

Witness of the Least / Witness 9

“Motherhood: Powered by love. Fueled by coffee. Sustained by wine.” – Condoleezza Rice
I am not sure if this is a truth or not – but in my life I have seen some element of reality in this. Mom’s you are loved. You are precious in the sight of God. Why? For more than what you do, how you do it, and even how your kids turn out. You are loved and precious to God – because this is who God is and what he does. I really don’t have a Mother’s Day sermon for you. Not even sure – what that would look like. I do have a holiday sermon for you – just not Mother’s Day – Christmas. Really - I do believe God has a compelling word that I think is for us all on this day we honor mothers. And here is my prayer – that His word will change us: 1) that it will change us right now in this place (we believe God’s Word can do that); and, 2) that it will begin a change that will continue every time we see Jesus in God’s Word. What is the change? I believe the change God longs to begin & continue in this room today involves – our worship.

For a brief time, I went to Trinity University and dated a girl on the Tennis Team from South Africa. She knew nothing about baseball – and teaching her the game was nuts because she didn’t understand it and the rules seemed nuts. But she slowly caught on. What I really wanted her to catch was my love for the Cardinals. It was 1982 – World Series year (we won) and I didn’t just want her to know baseball, or even like the Cardinals – I wanted her to become a Cardinal. I don’t think God is altogether that interested in what you know intellectually about worship. (That’s not the point of this passage.) I don’t think his desire this morning is for you to become a fan of his. He’s not asking if you believe He is. ... He wants you to become His in such a way you wear His name, sport His colors, tell people about why He is the greatest. All that is called worship. Here’s the question we are going to wrestle with this morning:

Do you worship Jesus? *Not do you understand Jesus, believe in Jesus, or are you a fan – do you worship?*

01. What moves you (and I) to worship?

02. How can your worship (and my worship) of Jesus change – for the better?

01. What moves you to worship?

Luke 2:20 (ESV) And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. This is how our passage ends today. Worship. The shepherds saw Jesus (as a baby don’t forget - and worshiped. But what exactly happened to them and what exactly is worship?

Worship – We all do it. We just don’t always call it that.

Sometimes we think, worship is what we devote ourselves to. For example, I devote myself to people, ideas, and things all over the place and all over the world. Specifically, I devote my time, my money, and my emotional energy to many things. Some call this worship.

But there are plenty of things I (we) devote our time, money, and emotional energy to - that we don’t worship. For example many of us devote ourselves to our dog or our house; or in planning a vacation or organizing a special birthday. Think about how empty planning a vacation can make you feel physically (time), financially (money), and emotionally (emotional energy) – **but most of us would never be accused by anyone of worshipping the planning of a vacation.** (a few- maybe, but most of us no. devoted to, but worship, nooooo.)

The reality of worship is that it is usually easier to see in other’s lives than our own. You know: we say, *He worships her. She has captured his heart. He does whatever she wants. She says jump and he says – how hi. OR – My friend, she is worshipping day and night at the altar of that new business she is starting. She can’t think of or do anything unless it is related to her start up. It has captured her.*

Whenever we accuse someone of worship – 1) we see a capturing of their heart and mind & 2) we see devotion that ongoing and growing. **Worship begins when your heart and mind is captured by something so powerfully that it leads to ongoing and growing devotion.** Devotion is part, but being captured is the heart of worship.

What has captured your heart and mind so powerfully that it leads to ongoing and growing devotion?

Don’t think about church or God or Jesus for a minute. Outside of God, what captured you – so that it moves you to worship? Again – not what do you have some devotion to. Don’t just think where does some of your time, money, or emotional energy go. Think about it this way: What can you not stop thinking about? (mind) What can you not stop dreaming about? (heart) When this thing or person is going great – Does it fill your heart? And maybe most telling – When this thing or person is not going well – Does it empty your heart and fill it with despair? What consistently makes you feel like you just got kissed for the first time and what consistently makes you feel like Chick Little – world is ending.

Now think about Jesus: Are you moved to worship Jesus? Again: Not – Is there devotion to Him? I’m not asking do you give time, money, or emotional energy to Jesus. My question is – **Has he captured your heart and mind in a way that your devotion to him is ongoing and growing.**

One of the greatest hindrances to worship of Jesus – *worship that comes from a captured heart that leads to devotion – Is a heart that is captured by something else.* **Matt 6:22 – No one can serve two masters.**

What or who is it you worship? *Hard to tell.* Let's ask God to show us – right now. **PRAY**

Do you worship Jesus?

