

III. Gospel Worship In Biblical Perspective

Worship God!

“How?”

Matthew 4:1–11

Dr. Harry Reeder

January 27, 2013 – Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God, the truth, inspired, inherent and infallible. Matthew 4:1-11 says [1] *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2] And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” [4] But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” [5] Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple [6] and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” [7] Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” [8] Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. [9] And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” [10] Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” [11] Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There will be another passage of Scripture that we’ll be looking at in this study that is very important. This is the third sermon in the series “Worship God” and it comes on the heels of last year’s ministry focus which was personal evangelism, iShare. This year it is Gospel worship and that is when the Gospel does its work it brings us from sinners to Christ and sin which is falling short of the glory of God, to Christ that we might live for the glory of God. It is Gospel worship. So we are on the pursuit of that. We are on that journey this year to find out more about what it means to worship God. We have chosen our words carefully about our journey. Our journey is the Gospel pursuit of God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped, Holy Spirit empowered worship. God glorifying means Christ exalting. Bible shaped means the Bible shapes our worship. We’re not going to engage in human will worship but Divine will worship. How is God to be revealed? He is to be worshipped and we can’t worship without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. We worship in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. Adoration to the Father, access through the Son, enabled and assisted by the Holy Spirit. That journey moves us forward.

I want to stop here for a moment. This is a Gospel journey to God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped, Holy Spirit empowered worship and cannot be done until the Gospel does its work in your life. Perhaps you’re reading this today in which you were drawn to do and I want you to know there is Good News. The Father has loved sinners and has given His only Son. If you will simply, yet gloriously and profoundly turn from your sin and put your trust in Christ alone, He will save you from your sins.

He will take you to Glory to be with Him. He will give you a new life, a new record, a new heart and He'll take you to your new home. He will even give you a new family. It's a glorious thing that He'll give to you.

Worship is very much a crucial part of it. In fact in many ways it assumes it. My life apart from Christ is that I am an unrepentant sinner. What is sin? The Bible says in Romans 3:23 [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. In sin I rebel against what God made me for. God made me for His glory and that is my joy. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever but because I am a sinner then I sin. Sin is coming short of the glory of God. In other words, my life apart from Christ is an active pursuit of assassinating God's glory and insinuating my glory, of denying His glory and embellishing my glory. When I get saved from my sins then God begins to turn my life around so instead of a life that assassinates God's glory and exalts my glory, now I have a new life where I want to assassinate sin and I want to give adoration to God. I want to life Him up. Now it is God glorifying instead of self exalting and I'm on that journey. I didn't arrive there. I won't be perfect until I go to be with Him but that's the journey – God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped, Holy Spirit empowered, life worship of God and gathered worship of God.

So your very first step in your journey in reality is Jesus and I just want to invite you to Him. You might be thinking "I'm not good enough." That is why He came. Don't go get good enough, just come to Him. His righteousness will clothe you and He'll wash away your sins. Then you can stand and sing "Worthy is the Lamb who has removed my sin and my shame. Praise His Name forever!" You can get started right now. I'm on this journey of God glorifying, Christ centered, Bible shaped, Holy Spirit empowered worship.

It had two features – adoration and action. Worship is adoration in action. That is I give God praise. I do it actively. The two words that are used – *proskynein* and *latreia* – are the two words of adoration and action to give worship and praise to God. Worship is not a noun, it's a verb. It's not 'let's go to worship' naming an event I'm going to watch. It is 'let's worship God', a verb describing what I do to give adoration to God whom I love because He first loved me. It is adoration and action at work in and through God's Holy Spirit that works within us, directed by God's Word that shapes us.

Worship not only has two features but two factors – two dynamics to worship. It's like two sides of one coin. There is life worship of God and there is gathered worship of the Triune God. I Corinthians 10:31 says [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*. Husbands, you love your wives as Christ loved the church. You're giving glory to God. Wives how are you submitting to your husband? It is as to the Lord. It is an act of worship. Why do I go to work? Colossians 3:23 says [23] *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men*. My work is worship. My stewardship is worship. My sharing the Gospel is worship. All of life, even down to the intimacy of the marriage bed, is sacred, worship. Even the intimacies of marriage are acts of worship to the Lord and in the Lord.

