

Now let me ask you a question.

I'll tell you this.

When I got here in 2009, we lived in a rental, and we actually prior to that lived with one of the families that were a part of Pinewood.

But we finally were able to buy our own home, and I don't even know how quickly it was, but before I know it, I got a letter in the mail.

It was a summons for jury duty.

Yeah, I don't know how many of you have been summoned for jury duty.

I lived 35 years up north, never was summoned.

It was here for a few months, summoned for jury duty.

Now, let me tell you, I was kind of distraught because I was to report because I was summoned on Monday in June.

That Monday happened to be the first day of VBS.

So you can imagine, I did not like that.

I did not prefer that time.

I did not want to do it.

But guess what?

I went because I was summoned.

It was not an option.

It wasn't something that I could say, you know what?

I'm not sure if the courtroom is going to be cold or hot.

I'm not sure how it has it decorated.

I'm not sure who's going to be the judge.

I'm not sure if it's going to be too loud or too soft.

No, I was summoned.

And because of that summons, I showed up.

Failure to do so is breaking the law.

Today we're going to begin a new series called Draw Near, Worship on God's Terms.

I really feel that as a congregation we have a unique opportunity to set an example of what it means to worship God according to His terms in a culture that is all about our terms, that is all about what we want or what we feel works or what we desire.

Now granted, as I'm going through this, this isn't to scold anyone.

I recognize that the decision that is before our elders and as we are prayerfully considering coming together, our desire is ultimately to present worship according to God's terms.

Now, for many of us, we feel worship is, what am I going to get out of it?

In fact, there are those who sometimes tell me, you know what, Pastor, I didn't get anything out of the worship service.

I loved what one of my professors in seminary said when someone said that to them after the service.

They said, you know what, Pastor, I didn't get anything out of that service.

That's a good thing because we weren't worshipping you.

One of the things that we recognize and one of the things that I myself have personally been reminded of is that there are a variety of ways in which people view worship.

I just want to ask you, why are you here today?

Why are you here?

And you need to answer that question.

Maybe you're here because, well, your parents brought you and you had no choice.

Others of you are, well, I want people to think pretty highly of me, and this is what Christians do.

We go to worship on Sunday.

We go to church.

But why are you here?

I want you to realize today that you're here because you've been summoned.

It's not whether or not you choose to worship or decide to come.

You have been summoned.

The God of all creation who has called you to be His, who made you,

who formed you, who is engaged in your life, who loves you and loves you so much that He demonstrated His love to you in this, that while you are yet a sinner, He sent His Son to die for you.

This God, this King, this Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer has called you to worship.

And you should recognize that you are here

because God has called you to be here, whether you feel like it or not.

There is a reality that churches today have lost the fact that God, who we love, who we cry out to when we have needs and concerns, is also a God who rules our lives.

And for many, we think, well, He's ruling it in such a way that it's good for me.

And I want God to direct my life in a way that I prefer and I like.

We need to be reminded that we are serving a God who owes us nothing, to whom we owe everything.

And our passage today, as this first in five verses,

sermons in a series on worshiping according to God's terms is to remind us that we are called.

You know, a lot of people come to worship, and many churches view worship in a variety of ways.

In fact, one of the ways that some people view worship is as evangelism.

Hey, worship is for the purpose of reaching others.

We're going to invite people to come.

We're going to have kind of a great presentation.

It's going to be excellently executed.

It's going to be moving and emotional.

It's going to be dramatic.

We want to use it as a means so that people look around and say, wow, God is really here.

People sometimes view worship as evangelism.

And although evangelism does occur, in fact, evangelism should be everything that we are doing.

We are proclaiming that good news.

It is more than just evangelism.

Some, many in our camp in the Presbyterian Church in America, we see worship as education.

We want to make sure that you know the right things about God.

that you know His Word, that you know what He has done, what duty He requires of you, and what we are to know concerning who He is and how He operates.

We view worship as education.

Maybe you're one that sometimes feels like, well, you know what?

I didn't really get anything out of worship because I didn't learn anything new.

Pastor JD just told things that I've already heard.

People view worship as education.

education.

The biggest way that people now see worship is experience.

They want you to have this experience, this spiritual high, this stirring in your soul.

And so the worship, the venue, the music, everything is all about bringing you to this emotional response where it moves you.

And then there's also those who view it as exaltation, and these individuals feel like we've got it right.

Now granted, they probably do have a better perspective because exaltation is us giving something to God, giving Him the glory, letting people know that He is the God who loves, a God of grace, a God of mercy, and we're here proclaiming that so that all can see we're exalting God.

