

Abide – A Heart of Worship

1/24/21

Romans 12:1-2 | Matthew 22:24-40

Sunday AM

I read a story this week of a church that had a man in the choir who couldn't sing. Many tried to help him find another ministry, but he insisted on being in the choir. Well, the director was desperate. So, he went to the pastor for help. He said, "Pastor, you have to help me w/ bro Joe. If you can't persuade him to leave the choir, ½ the choir, including me, are going to quit. So, the pastor went to Joe and suggested he leave the choir. When Joe asked, "Why should I leave?" The pastor said, "B/c several people have told me you can't sing." Joe replied, "That's nothing. 50 people have told me you can't preach, but you're still here."

Truth is – we can't all sing, and apparently, we can't all preach either. The good news – we can all worship.

Did you know you were made for worship? You can't help it. It's hardwired into your DNA. Whether it's the worship of Big (G) God or a manmade little (g) god, your default is to worship. So, if you can't make God the object of your worship, then you'll choose to worship someone/thing else – fame, fortune, folly, or maybe even flatbread...

In 1977 such a case took place. Maria Rubio of Lake Arthur, NM was minding making a burrito for her husband when she noticed the skillet marks on the tortilla resembled the face of Jesus.

After showing the burn mark to her family (who agreed), she asked her priest to bless it – and he did! She then placed it on a bed of cotton in a shadow box and put it on display in a renovated utility shack for people to see – and the people came! By 1979, over 35K people had come to pay homage to the tortilla at the *Shrine of Jesus of the Tortilla*. Really! Everyone agreed it looked like Jesus, except for a reporter who said it looked like former heavyweight boxing champ Leon Spinks. Ultimately, disaster befell the tortilla when Ms. Rubio's granddaughter took the sacred bread to school for Show/Tell where it was accidentally dropped and broke into pieces. REALLY

It just goes to show you that some people will worship any/everything. Why? B/c we've been created to worship. **Romans 1** says if we won't worship God, then we'll make something up – *exchanging the glory of the Creator for manmade items*.

*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being, birds, animals, and reptiles. Romans 1:21-23*

**What is worship?** Worship is the highest privilege and responsibility we can engage in; it's the most essential element in communing w/ God.

Jesus said worship is *loving God w/ all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength*. Thus, worship is giving God your mind's attention, your heart's affection, your will's ambition, and your body's action fully to the Lord. It's giving God His rightful place on the throne of your life so that every aspect of your life might bring glory/honor to Him.

Now, if you're just joining us, we're in a series on what it means to **abide** Christ; that is, what it means to walk intimately w/ our Creator.

In John 15, Jesus said to the (12) – *I am the vine, you are the branches. If anyone abides in Me, and I in them, they will bear much fruit, but apart from Me you can do nothing.*

Jesus wasn't concerned w/ producing fruit, He was focused on our intentionality/connection w/ Him and on each of us experiencing intimacy w/ Him.

The next essential element to experiencing God is worship – honoring God and getting Him in the correction position in our lives. So, today, I want to take a few min. to discuss living aligned/under God.

***Worship is central to drawing near to God***; yet sadly, many of us have been taught that worship is a service on Sunday and/or a few songs that we sing. Now, while some of these elements might help us to worship – true worship is so much more.

Let me take it a step further, there are (2) primary aspects of worship that feed off of each other. First is our **private** worship – this is the time we spend alone w/ God **loving, honoring, and enthroning** Him in our lives. The natural byproduct of true private worship is the ability to engage in authentic public worship – the time we spend w/ others loving, honoring, and enthroning God. Both should incite the other, but the starting line of all worship begins in private worship.

Today, may I offer to you the (6) A's of Worship:

## I Worship Starts w/ **ATTITUDE**

I'm mindful of the old Zig Ziglar saying – *Your attitude, not your aptitude, determines your altitude!*

**IOW** – if you want to go high, your priority, focus, and determination (your disposition) is key!

In **Philippians 2:5** – Paul encourages us to have the *same attitude in us that Jesus had for us* – which was an attitude that would willingly lay down our lives to bring honor/glory to the Father.

I think of Colossians 3:17 – *In everything you do in word and in deed, do it for the glory of God.*

That is, in our work, in our play, at church, at home, at school, on the job, or in the community – **honor God in everything you do at all times.**

When I think of having an attitude of worship, I think of a church member who I've traveled w/ and spent some time. Whenever I'm around **K**, I hear Him softly humming a hymn/ chorus – always. Walking thru the airport, working on a ministry project, watching TV – he's always softly worshipping the Lord b/c it is the attitude of his heart – he almost can't help it!

## II Worship Seeks **ALIGNMENT**

When Meg/I first married, she was driving a Nissan Sentra that made an awful noise when you drove it – and if you took your hands off the steering wheel, it'd take a hard turn to the right b/c it was out of alignment. An amazing thing happened after I took it Pep Boys and they fixed it – the car drove silent/straight.

**The same is true in life.** If we're not properly aligned w/ our Creator, life is going to get a little wonky. But when we trust in Him instead of in ourselves and submit to His leading in our lives – when we truly realize He's God and we're not! Life can work!

