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Series: Vision 2022 – *Building Up the Body of Christ*

Title: *Building Up the Body of Christ: Through Worship*

Text: John 9:1-6, 35-38

Preacher: Bill Archer

This morning the focus of our 2022 Vision preaching series is Building Up the Body of Christ - Through Worship.

As we talk about worship and the body of Christ, I would like for us to have a frame of reference regarding each of these concepts both worship and the body of Christ.

Let's begin with the Body of Christ. I invite us to look at a clip from the movie *Backdraft* that was in theatres about 30 years ago. The story is about 2 brothers who grew up in a firefighting family. Their dad lost his life in a fire when they were children, and they have both followed in his footsteps and are now firefighters themselves. All the action in this movie is set in and around the spectacular scenes of the challenges that these brave firefighters face. This clip takes place early in the movie and there is a particular spoken phrase that reflects a culture that I want us to pick up on this morning. Let's watch it now.

(*Backdraft* Clip)

"*You go we go.*" With this phrase these firefighters are letting their fellow fireman know that they are in this together. They all take the risks together and no one is left behind. This scene at the beginning of the movie sets up the climactic scene at the end of the movie where this phrase of "*You go we go*" is played out again.

Our Hero is the older brother. He and a fellow firefighter who is his lifelong friend are at a fire scene. Just before that call regarding this fire came in it was discovered that this friend had betrayed all the other firefighters in a terrible way. Now the two of them find themselves trapped in an industrial building standing on high scaffolding several stories high. There is an explosion, and the scaffolding gives way. Both firefighters begin to fall. Our Hero quickly grabs hold of the remaining scaffolding with one hand and grabs the hand of his friend-but-betrayer with his other hand. He is barely hanging on. The friend looks up and says, "*let me go*". Our hero, struggling and now trembling to hang on, looks down at his friend and says, "*You go we go*". While holding on to his fellow firefighter and friend with one hand, his other hand slips from the scaffolding. And they both plunge to their deaths.

Firefighters will tell you that the career they have chosen is much more than a job. Theirs is a brotherhood and sisterhood, a family of people serving their mission together. They train together, they eat meals together, they have leisure time and recreation together. They take risks together. When they show up to a fire scene, they each have a specific job to do. They work together to accomplish this mission of putting out fires, rescuing people and property and saving lives.

Scripture describes the body of Christ as many parts but one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12&26) If one part suffers, every part suffers with it if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. I would like to offer the picture of these four words from this movie as another descriptor of the Body of Christ. "*You go we go.*" We are in this together. There really is no longer a "you and me". There is only a "we" just different parts of the same body. The body of Christ is exclusively a "we" entity. As 1 Corinthians 12:27 says ***Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. You go we go.*** Verses 24 and 25 say ***But God has put the body together...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.***

You go we go!

This sense of "we" is a great way to think of the body of Christ.

Next, I would like for us to look at our frame of reference regarding the word worship.

In recent years I have had the privilege of speaking from this pulpit on the topic of worship. You have heard me say that worship is all about relationship.

We have previously talked about the idea that worship has very little to do with the worshipper and practically all to do with the object of our worship.

We have talked about worship as “worthship” where we give honor and glory to the only one who is worthy of our worship.

This afternoon the NFL play-off games will decide who will go to the Super Bowl on February 13. Will it be Kansas City Chiefs or Cincinnati Bengals. Will it be the Los Angeles Rams or the San Francisco 49ers.

As we move to the conclusion of the NFL season, I am reminded of the story from way back in the Football history of Washington DC. This is back in the old RFK Stadium days of Washington football.

There was a man attending a Washington home game for the very first time. He was so excited to be there. Back in those days it was practically impossible to get tickets because they were sold out to season ticket holders. This man was very fortunate to get his ticket from a co-worker who was unable to attend this particular game.

As he takes his seat, he notices an older woman sitting just on the other side of the empty seat next to him.

He introduces himself and starts a conversation... *“I notice this seat next to you is empty.”*

She said, *“This seat is my husband’s. For the past 40 years he and I have attended every Washington home game together.”*

With a curious tone he asked, *“Where is your husband today is he sick?”*

She answered sadly, *“Oh no, He passed away.”*

*“I’m so sorry.”* He responded.