The tennis player story at Trinity started out as a metaphor a picture of what worship is and is not. But truth is, who I was in college is a living example of someone who was a follower of Jesus but struggled to be a worshiper of Jesus. I trusted Christ with my soul but saw others who were captured by Jesus as a little crazy. Probably how that girl viewed me as a Cardinal – over the top. But something in me wanted more. I didn't just want to be a fan of Jesus who was randomly devoted. My soul longed for more – but I didn't have any idea how to get there. **Sound familiar? Long for more – for God to capture your heart?**

02. How can your worship of Jesus change – for the better? *Let's look at our passage – God change us now.*

Luke 2:8-9 (ESV) 8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around (*light*) them, and they were filled with great fear. Shepherds in this culture worked a lonely, isolated, low paying, low class job. Maybe 4-8 guys watched over hundreds sheep. Family business or hired hand it was lowly and lonely. And in the stillness of that night, as sheep rested and shepherds tried to stay awake, an angel, a heavenly messenger who constantly lives in the presence of God – was sent to these shepherds. The glory (*the greatness of who God*) was all over this angel because he had just left God's presence. 1) God's glory – lit up the hills (9) where they watched their sheep. Response -fear! ***This was not awe – this was great terrifying, I'm gonna die fear. Like the fear Jeff Goldblum's char Ian in Jurassic Park has when he first encounters the T-Rex and says - we're gonna die. The shepherds don't worship God and his glory. They are just terrified. What kept them from worship here? Why can we see the greatness of God at times and have little to no response, except maybe anxiety, worry – or crippling fear. Why?***

Luke 2:10-15 (ESV) 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 2) The shepherds got a 2nd display of God's greatness as this frightening angel revealed that God's redemptive plan for the earth was in full swing thru the birth of the promised Savior. Amazing news, especially since it was told to these lowly shepherds. What an honor that deserves praise. But – they don't. We see no response. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" 3) And third, a multitude of the heavenly host appears (*hundreds to thousands of angels*) and as one, they declare the greatness of God (*maybe not in song - but probably not a whisper*). Can you imagine the passion hundreds and thousands of angels delivered this message. Oh man – I bet it shook the hillside. You would have thought – now for sure the shepherds will bow & with raised hands worship - declaring God's praise. But, no. What's their response in vs 15: (read it) 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." – *translation* "Let's go see if this is true! Excitement, curiosity, freaked out bewilderment – all of the above. But worship – we see nothing that tells us they worshipped. There is worship going on in this scene – just not from the shepherds. Why?

Sometimes worship of Jesus does not come easy for us. 1) We are overlooking the greatest scenic view ever in N America and – no worship. Just pictures of us photobombing God's glory. Look how great we are. Aren't I awesome against this mountain. 2) We walk into corporate worship – God is here, moving – declared as great – but nothing. We are more concerned about our hair, or your hair, or the sound Jonathan is making. Why? Let's keep reading.

Luke 2:16-20 (ESV) 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. **The shepherds worship! Question - When did the shepherds begin to worship? ...**

I believed it began when they saw JESUS. Maybe as the left, but for sure it did not begin until they saw JESUS. What was it they saw that moved them to worship? What captured their heart and minds? Was it baby Jesus?

- * An angel splits the night & illuminates the whole hillside in a day an age of no electricity. *Miracle – but no worship.*
- * This angel declares God's eternal plan to redeem and restore the earth to these shepherds. *Wow – but no worship.*
- * 100s and 1000s of angels loudly declare the greatness of God. *Freaked out w great curiosity - but no worship.*
- * They see baby Jesus – worship! **WHY? What do you think?**

What is God revealing about Himself in this passage?

- God is revealed as Great, Awesome, Mighty, Glorious. But not till the end of the passage do we see -
- God is revealed as Humble. It's not just that God is selfless, thinking of others, or not arrogantly boasting. There's more - God puts himself in a position of **lowness, vulnerability, & weakness as a baby**.
- God is revealed as King of kings but also as Servant of servants.
- I believe it fully seeing this unbelievable combination of **majesty and humility, ultimate power and ultimate weakness** that overwhelms the shepherds and captures their hearts and leads them to ... **worship**.

This is not a random occurrence that happens once in the life of Jesus.

Jesus is revealed as King of kings & Servant of servants all thru Luke – with mostly the same response.

Luke 2: Simeon and Anna – waiting for the King of kings' messiah. He comes as a humble peasant baby, not born in luxury or overt royalty - but rather in poverty and obscurity. What happens - They WORSHIP.

