this issue with So-and-so. I'm feeling depressed. I'm battling this illness. I don't know how to respond." Do you know what he would do? Before he would counsel them, he would say, "I want you to come to two Sundays of worship services, morning and evening, and then come talk to me." And undoubtedly what he would find is after coming to four services over two Sundays, that they had resolved their issue. They would say, "Look what you said in that third sermon directly addressed what I was facing and now my issue is resolved." You see, God uses corporate worship in our lives like nothing else.

Now this is something, I think, we have to learn. Psalm 122:1, jot that verse down, the psalmist says, "I was glad when they told me, 'Let us go to the house of God!'" I was glad when they told me, "Let us go to the house of God." Were you glad this morning when you came to the house of God? Well, you should be. That's the mark of a Christian. You long for this. You want this. You love this. But this isn't in some ways something that the Holy Spirit has to teach us, to bring us into, to love this aspect of corporate worship.

I remember as a boy, I was saved at a very early age, but when I was a boy, you know, I was 6-7 years old, I didn't love coming to church. I didn't love it. I didn't love listening to the sermons and standing hearing the hymns. I was just kind of like, "Man, when are we going to be able to go play again after church?" And I remember we were up at this church up in Wisconsin and our family had a lake house years and years ago up in Wisconsin, and we went to church that Sunday and I was not happy to be there. I wanted to be out on the lake fishing. I did not want to be in church and when the minister got up to preach, I excused myself and I went out the back door of the church and I said I had to go to the bathroom, so the bathrooms were in the basement. So I went down through the foyer, down into the basement and I decided to kill time, I didn't want to be up there in that worship service, so I just started exploring the basement, just going around, looking in different doors, looking in different classrooms. I was just going to take my merry time, and I saw these steps going up to this door, and I was curious. I was like, "Man, I wonder where that goes?" And so I go up the steps and I opened the door, and I boldly take three steps forward, and I find myself right on the stage behind the preacher and everything stops. I've never told this story before. The preacher stops preaching, literally turns around and I can remember this so clearly, he said, "Can I help you, young man?" And I said, "No, sir, you cannot." And I did an about-face and walked through the door and moped back to my place in the pew.

But my point in saying that is, is now I love this. There's nowhere else I'd rather be than with the people of God on the Lord's Day, but this is something that the Holy Spirit works in our souls, works in our hearts, and it's something that I want you to come to love if you don't already. I want you to thirst to worship corporately with the people of God, and it is my hope and expectation that this morning that you will leave here and never think about corporate worship the same way again. That's my expectation. I know that's a big expectation but let me give you, this is what I'm going to do this morning, is I'm going to give you eight reasons why corporate worship is fundamental to your

discipleship. Now, I'm going to go quickly through these, okay? But eight reasons why corporate worship is fundamental to your disciples.

First, the Old Testament saints worshiped God corporately. I know this might seem like an obvious statement if you think about it, but that's what the temple was for, that's what the tabernacle was for. By the way, that's what the psalter is for, by the Psalter, I mean the Psalms. You might not know it, but the Psalms were the hymnbook of the Old Testament people of God. When they would gather together at the temple, that's what they would sing. They would sing the Psalms. David writes in Psalm 22:25, "From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him." In Psalm 35:18 he says, "I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you." You might know the Psalms of Ascents there in Psalm 120, and afterwards. The Psalms of Ascents were what they would sing on their way to the temple to worship God corporately and publicly.

You might not know this, but the Jews in the Old Testament and then later the Christians, which is the completion or fulfillment of Judaism, were the only religions in the ancient world to worship God corporately. All the other pagan religions were individual exercises. People would go on a hill and pray to their pagan deity, but only Judaism in the ancient world was a corporate religion. And then, of course, Christianity continued as a corporate religion. Islam copied Christianity and Judaism, and then Jehovah's Witnesses and Church of Mormon, all of those cults copied what we're doing here. Why do the Jews and Christians worship God corporately? Because we are the only people in covenant with God. We are a covenant people with God. We, as the church, have entered into what covenant? The new covenant. We are the new covenant people with God, and it is a covenant that we enter into as individuals, but it is something that we engage with others corporately in with Yahweh, our God.

So that's 1) Old Testament saints worship God corporately. 2. Jesus made corporate worship a priority in his life. Jesus made corporate worship a priority in his life. You remember when Jesus, his parents, when he was 12 years old, took him to Jerusalem for the Passover and then they left and couldn't find him. Do you remember where they found him? In the temple. Remember what Jesus said? He said in Luke 2:49, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house? Didn't you know that I would be worshiping with the people of God in the temple? You should have known to look for me there."