There was a pause and then he continued, *“I am a little curious. Don’t you have any family or friends who would want to use this extra ticket and sit with you at the game?”*

She answered him, *“I don’t know, they are all at the funeral.”* (BaHaHaHa!)

Now that was a woman who worshipped football.

When I have spoken previously on Worship, we have seen this image of an iceberg reminding us that worship is an everyday thing not a Sunday only experience. Most of our worship happens throughout the week and does not take place on Sundays. Sunday is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to worship. We have understood that the “spirit and truth” worship that Jesus talks about in John Chapter 4 happens more on Monday through Saturday than it does on Sunday mornings.

In previous sermons we have talked about worship as an action and have learned the words of scripture translated as worship are all action verbs, bow, kneel, pray, serve, give, minister, inquire, seek. When the Bible talks about worship it is talking about some kind of action.

Throughout the Old Testament and New Testament, we see worship as a priority and the natural response to God’s revelation of himself to his people. Whether it be the many altars of worship built to celebrate God’s presence and provision that we read about in the Old Testament, or the peoples’ response to seeing God himself in the person of Jesus, that we read about in the New Testament.

When Jesus was born Luke tells us that when the shepherds saw Jesus they responded by praising and glorifying God (Luke 2:20). Matthew tells us that upon entering the house as soon as they saw Jesus the magi worshipped him (Matthew 2:11). And John tells us that following the resurrection as soon as Thomas saw the nail prints in His hand he responded with **“My Lord and My God.”** (John 20:28)

With this as a backdrop I would like to move the ball a little further down the field this morning from the perspective of our 2022 Vision theme and help us connect the dots of worship and Building Up the Body of Christ.

Let's turn in our Bibles or apps to John Chapter 9 and begin reading in Verse 1. If you are able, please stand as we read out of respect for God's Word.

John 9:1-6

<sup>1</sup>**As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"**

<sup>3</sup>**"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup>As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

<sup>6</sup>**After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. <sup>7</sup>"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So, the man went and washed, and came home seeing.**

John 9:1-35-38

<sup>35</sup>**Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"**

<sup>36</sup>**"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."**

<sup>37</sup>**Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."**

<sup>38</sup>**Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.**

This passage in John 9 about the healing of the man who was blind from birth has a variety of teaching or learning points and there are multiple sermons to be preached from this text. Today I would like to focus on just one of the "take-a-ways" from this story and it is this. Worship is our response to God's presence in our lives and in our midst.

In this passage the man who was blind from birth sees and recognizes who Jesus is and declares, **"Lord, I believe"** and then he responds with worship.

Worship is our response to God's presence in our lives and in our midst.

This word for worship used here, in the Greek, is the word *prosekynēsen* which means to bow down or fall prostrate. It is the word that Jesus used in the desert when he was rebuking Satan and said, **"For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'**" (Matthew 4:10)

Worship cannot be just an understanding of who God is. Scripture tells us that is even Satan, and his demons know who God is (James 2:10). But they do not worship, they shudder.

But this man who lived with a handicap his whole life responded with a sense of awe and humbleness as he recognized who he was standing in the presence of. This was the natural response of a man who had in effect been given a whole new life. His response to the presence and power of Jesus was worship.

**So, as we explore our response of worship to God's presence in our lives and in our midst, I want us to look at two things. The first is...**

### **1. Worshiping Within Community**

As Jesus traveled from town to town, one of the first things he did when he came to a new city was to visit the synagogue or the temple to worship within community. Matthew 4:23 **Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.** (NIV)

Scripture instructs us regarding the priority of community Hebrews 10:25 **And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.** (NLT)

And Jesus confirms to us in Matthew 18:20 the promise of his presence when we meet together. ***For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst.*** (NASB)

When we join for worship with the body of Redland, we are also part of a “bigger picture Body of Christ” that is worshipping on this very Lord’s day across the globe and in unnumbered languages. This earthly worship is joining with the heavenly worship that is unceasing before the God’s Throne. When we worship as the body of Christ here at 6922 Muncaster Mill Road we are connected to and part of the body of Christ global and eternal.