So all of life is worship and that leads me to the joy of gathered worship. All week Satan has assaulted you and you've kept coming back – I want to worship God, I want to worship God, I don't want to be led aside. I have been in the wilderness of this world, just like Jesus was and Satan has come. Satan does not want me to live my life as a worship statement to the One true and living God. I have had some failures and

challenges but God has given me grace and mercy and I've grown. Now I have come to gathered worship to encourage and stimulate one another and to be refreshed, renewed, recalibrated and refocused in the Lord. So life worship leads to gathered worship. In gathered worship I am now focused back on the Lord and am ready to step back into life next week to worship the Lord. These are the two factors of worship that are working back and forth together in and to the Lord.

In this series I have tried to lay out for us through a series of questions – why do we worship God, who are we to worship and in this study how are we to worship? I know three things about everybody I ever meet. Everybody I ever meet is religious. You might say what about the atheist? That's a religion. That's not a faith that's a leap in the light but that's a leap in the dark. So that's faith. They have never uncovered any tribe that didn't have religion. So I know you have a religion I just don't know what it is. Something is guiding your life but I don't know what it is. I'm hoping it's the Gospel because if it's the Gospel then you know it's not religion that leads you into salvation but it's God that gives you salvation and religion is the fruit of your salvation not the route of your salvation. Secondly, I know everyone is a believer for even the devil believes. The third thing I know is that everyone I meet worships. It's wired into us. We will worship. The question is, why, who and how. It isn't, are you going to worship because you are. Who, what, how? How are you going to worship?

We have already laid down one marker on our journey and that marker is the following. Acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is the culmination, the occupation and affirmation of a Gospel centered life. Why did God make you? He made you to praise Him. Why did God save you? It is to praise Him – to the praise of the glory of His grace. Why did God change you? It is to give Him glory. Why does God sustain you? It is that you might give Him praise. Acceptable worship of the Triune God of glory is the occupation of the Christian life. Life is worship of God. Then there is gathered worship before God. Life is worship to the One true and living God.

The second thing we learned in that aspect is that life is the culmination of our life. It's why He saved us, made us, redeemed us and it is the affirmation of our life. How do you know when somebody is saved? They come from assassinating the glory of God to wanting to adore God in all of His glory. They are growing in that grace and knowledge of Christ. It is the culmination, the occupation and affirmation of a Gospel saturated life.

Worship is important, why? It is because worship is important. The worship of God is important, because worship is important. That's why it is important. This is tough. Did you know there are many blessings to worship? When you and your family come together in worship it blesses your family, it does something for your family. That's why I love to see families coming together at the Lord's Day morning worship, because I know there's an effect. It may not be felt immediately but it will be there. I know that when we do worship right, unbelievers are going to be drawn to the Lord. They will say "God is in the midst of these people" and they will fall down to worship Him and come to Him. I know that when the Word of God is sung, preached, prayed and read that you will be equipped to live more for Christ. I know that you're hurting and God's Word is going to encourage you. I know that things have perhaps gone pretty well and God's Word will humble you. I know all those blessed effects of worship but that's not why we worship.

We don't worship for the blessings of worship. We worship because who God is and what God does, deserves our worship. That's why we worship. You were created to worship. You were saved to worship. You were sustained. Do you know why you had breath this morning? It is because God gave you that. It wasn't your lung but He used your lungs. He gave you the lungs. I was sharing with some the other day about the scientist who had the opportunity to debate with God about creation and the scientist said "We don't need a Creator, because we can take dirt and make it into men." God said "Okay let's have a contest." The scientist said "Okay, You watch I can make men from dirt." God said "Okay bring your own dirt." See, God gave you those lungs, this atmosphere and all of those things. Why did He sustain you to breathe that breath? Psalm 150:6 says [6] *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!* That is why He did it. Why did He save you? He saved you to the praise of His glorious grace.

That's why I can say everywhere I go that I know people worship. The question is who, what and how? God wired us to worship. If we don't worship the One true and living God and the way that's acceptable unto Him we'll worship recreation, sports, technology, our job, wife, husband, children etc. We will worship. We'll take those things that ought to be used for the praise of God and make them the objects of praise and then our life will be devoted to that. So I know we'll worship.