Jesus was passionately concerned about the public worship of God. In John 2 when he comes and cleans out the temple, the reason why he clears out the temple is because they had set up stands to sell animals in the court of the Gentiles. So the Gentiles couldn't come and worship God properly in the temple, so Jesus comes and he clears it out. He says, "You've made my Father's house a den of thieves." He does the same thing at the end of his ministry in Matthew 21 and Mark 11 and Luke 19. You read the gospels and throughout his ministry Jesus was always going to Jerusalem for the feast, for Passover, for the Feast of Tabernacles, for Firstfruits; for all those things, he would go up to

Jerusalem and he would take his disciples with him and Jesus modeled for his disciples public corporate worship.

So that's 2. So first, the Old Testament saints worshiped God corporately. Jesus continues that, Jesus worshiped God corporately. Then 3) Jesus taught the necessity of corporate worship. Jesus taught the necessity of corporate worship. I want you to turn the John 4. You know this passage well. We probably spent eight or nine messages going through it exegetically. But John 4 is when Jesus encounters the woman in the Samaritan village of Sychar and the conversation with her is a conversation on worship, really. It's evangelism by worship. When was the last time you had an evangelism conversation that was about worship? That's what takes place here, and we can pick it up in verse 17. "The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.'" So Jesus tells her her issue, that she has, for whatever reason, been divorced five times and now she's cohabitating with a man who is not her husband.

"The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.'" That's an astute observation. Now she diverts the conversation and she says, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain," that's Mount Gerizim. You see, the Samaritans, remember, in the history of Israel, there were 10 tribes that broke off to the north under Jeroboam and Jeroboam did not want the 10 tribes to the north to go worship in Jerusalem in the south because he wanted to keep them under his rule, so he set up two other places of worship and eventually they started worshipping on this mountain, Mount Gerizim. And the woman is asking Jesus, "Okay, I perceive that you're a prophet. Are we supposed to worship on this mountain or are we supposed to worship in Jerusalem?"

And Jesus said to her, verse 21, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." So in other words, a time is coming when you won't be constrained to worship in Jerusalem.

Jesus says, "You worship what you do not know," in other words, you don't worship God truly and that's because the Samaritans had rejected much of the Old Testament. They didn't worship God according to divine revelation. He says, "You don't worship God truly," and by the way, that's the big problem with so-called churches across this country is they've rejected this book and people all across America, the West, are gathering together today, and it's just rote, hollow religion because they've rejected divine revelation, mainline churches in this country, and they've embraced the world.

So in many ways, the Samaritans had done the same thing. Jesus says, "we worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here," listen to this, Jesus is talking about corporate worship here, "when the true worshipers," these are the worshipers of whom God will accept their worship. Jesus says they "will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." And he says, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." This is what Jesus is saying about corporate worship, this is what he's teaching: by spirit he's

saying it's not enough to just worship God externally and go through the motions, your worship has to be here in the heart otherwise God cannot accept it. It's just outward religiosity. It has to be from the heart. And now hear me very clearly: the only way that you can offer up true religion from the heart is to be born again through the gospel. You can't do an end around Christ and the atonement and expect God to accept your worship. You have to be transformed from the inside out and your heart has to love God, and that's a supernatural thing. And God only accepts the worship of those who worship him in spirit from the heart. By the way, that's the point of Psalm 1. The blessed man, God accepts his worship. The foolish man, you don't make it through the gate. Your worship is not accepted.

We must worship him in spirit and then what does he say? Truth. Truth. You can't do an end around truth. God has revealed himself by truth. We were talking about divine revelation from God. God has revealed himself and we don't get to make up a God of our own imagination. We don't just get to say, "Oh, God is just like the secular deity that the world wants him to be." We have to go back to the Bible and ask the question: who is God? Who has he revealed himself to be, and that's the God we are to worship, and by the way, we are to worship in the way that God tells us we are to worship him.

So that's what Jesus taught regarding corporate worship. 4. The New Testament church worshiped God corporately. So the New Testament church continues this tradition of worshipping God corporately. Christ died for individuals, yes, but he died to establish individuals into a church. The Greek word "church" is "ekklesia," which means "an assembly," those that are literally called out together from the world. So Christ died that we might come together as an assembly. This is Matthew 16:18. Jesus told Peter, "You are Petros, you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, my assembly." Paul says in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church," the assembly, "and gave himself up for her."

So what you see in the early church is the church coming together corporately to worship. I want you to turn over to Acts 2. Acts 2. This is at Pentecost, the very beginning of the New Testament church, and I want you to look at verse 42. These are the first functions of the apostolic church. Acts 2:42. Look at the corporate nature of their worship. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship," that's corporate, "to the breaking of bread," these are love feasts, these are corporate worship of God, "and the prayers." And look at this, "And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common."