This is the reason for the first Commandment. In **Exodus 20**, God was clear when He told Moses – *You shall have no other gods before me.* Exodus 20:3

**This command is about getting God in His rightful place on the throne of our lives and aligning our lives under His sovereign, loving rule.**

In fact, the first (4) commandments deal w/ alignment. That is, (1) we have only one God sitting on the throne; (2) we allow no other idols to take His place; (3) we think so highly of Him we speak highly of Him; and (4) we set aside a day to honor Him and to rest in Him.

Jesus summed it up this way in the Gospels – *Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.* Matthew 22:34

**What was Jesus saying?** He was saying that loving God first, above all else, is worship that brings our lives in alignment under His love. **That is** – if you want your life to work, then get God in the right seat on the bus in your life. May I offer a **HINT** – God’s seat is not one of the passenger seats.

### III Worship Necessitates **AMBITION**

In the church world, we sometimes see ambition in a negative light – and when ambition is independent of God and focused only on self, then ambition is not your friend. But **holy ambition** is a different story – and there’s no greater ambition than knowing God and making Him the object of your worship and the pursuit of your life. *King David helps us to see holy ambition:*

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs for you O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.* Psalm 42:1-2

**Listen to the craving of David’s heart.** He’s desperate – seeking/needing God. He said, “Lord, as a deer pants in need of water, so am I in desperate need of You to show up and be God in my life.

I heard a story of a proud man who came to Socrates seeking knowledge. He said, "Great Socrates, I am in great need of knowledge. Wanting to see just how great of need the man had, Socrates led him waist deep into the sea and asked, "What do you want?" The man replied, "Knowledge." So, Socrates pushed the man under the water for 30 sec. When he pulled the man up, he asked, "What do you want?" The man sputtered, "Wisdom?" So, Socrates pushed him under again for several sec. Pulling him up, he asked again, “What do you seek? Gasping, the man said, “I seek knowledge.” Socrates jammed him under the water again for some 60 sec. When he pulled him up, he asked again, "What do you want?" The man screeched. “Air! I need air!” Socrates said, "When you want knowledge as much as you’ve just wanted air, then you will begin to find it.”

**Can I be honest?** W/ all of our wealth/prosperity, w/ all of our comforts/conveniences, I wonder just how desperate we are for God. ***We need holy ambition.***

### IV Worship Includes **ANTICIPATION**

Do you remember the Heinz ketchup commercial – w/ the ketchup bottle tipped w/ a person eagerly awaiting the ketchup. The anticipation was over the top.

How much more should we anticipate the blessings and presence of God in our worship of Him. The Bible promises that when we enthrone Him, He will inhabit the praise of His people. **Listen to Psalm 145:**

*I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name forever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom...*

Now listen to why David anticipated from God...

*The Lord is gracious/compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made... The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down... You open your hand and satisfy the desires of*

*every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on Him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy... Psalms 145*

**Question** – when you enter into His gate's w/ thanksgiving and into His court's w/ praise – whether in private/public worship, do you enter anticipating that God will be present and act like God or are you entering w/ no anticipation or expectation?

In private/public times w/ God, we always must **come expecting** – knowing God loves nothing more than being God in our lives. So, **ask** so He can give, **seek** so He can reveal, knock – and watch Him open doors.

## V Worship Involves **AFFECTION**

In **Matthew 15**, Jesus has an interesting exchange w/ the Pharisees. They're upset w/ Jesus that His disciples appear to be breaking their traditions on the Sabbath. Notice Jesus' response:

*You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: "These people honor me w/ their lips, but their hearts are far from me..." Matthew 15:7-8*

Their hearts were far from God b/c their worship was about **keeping rules** and **going thru the motions** instead of engaging in intimacy w/ God – it was sterile. Jesus was saying, worship must engage the heart. There must be an emotional connection w/out being so emotional it's about the emotion.

Consider Jeremiah's exchange w/ God in Jeremiah 29 in calling the Israelites out of Babylonian captivity.

*The Lord says: "When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. **Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me w/ all your heart.**"*

**KEY** – Worship and the pursuit of God doesn't get caught up in the hype/emotion of the moment – it doesn't get swept away by the highs/lows – you don't have to check your brain for your heart or vice versa – it's both! Worship always involves the head/heart.

## VI Worship Requires **ACTION**

*I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual form of worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2*

W/out a doubt, this text is loaded w/ the keys elements of worship, yet I think Paul was saying – when a person has truly experienced the glory and redeeming mercy of God – when they've genuinely come face-to-face w/ grace – *they can't help but to **bend their knee, bow their hearts, surrender their will and offer their lives as a living sacrifice to God in worship.** **Action***

Paul tells us we must (1) **offer** our lives to God and (2) **resist** conforming to the world as an act of worship.

**offer your bodies** implies surrendering/yielding. The word was used of a priest who'd offer a spotless lamb on an altar as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

**not conforming** pertains to not being squeezed into the mold of the world but instead shaped/molded into the image of Christ.

**IOW** – worship is the act of surrendering/yielding your life to God so His will can be done in/thru you.

There's only one thing you can dedicate to God – only one; and this is your right to yourself. Chambers

**Here's the truth** – we're all going to worship someone/thing b/c we're all hardwired to worship – it's standard human equipment. The question is – do we understand this and are we willing to engage in it?

Worship might begin w/ an attitude and willingness of the heart – but as it is processed in our lives – it will eventually become an action (a fruit) that is produced thru our lives that seeks to honor/glorify God.