I'll try to put it this way. This last week I was in Grand Rapids to do the Embers to a Flame conference and it was five degrees below zero. I said "Lord, what am I doing here?" There was eighteen inches of snow. The whole time I'm there it is cold and snowing. Finally on Thursday I go to get on the plane and I said "We don't do this in Birmingham." When I got there I asked them "What are you going to do about the schedule tomorrow?" They said "What do you mean?" I said "If it was like this in Birmingham we take the whole month off." They said "Oh we'll meet tomorrow" and sure enough not a single person missed it. They all got there. Thursday I'm looking on my iPhone to see the temperature in Birmingham and I said "Lord, get me home please." In God's providence I sat in one of those emergency exit aisles which I love because of all that leg room and the only exception is that the attendant comes to you and says "Look at me for you must verbally answer this question. Are you prepared to do what you're supposed to do and follow the directions by sitting in this emergency exit seat?" I believe the lady actually spent sixteen weeks at Paris Island at boot camp in the Marine Corp. She so emphatically said "Look at me!" We're all like "Yes, yes, yes." That mischievous part of me said to that lady "Ma'am I was made for this moment." The man sitting next to me said "Do you know something that's going to happen that I don't know?" So that became an evangelistic opportunity at that moment.

What you are supposed to go do with your life when you leave here is that we were made for that. We were saved for that. We are sustained with a heartbeat, a breath and a pulse to do that. We were made to worship the Triune God.

The second marker was acceptable worship is first and foremost unalterably committed to one object and consumed with one subject, the Triune God of glory. In other words, *everything* in this worship service from start to finish, God is the content of worship. He is the object of worship. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. If you only had one word to describe God what would it

be? The Bible has already given it to us and that's holy. That doesn't exhaustively tell you who God is but it's accurate. Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

The content of our worship is we praise the Father, who authored us our creation, we praise the Son by whom we were created and we praise the Holy Spirit who has applied and hovered over this creation. Then the Father has authored my salvation, the Son has accomplished my salvation and the Holy Spirit has applied, sealed and secured my salvation. God the Father has ordained the days of my life. God the Son is interceding for me right now and God the Holy Spirit is with me in life. We are praising Father, Son and Holy Spirit for His work of creation, redemption and His works of providence in our life. He is the subject of our worship. He is the object of our worship. God is the infinite center of our worship. God is the boundless circumference of our worship. He has no boundaries. He is the unfathomable substance of our worship and He is the endless summation of our worship, because every time I'm summing Him up there is just more to speak of Him. It is that which is the focus of our worship. That is why we worship and who we worship.

Now how do we worship? Let's look back in Matthew 4. The first word in Matthew 4:1 is 'then' and that means that which is about to happen has something to do with what has gone on before this. In Matthew 1 Jesus is born. In Matthew 1 and 2 Jesus moves from birth into childhood. In Matthew 3 He is ready to begin His public ministry at age 30. So in obedience to God's Word the priest can only begin his ministry at age 30 whereas a prophet or king can begin at any time. How is the priest to begin his ministry? It begins with a baptism by another priest. John baptize Me that we might fulfill righteousness and John baptizes Him. Now He is ordained and installed for His public ministry as the Messiah. As He is ready to go forward as Prophet, Priest and King, the Father speaks in affirmation saying "This is My Son in whom I'm well pleased" and the Holy Spirit is poured out upon Him.

Now He rises from the baptismal waters, goes to the wilderness and Satan comes to attack and assault Him there. He comes to the Second Adam as he came to the first Adam, with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Using the lust of the flesh Satan says "Are you hungry? Command these stones to become bread. Make it all about You, Jesus." Jesus says "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" Oh You want to quote the Bible? Satan says "I'll quote the Bible for You." He takes Jesus up a mountain and shows Him all the things of glory and says "Fall down and worship me." Jesus says "*You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*" He shows Him at the pinnacle of the temple with the boastful pride of life and says "If You're the Son of God then throw Yourself down. Doesn't the Bible say..." and then of course Jesus says '*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.*' Satan does a lot of work with the Bible in a lot of pulpits but Jesus brings the truth of God's Word in context back to him.

Notice where it all leads to, did you notice the last thing I read? He took Him up on a high mountain. He showed Him the glories of an imagined kingdom that is not true and he displays it before His eyes. He says "I'll give you this" because this is what Satan is really after. Satan does not want you to leave here and worship God with your life. He doesn't want you to gather together and worship God with your heart, your soul and your mind. He wants you to worship him. The way he can get you to worship him is to get you to quit worshipping God. He might even get you to worship, worship if he can or he

may get you to worship the blessings of worship instead of worshipping God. He does not want you to worship God so Jesus says “Be gone, Satan. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him alone.”