There are some things that only take place within a community setting. Shared experiences have significant meaning. Shared experiences are integral to “Building Up the Body”.

I remember being a chaperone on a whitewater rafting trip with the youth group from the church I was serving at that time. We rode down the Nantahala River in North Carolina. This river has class 2 and 3 whitewater and while this is not the most dangerous rapids to run, they were plenty scary for me and the group in my boat. We wanted to keep our raft upright and nobody wanted to get bounced out of the boat, especially me. When we approached each rapid our guide would give instructions on how to enter the rapid and when to paddle and when to stop. When it was time to paddle, we were to paddle as hard as we could. We made our way through each rapid feeling fear and exhilaration. And at the end of the trip, we felt exhaustion and relief. We had been a team. We worked together and made it through. The folks in my boat felt very bonded and we felt bonded to those in the other boats who had gone through the same experience with us.

There are all kinds of bonding activities within a church community, mission trips, service projects, musical groups, and a host of other activities. We remember many of these activities as high and holy moments. I truly believe that there is no other activity that we do together as a community of faith that is more significant and more bonding than worship.

When we worship as the body of Christ we meet together with the Creator of the universe in His magnificent splendor (*Psalms 29:2*)

Worshipping in a community setting is one of the clearest pictures of a functioning body of Christ that there is. We physically stand together, we sit together, we pray as one, we sing and articulate the very same words at the very same time and sing the very same notes of a song together. Worship is a community and togetherness experience

We build Up the body of Christ at Redland through worship just by being here. In God’s presence with God’s people, we listen together to what God has to say to us and we respond to Him in worship. Together we experience His goodness, His graciousness, His sustaining power, and His amazing grace and love and we cannot help but worship Him.

Many aspects of this life will be left behind when we leave this world and enter the next. But one thing will remain, throughout all eternity, we will continue to worship the Lord.

Worship within community is our rehearsal for Heaven.

Many of us have heard the joke about the man visiting New York City for the first time. He walks up to someone and asks, “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?”. And the man responds, “Practice. Practice. Practice.”

Since we are going to be worshipping in heaven, what do you think God wants us to be doing here on earth? Practice. Practice. Practice.

**The second thing I want us to look at as we explore our response of worship to God’s presence in our lives and in our midst is...**

## **2. Worship in Our Daily Walk**

The thesis for this idea is: Worship needs to be woven into the fabric of our lives and part of our daily walk.

The good news is worship can happen anytime and anyplace. It can happen while you are driving in your car or sitting in your kitchen. It can happen during a restless night of personal struggle or during a restful and beautiful sunrise. I'm sure there are more than a few testimonies from this congregation of very meaningful worship experiences at very unusual times and unexpected places.

I remember well a unique and unexpected worship experience from 37 years ago.

The first church Ava and I served after graduating from seminary was in North Carolina. And about a year in we decided to start our family. It took us a little while, but Ava did become pregnant with our daughter Katie. We were very excited and planning for this new arrival. When Ava was about 6 months along, I began to have some worries and anxious feelings about fatherhood. What if I am not a good Father? What if I don't even like being a Father? Let's be honest my life is forever going to be changed. What if taking care of a baby doesn't really suite me? After all you cannot send them back.

On October 1, 1984, Katie Archer was born. We all felt a natural exhilaration that you have when welcoming a new life into your home and we fell into the normal routine of a new baby in the house, diapers, lack of sleep, etc.

For the first 6 months of her life Katie had very sensitive skin condition and could not tolerate disposable diapers. So, we had to use cloth diapers. How many here remember the cloth diaper days. Current generations have no idea what it is to use cloth diapers. Not only are you washing them pretty much every day, but you also must contend with safety pins. The last thing you want to do is accidentally stick your precious little baby with a safety pin. So, you always put your hand underneath which means you are often sticking yourself when manipulating the safety pin.

At the end of a long and tiring day I was in the bathroom rinsing out the dirty cloth diapers in the diaper pail. The way this worked in our house was... you take the diaper pail and a second bucket to the bathroom. You kneel at the toilet and pull out the dirty and stinky diaper one at a time and rinse it in the toilet bowl and then put it in the second bucket. After you have emptied and rinsed out the diaper pail you then take the bucket of now rinsed dirty diapers to the washing machine.