Now, let me tell you, every worship service or time in which God's people gather, you're going to have those elements.

Those do exist, and they are a part of what we do every week.

But really, as you look at God's Word and you look to see what is worship and what has worship always been in the Old Testament as well as into the New,

is about covenant renewal.

We see a five-fold pattern in the Scriptures whenever God's people come to worship.

And those five-fold issues or aspects deal with what God is doing with us, as well as being reminded of what He has done

and recognizing where we are.

In fact, we're seeking to be very intentional with our worship services to have these five elements.

Now, granted, we've had them at various degrees, but moving forward, we want to be very intentional because we believe we can be that witness of what worship looks like when it is

seen and understood as covenant renewal.

So you're going to hear a lot about covenant renewal, that each week is an opportunity for us to be renewed in God's covenant promises to us, as well as the covenant expectations He has for us.

And so the very first of those five is that we are called to worship.

that we are summoned, that this is something that we were created to do, that it's not something that we initiate.

In fact, that's why every Sunday we speak of having a call to worship.

That is really the summons saying it is time for us to gather, to set aside all other aspects of our lives, to not be focused on what we have to do tomorrow or later this afternoon, but rather we are coming together for the sole purpose,

Because God has invited us and said it's time for us as His people to come and to meet with Him.

It's time for us to do business with God, and God calls us to Him.

He calls us and says, this is our time together.

So you have that call to worship.

God initiates it.

He summons us into His presence.

That's followed by confession of sin, right?

that we recognize that even though we are called to be His, we haven't thought like His, we haven't talked like His, we haven't lived like His.

That through our past week, our time away from this gathering, we got focused on, well, what everyone else is focused on, life, bills, work, schoolwork, the yard, dishes,

All of the things that flood into our lives, that sometimes that flood is so overwhelming, we spend days not even thinking about God.

But we spend a whole lot of time thinking about ourselves and what we want and how we think things should be.

It's a time for confession and acknowledgement that we have failed to do what we ought to do and that we did things we shouldn't have.

And we've not lived as that covenant relationship calls us to.

We confess our sins with the promise that he's faithful and just.

He forgives us and cleanses us.

from all sin.

We have that then assurance of His forgiveness.

So we have that confession of sin and assurance of pardon.

You need to leave here knowing that if you've confessed your sins and that if you are trusting in Christ, you are completely, fully, absolutely deemed perfect in the eyes of God.

You know that you're a miserable failure.

In fact, you're worse than you think you are.

But God's grace is greater than you can imagine.

And He declares to you, stop fretting over that.

You have confessed it.

I forgive you.

Now, go.

Sin no more and live for me.

We are reminded of that.

And you leave here with the absolute assurance that your sins are absolved through Jesus Christ.

No one else can offer that.

Only Christ.

That's followed by consecration, where we're now at a point where our relationship has been restored because we're reminded of God's love and His faithfulness and His forgiveness.

We've confessed our sins.

He's invited us to come.

And now we lift up our prayers to Him.

We hear from His Word.

And what we do then once a month is communion.

Communion in which we are reminded and participating what Christ has done on our behalf.

And finally, we are commissioned.

We are given God's blessing to go out into the world to exalt, to evangelize, to educate, to do those things that only we can do as His witnesses.

Covenant renewal.

And the songs that we then sing, and I hope you're noticing that as we're moving forward.

I hope you noticed that today, the songs that we sing actually reflect where we are and what we're doing in the service.

So after our call to worship, we have big songs of who God is.

This is my Father's world.

We sing of the fact that He is holy.

Not just holy, but holy, holy.

And not just holy, holy, but holy, holy, holy.

And with the angels we cry, holy.

We are reminded of the grandness and greatness of God.

Our songs will be those that remind us and proclaim that our God and our God alone is worthy of worship.

We confess our sins.

We are short of His pardon, of His forgiveness.

We recognize that His mercy is more.

Our sins, many.

His grace and mercy far greater.

We're then also reminded of the fact that we are His, that His love for us is deep.

It's a love unfathomable.

It's a love that you and I, we can hardly give.

We can maybe give it to those who we like, to those who benefit us, but to our very enemies...

how deep the Father's love is for us.

And as we leave, we'll be reminded of who we are and our mission.

Now, our plan is to incorporate every song we can possibly incorporate from every generation that the church has sung and been engaged in because we want it to align with what we are doing.

We want to answer the question of why are you here?

You're here to be renewed in the promises of God as He calls us to worship Him, as we confess our sins, we receive and are reminded of His forgiveness, we spend time being consecrated, learning from His Word, spending time in prayer, and ultimately as we go out.

and are called to serve.