Now they those that had needs, they basically provided for their needs by financially selling their possessions and giving to them. Luke is not advocating for Communism here. He's advocating for generosity in the church. Verse 45, he says, "they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need." Now look at verse 46, "And day by day, attending the temple together," corporate worship, "and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added

to their number day by day those who were being saved." Do you see the corporate nature of the early church's worship? And this continued throughout the life of the church; archaeologists are still excavating the early church buildings where the church would gather. Hebrews 2:12 says, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." So this was the continual pattern of the New Testament church was to gather for worship. worship.

So first, the Old Testament saints worshiped God corporately. Second, Jesus worshiped God corporately. Third, Jesus taught the necessity of corporate worship. And then fourth, the New Testament church worshiped God corporately. Now fifth, the apostles instruct us in corporate worship. The apostles themselves instruct us in corporate worship. The foremost expert in the world living right now on corporate worship is a pastor in Savannah named Terry Johnson. Have any of y'all ever been to Savannah and seen the big church with the tall steeple right down there right off River Street? That's Independent Presbyterian Church, and that's the church that Terry Johnson pastors. And one time Grace Ann and I were fortunate enough to eat lunch with he and his wife and, of course, I got to ask him about what he's an expert in, which is worship. And I said, "Okay, you know, what's, what's your theology of worship?" And what he said was really insightful. He said, "You do what the New Testament says." Pretty brilliant, huh? But here's the catch, he says, "You do only what the New Testament says. You go back to the basics and you look at what the apostles said that we are to do in our worship, and you do those things." And if you go back and you read the apostles' teaching, there are five main things that the apostles said to do in our worship and all of those things involve the word of God. The word of God.

So first, he said we're to pray the word of God. You see this in the passage we just read, Acts 24:2, "and they devoted themselves to prayer." Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:1, he says, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people," he's talking about in the worship of the church, "for kings and all who are in high positions," you heard Kenny doing this earlier, "that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." So when we come together, we are to pray together not just token prayers, not just, "O God, we hope that we have a great day," but we are to come together as a church and plead with God for his mercy upon our congregation that we would be effective witnesses for the kingdom. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Prayer is always a great feature of every revival. Great prayer meetings, intercession, hour after hour. They pray for these people by name, lost people, and they plead, and they will not let God go, as it were. They are intent on this with a strange urgency."

And so we want to be urgent in our public prayers. Urgent. Then we sing the word. We sing psalms, hymns, spiritual songs that reflect the truth of God's word. And by the way, remember earlier how I said that only Judaism and Christianity are corporate religions? That's why only Judaism and Christianity have songs. When was the last time you were just driving and you turned on the radio and you heard a Scientology song? Or a Hindu hymn? You won't hear them. Why? They don't worship corporately like we do. We

worship corporately and because we worship corporately, we have songs. Isn't that awesome?

Colossians 3:16, "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." Ephesians 5:19 Paul says, "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." We sing because we are a corporate people. You know, I can't carry a tune. I can't really sing alone. But when I'm with you it's wonderful. It's wonderful to sing with the people of God.

Third, we're instructed to read the word of God. Read the word of God. Paul says. 1 Timothy 4:13, he says, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture." This is so basic, but you can't imagine how many churches neglect it. Literally open this book, turn to a page and read a passage. It's very simple but somewhere along the way we thought that people would become bored with it so we stopped doing it. May we never be bored listening to the word of God.

And then fourth, we are to preach the word. We are to proclaim the word. This is 2 Timothy 4:2. Paul says, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." I talk a lot about that as a preacher. I won't. I'll save that for another Sunday.

Five, see the word and that, of course, is in the Lord's Supper and baptism which our Lord instituted in the Great Commission, and then at the Last Supper, that we are to baptize new believers and we are to give the bread and the cup which symbolizes the Lord's blood and this body which is given for us.

So if you read the New Testament, those are the five main elements that the apostles taught were to be a part of our worship. Very simple right? But what has happened over the past 2,000 years is the church over and over and said, "It's not enough. We need to add stuff. We need to add these icons that you're going to pray to. We need to add different elements in the worship service. We need to add a drama team or whatever, movie night." No, you don't need to add to it. This is what God has given to us and God's word is sufficient for our worship. So this is what the apostles taught.