One very late-night Ava walked by the bathroom door and noticed that I had tears coming down my cheek. Knowing I had had a really long and hard day she stepped in and said, *"You look really upset, Let me do this and you go get ready for bed."*

I look at her and said I am not upset. I am really very happy. Because me doing this means that we have this precious baby sleeping in the next room. In that moment I experienced two things. One was I knew that this having a baby and being a father thing was going to be alright with me. And the other was my tears were tears of deep joy and thankfulness to God for this precious gift.

The Bible talks about kneeling as a form of worship, and I do not know if kneeling over a commode is the normal picture we think of when we think of kneeling for worship, but that was what I was doing. I was praising God with all my heart in that moment. I was thanking him for a special blessing that I have continued to thank Him for the past 37 years.

I'll be honest I did not break into song, but my heart was so full that singing *"Praise God from whom all blessings flow"* would have been completely appropriate.

I am blessed and have a lot to worship God about that brings me to the point of praise and thanksgiving and celebration.

And Look. I get it. For some of us we don't feel like we are just sitting at a toilet slogging through dirty diapers. We feel like our whole life is in the toilet. Some of us may be feeling like we are living through some really crappy experiences. And we are not sure we see God anywhere. How do we respond to that?

The pastoral word I have for today is this. These moments are where worship becomes the most meaningful and impactful to the worshipper. The promise of scripture is that God will meet us at our point of need.

Rick Warren puts it this way. *When you feel abandoned by God yet continue to trust him in spite of your feelings, you worship him in the deepest way* – Rick Warren

The purpose of Worship is not about singing a happy song and hearing an inspirational sermon. If that is our purpose for gathering today, then we will be missing out on what God has planned for us. You see God does loves our singing and Biblical teaching but that is not the purpose of worship. The purpose of worship is to encounter God and to see Him. And as we respond to Him in worship our lives are fundamentally changed just like the blind man at the Pool of Siloam. In these moments where two or more are gathered in His name His presence is made manifest. We know that we are not forsaken, we know that he is with us no matter the circumstance.

Sometimes we enter into worship when life has overwhelmed us, and we can barely lift our heads. That is why God gives his blessing when the only strength we have is to smite our own breast and say God be merciful to me. (Luke 18:13)

Scripture tells us that God hears that prayer, and his mercy is given. Where do we see it? How do we find it? I cannot speak for how God works in all cases and circumstances, but I do know this. God's mercy lives in the body of Christ called Redland. If the only prayer that you can lift up today is Lord be merciful to me, I want you to know that you are sitting among others who have prayed that very same prayer and have experienced God's mercy in their darkest of days. I know because I have heard the stories. Their testimony is of God who is rich in mercy.

They would encourage you today to lean on Hebrews 4:16 and not hesitate but move with confidence to the Throne of Grace and receive this mercy.

Worship is where we bring Him our hearts of praise and hearts that are broken. We bring our offerings big and small because we are thankful. And we bring ourselves completely whether we feel joyful or feel despair. We come to hear from Him and respond to Him bowing our heads or lifting our hands. This is the work of the Body of Christ.

If the only prayer you can utter today is God be merciful to me, I want you to know that God's people in this setting of worship are surrounding you today as the hands and feet of Jesus. They are ready to reach out to you and come around you. And I want you to know that Redland is a "You go we go" church. The Body of Christ is alive and well.

The man blind from birth we read about in John Chapter 9 got a heavenly view and worshiped Jesus. Things are different when we acknowledge the presence of Christ in our lives and in our midst. We not only have His abiding presence, we also have his guiding presence. We have access to the person who is all wise, all powerful, and all loving.

Worship is our response to the presence of God in our lives and in our midst. The question is... what will be our response to Him?

Scripture tells us that He loved us first - you and me. How will we respond to Him?

Scripture tells us that because of this incredible love He is seeking us because He wants to have relationship with us. How will we respond to Him?

Scripture tells us that He gave himself for us. He sacrificed His life for you and me. How will we respond to Him?

Jesus is in our midst today. What is our response to Him?