That's what the next five weeks will be going through, those five-fold aspects of covenant renewal worship, so that you can tell people when they say, hey, why do you go to church?

To be renewed in God's covenant promises that He has made to me, and for me to acknowledge my failure that I haven't done that.

but then to receive grace and mercy, and then to be encouraged to be more committed and consecrated to Him so that I can go out and be the ambassadors and the witnesses and the light and the salt that He has called us to be.

So I encourage you to be a part of that.

Let's just briefly look at this passage.

We're looking at a passage from Hebrews, and if you want to know all the context, you can go on our website.

I preach through the entire book of Hebrews, and you can listen to every single sermon, and you can be just awed and amazed at just how impressive it is.

But here's what I hope you remember, those of you who walked through it.

Remember, the book written to the Hebrews, to the Jewish people, were to those that were experiencing immense persecution.

And a lot of them were also having some doubts because they went from a type of worship that they understood, they knew, and they felt comfortable with, the temple worship.

They liked all the sounds and all the tapestry and everything about it.

And now they were coming to this, well, not as extravagant, not as exciting, different kind of worship service.

And for some, they're like, you know what?

I can worship God anywhere, right?

So going to this

time of worship with my brothers and sisters in Christ, it's going to cause me suffering.

It might possibly have persecution occur.

I'm going to have people not want to hang out with me anymore.

And you know what?

It's just not what I'm used to.

And so, the author of Hebrews says, look, don't give up.

Don't go back.

You can't go back to the temple worship because Christ came to fulfill all of that.

Christ is what the temple was pointing to.

You can't go back to the markers.

You've got the real thing.

And so in chapter 12, after he's encouraged them, hey, don't fall away.

Keep running the race.

Keep pressing on.

He basically says this, hey guys, worship is expected.

It's expected.

And oh, by the way, be glad of Jesus, because the way that we now worship does not have all of the fear and being frightened to death and being concerned that you might die if you're not in the right, don't have the right attitude or heart perspective.

but rather you now are invited into the presence of God whose wrath for your sin has been fully satisfied in Jesus.

But worship is expected.

Just like earlier today, Pastor Dan talked about how growth is expected.

There's just certain things that the Bible assumes are happening.

And the

or even what personal consequence might occur because of it, you're expected to worship and remember this.

You have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of the trumpet and the voice of whose words made the hearers beg that no further message be spoken to them.

For they could not endure the order that was given.

For even if a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.

Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear.

And it goes on at the next slide there.

Need a little bit of help.

Something's not working with our stuff there.

Here we go.

Maybe it did work.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and the innumerable angels and festal gathering and to the assembly of the firstborn and enrolled in heaven and to God, the judge of all.

And it goes on saying, look, you now have come under much better circumstances.

where there is certainty, where you know you are forgiven because of what Christ has done, where it might not have all of what you had before, but you can now come in freedom knowing that you are loved and not in fear.

And so the author is saying, look, worship is expected.

We are expected to worship because we have been called.

This is what the author of Hebrews says to those individuals.

And I'll say to all of us, do not refuse him.

Yes, there's a possibility of some big changes here.

But we really believe and are leaning towards the idea that it is beneficial.

I can't tell you just how great it was and has been to sit in our combined Sunday school time.

Now, granted, in the fall, the plan would be to have multiple classes.

In fact, at least three, taught by three of the pastors, Wren, Zepp, teaching from the Bible, the Old Testament, and Dan and Dennis are still sorting out what they're doing.

But it's going to be great.

But guess what?

You've got four more weeks of cultivating and growing in godliness.

So come on out at 9 a.m.

It's important.

Your kids, we have ministries to encourage them and to teach them.

Soon they're going to be going, many of them, to school where they're going to be taught things for eight hours by others.

It's important to have this time on Sunday to teach as well.

So I encourage you not to refuse Him.

Yes, you might be upset, you might be disappointed, but you've been summoned.

We've been called to do this.

We should do it.

And our desire is to present to our culture worship that isn't about us and what we like or the favorite songs that we can sing, but rather what are we called to?

to know, to be, and to do.

So worship is expected.

Also, worship is not optional or casual.

See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking.

For they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, much less will they escape if we reject Him who warns from heaven.

That is a warning.

He's saying, look, yeah, you've got all these reasons for why you don't want to do this, or you don't want to make the change, or you want to go back to the old ways.

And that's both services.

I've talked with individuals who've attended both services.

The first service saying, I'm not sure about moving ahead into these new things.

And people in the second service say, boy, we're adding a whole lot of older things.

And my response to all of them is, yes, yes, yes.