Now 6, corporate worship demonstrates the weightiness of God. Corporate worship demonstrates the weightiness of God. First, Old Testament saints worship God corporately. 2. Jesus worshiped God corporately. 3. Jesus taught the necessity of corporate worship. 4. The New Testament church worshiped God corporately. 5 The apostles themselves instruct us in corporate worship. And then 6, corporate worship demonstrates the weightiness of God.

Now, these last three, I know we save these till the end, but they're probably the most important. The most important. What do we mean by the weightiness of God? What I mean is this, that the character of God and the fact of who God is weighs so heavy in our



lives that it overflows in our corporate worship with God's people, that the character of God right now is overflowing in our lives as we come together to worship. And I want to show you this from Isaiah 6. You know this passage well. If you would, turn to the left in the Old Testament to the book of Isaiah. It's almost, it's right to the right of the middle of the Old Testament. Isaiah 6, and this is the vision that Isaiah has of God when he is called to ministry and it's important, I think, to revisit passages like this because it reminds us of the weightiness of God because we don't see God on a day-to-day basis. God's a spirit. He resides in heaven. We don't see the weightiness of God.

But look what Isaiah says. He says, "In the year that King Uzziah died," that was around 740 BC. King Uzziah was a very influential figure. It would be kind of like George Washington dying. It would be a very sad day for a nation, a very ominous day for a nation. He says in this moment when everything is in turmoil, when our country seems to be on the verge of the unknown, he says this is what happened. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne." In other words, God is continuing to reign so don't doubt what God is doing this morning. The world is in turmoil. It absolutely is. People's lives are in turmoil. Guess what? Where's God? On his throne reigning right now.

Verse 1, "high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple." God fills the heavenly places, and Isaiah says, "Above him stood the seraphim." These are a special type of angel. "Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another," and listen to this, "and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'" R. C. Sproul was famous for preaching this passage, and one of the things he always used to remind people of is that there's only one place in Scripture where God is described with an attribute three times and he's only described in this superlative way with three words like this, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." Holy means separate. Separate, that God, yes, we're made in his image, but God is separate from us. God's in a different category than us, than the cosmos. And he says, "the whole earth is full of his glory," that all of it reflects the weightiness of God.

That's what that word glory means, kavod, it means the weight of God. You just look out at the sunset at the ocean and what do you feel? What you're supposed to feel is the weightiness of God. When you look up at these new pictures that are coming on the satellite, what are you supposed to feel? The kavod of God, the weightiness of God. That's what God designed it for, is that you would see what he has created and see his glory and be stunned.

And God speaks, verse 4, "And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke." And listen to Isaiah's response, "And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!' Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.'" This is the vision of God, and this, my friends, is the weighty God that we come to worship.

So let me just explain to you what is taking place right now as we speak. In a very real sense, we are joining that. God right now is being honored in heaven by the Seraphim themselves saying, "Holy, holy, holy." And we have come to gather with the heavenly throng and say with our lives and our voices and our finances and all that we are that there is a God in heaven that is worthy of worship. You as a man, you want to establish your family in the Lord, and you want your children to fear God? You tell that soccer coach, "Hey, we're going to church on the Lord's Day and not to the soccer game because there is a God in heaven who is worthy of worship." That'll set your family on the right trajectory.

What do you think people think about when they drive by this morning and see this parking lot full of cars? Your presence here this morning is a reminder to this dark world that there is a God in heaven who is worthy of worship. Is he worthy? He is. He is worthy. We forget that. We forget that. That is why worship is not discussed in the church today, is we have forgotten that there is a God who is worthy of worship.

J. B. Phillips wrote a book, you probably, any of y'all read J. B. Phillips' book? "Your God is Too Small." Your God is too small. And for most of the modern church, our God is too small. We've lost this vision of God. J. I. Packer wrote this in the preface of "Knowing God" 50 years ago. Listen, "The modern way with God is to set him at a distance, if not to deny him altogether, and the irony is that modern Christians preoccupied with maintaining religious practices in an irreligious world, have themselves allowed God to become remote."

We've allowed God to become remote. And of course, the other problem is that we have made corporate worship primarily about meeting the seekers needs. This was the movement in the '90s, the seeker sensitive movement, that we want to design the corporate worship of God around who? The unbeliever, as if the unbeliever knows how to worship God. Can the unbeliever even offer correct worship to God? No, they cannot. We've covered this. We must worship in spirit and truth. But the worship service began to be catered to the felt needs of people to bring them to church on Sunday, and the reason why that's such a problem is obviously it denies the vertical aspect of worship, but if worship is simply about our needs, then, when we feel like we're doing well, we don't feel like we need to worship. "Oh yeah, I don't need to go to church on Sunday. I'm doing pretty good. I just go to church when I feel like I need to get my life cleaned up." The American church forgot what worship is about, that it's first and foremost about the public honoring of God.