Luke 5: Jesus-humble, peasant teacher, helps fisherman fish & is revealed as holy All-Powerful God. **Peter** worships.

Luke 5: Jesus heals a **paralyzed man**. Power of God alone to heal the humility to touch him stuns people. Rabbis wouldn't come near sick- unclean. Jesus was humble, lowly – yet all powerful to raise the lame. Result – worship!

Luke 7: Humble Jesus engages a **mom and her dead son** (*unclean*) and He raises him from dead (*power*) - Worship!

Luke 7: **Prostitute** worships at Jesus feet with money (oil), time, and emotional energy (she will be ridiculed). Leaders scorn. Why did she worship – humility to talk to her – power to forgive.

Luke 8: Not all see Jesus as He is > all-powerful and humble even though they saw same things. **Family** called him crazy.

Luke 8: **Demon possessed man** healed by peasant priest (not done). **People of village:** say leave, the man worships.

Luke 9: Jesus serves, heals and feeds thousands from little food (King and Servant) **Peter** worships- **crowd** want Thor.

This is what we see in the 1st 9 chapters of Luke. This scene repeats itself over and over and over. King – Servant.

When Jesus is revealed as King of kings & Servant of servants, we are seeing the fullness of God- *who He is. And, seeing God for who He fully is, captures our heart & mind. When this happens– our worship will begin to change.*

Captured by the awesome majesty and humility of GOD (Jesus) - your worship will begin to change.

What keeps you from seeing Jesus for who He fully is – King of kings and Servant of servants?

Your heart is captured by something else.

Your heart can be captured by many different things that become ongoing & growing hindrances to worship of Jesus.

You can be captured by a desire – control, power, comfort, approval,

You can be captured by a dream – success, perfect marriage or perfect family,

You can be captured by a person – love can turn to worship when we put the character of God on them – to be perfect (to treat us with perfect goodness) or the saving nature of God on them (to make our life better or rescue).

What makes these - things we worship (gods) is the strength they promise to our soul.

They make us feel we have it together, we are worthy - we are strong in here.

But Jesus comes as a different GOD to be worshipped.

He comes YES as KING of kings, but he also comes as the Servant of servants.

HE is majestic, all-powerful, ruler over all, who reversed sickness, stopped seas, forgave sins, and raised the dead.

But - He is also humble: a servant, submissive, who willingly made himself lowly, vulnerable – weak.

We love KING Jesus – he is worthy, but

God as Lead Servant – Servant of servants is – often not divine or holy in our eyes.

In our eyes God is often only power – conqueror of death – because this serves us best.

The servant who was weak and lowly – not sure how this can help us.

Gospel:

Jesus – In humility, became weak & gave up *control, power, comfort, approval* – rested in the Father's control, power, comfort, and approval. **In his weakness – not his power** – we received life, forgiveness, and acceptance. Because it was in his weakness – he took our place, took our judgment, took our guilt and shame. No weak Jesus – we don't get Jesus – his life, forgiveness, love, his presence.

God is saying to us in this passage – in all of Luke (Matt, Mark, John). Look at me through my eyes.

I AM HOLY MAJESTIC GOD and HUMBLE GOD.

When you see both of these – you see me fully and you will be stunned and overwhelmed.

Mom – whose has boys like my wife – you do some incredible out of character things to be with your boys so you can express you love to them. Pick up and wash their nasty smelly clothes, roll in the dirt and play with them, get sweaty smelly nasty hugs, watch 2 million games. These actions were not necessarily in character, things you lie – but they were actions you did to show love. This is part of being a mom – love when its hard – when it hurts you.

We think the same of Jesus. We think he stepped out of character – did things God should not do to show his love. Moms – I'm not slighting your love. I'm trying to show the stunning greatness of who Jesus is. He is GOD – majestic, almighty, all powerful God. But he did humiliating things on this earth and they were not out of character things. No he did these things because that is who he is - humble. Our majestic God is also humble God. And he didn't do these things just to show His love. He did all these things to give us his love & take away our guilt & shame & punishment.

Be captured by the awesome majesty and humility of Jesus

See Jesus. *May the Majesty and Humility of our God capture your heart – like it did the shepherds.*

Be captured by the awesome majesty & humility of Jesus and your worship will begin to change.

Response:

- Prayer of Confession
 - My heart is captured by another.
 - I struggle seeing you as truly humble.
- Prayer to Change my Worship
 - Jesus - open my eyes to see your awesome majesty and humility in all I hear, see, and read.
 - Jesus - capture my heart and mind with your majesty and humility.
 - Jesus - from a captured heart, begin to increase my devotion.