And give us time because we're seeking to develop this prayerfully and in a way that reflects what God desires, that we would worship according to His terms.

So, worship is not optional or casual.

It's not something that we do lightly.

It's not something that we say it's ours.

We don't talk about our service, my service, your service.

It's God's service.

Don't refuse Him.

Don't stop coming because of that.

And maybe you can find a church that meets all of your preferences and sings the songs that you prefer and operates in the way that you desire.

They're out there

But what we're finding is that there are very few churches that step back and say, well, how are we to worship according to God's terms?

It's not to be ignored.

It's not optional.

It's not casual.

In fact, that's exactly what he says.

He's saying that we're coming to something that everything else will be removed.

In fact, everything in this world will pass away.

But yet what doesn't pass away?

Absolutely, His Word, His gospel, His kingdom, His righteousness.

And so when we come to worship, we should not be looking and saying, I'm not sure I got anything out of that, or I didn't like that, or I like those parts but not this part.

We never should ask what we wanted or what we experienced or how we feel.

We need to ask ourselves, how do we do?

how did I do today?

Well, the fact that you're here, there you go, attaboy, attagirl.

You got the first one down.

You were summoned, and you're here.

Pretty simple.

But how were you, and how did you do in confessing your sins?

Were you actually asking that God would search you and know you and reveal to you those things that you don't even recognize anymore because they've just become so common in your life?

And how about praising?

Yeah, maybe you didn't know all the songs, but the words are up there.

And the issue is singing is just an expressive way for us to remember and to join in unison so that we're not just chanting or speaking together all the time.

I love to sing.

But even if I don't know the melody, I think about the words.

And I'm reminded that my sins are many, but God's mercy is more, and I need to hear that every day, and I think so do all of us.

I need to be reminded of how deep...

God's love for me is.

Because let's be honest, for most of us, our love for others is pretty conditional.

Yet God's love for us is unconditional.

And that should move us.

Because there are times in our lives, and myself included, that I'll go a whole day and don't even think about what God desires or wants.

And I could chalk it up to being busy or trying to be responsible and faithful in the roles that He has placed me.

It's no excuse.

It's no excuse.

We're a very self-centered species.

We're not much, but we're all we think about.

And finally, this is your takeaway.

It's a simple sermon.

It's just the author of Hebrews under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reminding people it's about God and coming and being renewed

and who He is and our relationship with Him.

So I invite you to come ready and to come reverent because the author ends and says, for our God is a consuming fire.

I mean, worship was pretty traumatic in the old covenant, particularly if you were a minister or a priest.

You know, I go home maybe tired from, you know, talking and moving my arms and trying to be engaging.

Those priests went home covered in blood and exhausted.

Any of you who are hunters or farmers, man, processing an animal is not something for the faint of heart, nor is it something that you do easily.

You've got to get in there and break those bones.

You've got to cut through the flesh.

That animal's

bleeding, you know, who knows?

It's crazy.

Imagine, they had all those horns, I think, to basically drown out the, you know, all the lambs that are crying out while being slaughtered.

It was a very, very intense experience.

And this God of blood and judgment and smoke and fire

now being worshiped in a smaller setting.

In times of singing, but in times of silence.

Times of standing, times of sitting, times of engaging, times of listening.

The author of Hebrews says, yeah, maybe the approach has changed, but God hasn't.

So come ready and come reverent because this God that we worship is

consuming fire.

But the good news is, as we leave, because of Jesus, you're summoned, not for condemnation, but invitation to be renewed in your relationship, and to be renewed in how you even feel about yourself.

You're welcomed, not warned that if any part of you touches the wrong thing, you're going to die.

You're safe.

There's no fire falling from heaven and scorching all those who are not here for the right reason.

And worship isn't about earning or achieving something.

It's about responding and being renewed in our confidence and faithfulness to the covenant that God has established, a covenant through which by His Son,

We are fully and completely forgiven.

We are adopted as sons and daughters.

And we are valued and have true purpose of sharing and living and engaging in the world that is lost, dark, and desperate.

And worship isn't about performance.

It's not even a concert.

It's really a summons to experience what's happening right now in heaven, something that we will all, who are in Christ when our life here ceases to exist, we will exist eternally in the presence of God with those angels in a festal gathering as all creation cries, "'Holy.'"

So how will we answer to this invitation to being called to worship?

Hopefully not with opinions or preferences, but just with sheer praise for this God who is long-suffering with us and continues to love us even when we're unlovable, who continues to forgive when we constantly go our own way,

and who has provided all that is necessary for us to be right with Him.

So do not forsake the gathering together as is the habit of some, but come.

We've been called to worship and to be renewed in our time together with our God.