So that's 6. Now let me hurry to 7, and this one is so important for you to understand, so stay with me here. But 7 is that God uses corporate worship to recalibrate our souls. God uses corporate worship to recalibrate our own souls. I want you to turn to the left to Psalm 73. Psalm 73. This is such an important Psalm for you to know, to even memorize, to meditate on, especially in the day and age that we live in. The Psalm basically breaks down like this. Verse 1 is the theme of the entire Psalm. The entire Psalm hinges on verse 1 and explains verse 1. This is what the psalmist comes to understand at the end of the

Psalm. This is the thesis. "Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart." Do you believe that, that God is good to his people, to those who are pure in heart because here's the danger, verses 2 all the way to 16 are the dilemma. Verses 2 to 16 are the dilemma and this, my friends, is the dilemma of modern man. You're a Christian. You worship God. You love the Lord. Then why does it seem like the pagan excels?

I was in Hollywood last week. You know, you're driving around, you see a billboard of Tom Cruise, and you're thinking about him having his personal chef and all his stuff. Why does the pagan have all this stuff and bad things happen to God's people? Why does that happen? How can that happen? That's the dilemma of modern man. And where am I getting with this whole God thing? This is the question of the psalmist, he said, "as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped." Why? "For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

I don't have time to explain these verses. I'll just read them and you can go and study this for yourself. He said, "For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind." They seem to be getting along fine. "Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens," in other words, they mock God, "and their tongue struts through the earth." I'm prideful. I do this. I'm smart. I'm brilliant. I produced this. I earned that. "Therefore, this is their people, the minions, "his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them." Right? Isn't that the life of the celebrity? There's no fault, right? "And they say, 'How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?' Behold, these are the wicked," he says, "always at ease, they increase in riches."

Now look at his plight. The psalmist says, "This is my plight." He says, "Is this all in vain? All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning." My life has been difficult. And then he says, "I almost said this amidst the people of God." He says, "I'm glad I didn't. If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed the generation of your children." He said, "I'm glad I didn't speak these thoughts out loud to the people of God."

Now verse 16 he says, he's trying to figure out this dilemma, "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task." Why is it like this? How can I go through such turmoil and God be in the heavens and God says he's good to me? But I don't see it. Where is the resolution? Look at verse 17. Where is the resolution to the dilemma? "Until I went into the sanctuary of God." Wow, "until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." Then. You see, his problem was resolved by going to the corporate worship of God's people and then, probably because he was taught by the priest or a prophet or the songs that they sang, "then I remembered how things play out, that truly, in the end," he says, "you, God, set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin." In other words, they come to destruction.

Then he says, verse 22, "I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. Nevertheless," he says now, "I am continually with you; you hold my right hand." He's reminded of the fact that God guides "me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory." And then he erupts in praise, verse 25, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you." Do you see the change in his perspective? It's a complete 180-degree turn and it hinged on the public worship of God. And that's how God changes our perspective as well, that's how God recalibrates our souls.

Okay eighth and finally. I want you to turn all the way to the very end. This is how the story ends. Revelation 5. Corporate worship is the final destination and end of the believer. The way that things end is in corporate worship, the corporate worship of the risen, resurrected Christ. I'm not going to read all of Revelation 5, you can go and study it on your own, but basically verses 1 through 7. A scroll is produced, and that scroll is filled with writing, and on that writing is essentially the unfolding of history. And the resurrected Christ is in heaven and an angel speaks and says, "Who is worthy to open the scroll?" And there is no one found worthy to open the scroll until the Lord shows up. And it says, verse 7, "And he," that's the Lord, "went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." And listen, "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'" Now listen to this, "Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!' And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' and the elders fell down and worshiped."

That word, that last word is the same word that Jesus used with the woman at the well. It's the Greek word *proskuneo*, and it means to bow down before God in worship. And friend, that's my prayer for you, is that the rest of your life that you set aside this day, Sunday, as a day that you will bow down to the risen and living Christ because he is worthy and he alone is worthy of all of our worship, and all of the honor, and all of the praise, forever and ever. Amen.

*Heavenly Father we praise you. God, we have come here today to honor you, to testify that there is a God in heaven who is worthy of our praise. And Lord, our desire is that our lives would reflect that, that, yes, we would worship you and honor you 24/7, 365 days a year, but that we would also come together with the people of God and say, "We will testify with our lives that there is a God worthy to be honored, that there is a risen*

*Christ who has redeemed us that is worthy of our glory. We pray that this would be true in our lives. We ask all this in Christ's name. Amen.*

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