Now the question is, how? What is acceptable worship? How do we worship Him? Let’s look at Psalm 29. This is a Psalm of thanksgiving and praise to God for His power and demonstrated might. The Psalm falls into two categories. The worship of God in Psalm 29:3-11 and then there is the call to worship in Psalm 29:1-2. Here is what David says in Psalm 29:1-2, [1] *Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings* (He calls the angels to worship), *ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.* (Now He turns to us.) [2] *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name* (Give Him praise not only for what He has done but for who He is. Then how do You want me to do this?); *worship the LORD* (That’s who, now how?) *in the splendor of holiness.* Why? It is because He deserves it and worship of God is important. Who do we worship? It is the Lord of glory, the Triune God, Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer. How do we worship Him? We worship Him in the splendor of holiness.

I want to leave you with a couple of things. This Psalm of praise is purely a psalm of praise. There are no divergent paths in it as there are in other psalms that go off in places of application and other things. This is purely a Psalm of praise because of God’s glory, grace and might.

The second thing is that it is absorbed with God. If you read through it you will see the name of God 18 times – Yahweh, translated Jehovah or with the capital letters LORD. Ascribe to Jehovah, ascribe to Yahweh the glory and praise that is due His Name. This is not only the way you live but this is what you would have sung coming to worship and this is what they would have sung in worship. By the way, He has put into this Psalm a phrase that He had already written in I Chronicles 16:29 and you find it in its entirety in I Chronicles 16. It’s a psalm of thanksgiving for God’s sustaining, delivering power. When you get to I Chronicles 16:29 He says [29] *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor (or beauty) of holiness.* Which means our worship is to be holy.

Earlier I mentioned to you that there is one word to describe God, not exhaustively but pointedly. If I only get one word to say then I reach back to what they are singing in heaven – Holy, holy, holy. In heaven as they are before the Lord they cry out “Holy is the Lord” and that is not enough just to give it in the normative and the comparative. Then they say “Holy, holy, holy” – the normative, comparative, and the superlative – “Let all the earth praise His Name. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God.”

What does the word ‘holy’ mean? One thing it means is purity and righteousness. That is a secondary usage of the word holy, translated holy in your Bible. Its primary usage is that holy means unique. It means one of a kind. Holy means, wholly other. It means something distinct, something sacred, something unique. So let’s apply that to God. Is there anyone like God? He is one of a kind. He is unique, glorious and high and lifted up. He made everything under Him. He saves His people. There is nothing over Him. There is nothing beside Him. Holy, holy, holy and He’s not only righteous but there is none like Him. All the gods of the earth are nothing. There is none like Him.

If our worship is to be holy, what is He saying? He is saying the worship of God is to be sacred and unique. It is something absolutely distinct. You sing but it’s not a concert. You learn but it’s not a classroom. You’re encouraged but it’s not a therapy

session. You're drawn together but it's not just a tool for personal, family or church unity. People get evangelized but it's not an evangelistic event. People are equipped but the pastor is not just up there to get the people equipped, but he's not a CEO at the moment with the stockholders. No, it's the worship of God. It has singing, teaching, praise, encouragement, conviction, challenge, a unifying effect, an evangelistic effect but we don't take those and make them the object of worship nor the subject of worship. They are the blessings of worship.

What is worship? It is something unique. It's not 'you ought to come to our worship because there's not a concert like that around.' I'm not opposed to concerts. It's not come to worship because you'll get a blessing. No, you come to worship to bless the Lord. Are there blessings that come from that? Absolutely, but that's not what we come for – the blessings. We come to bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me bless His holy Name. It is this consuming desire to give praise to God and that nothing else steps in the place of that. It is sacred. You can't describe it any other way.

Earlier I said the word worship is a verb. I have dug down deep into my tenth grade English that I didn't spend a lot of time on but I'd like to take this a step further because I think this is important. The word worship in the Bible is not only a verb but it is a transitive verb which means in the Christian use of the word worship there can never be a period after the word worship. I'm going to worship. No, worship demands an object. Christian worship demands an object and there is only One. We have come to worship God, the God of glory, the thrice holy God, the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have come to worship God.

There is none like Him therefore the worship of God is unique. On the one hand it is utterly reverent and on the other hand it is full of joy. In the name of reverence you don't just take a trip into morbidity. In the name of joy you don't take a flight into personal triviality. It is Holy Spirit empowered where we're on the one hand we're in awe and reverence and on the other hand rejoicing in the Lord. Both of those are put together and there's something about the worship of God from God's people in life and when they gather in which it is unique and sacred. When Satan comes to us in the wilderness of life and wanting us to worship for something other than the One true and living God with the uniqueness and sacredness of that worship we can tell him to be gone.

Let me put it this way. You could translate 'worship God in the splendor of holiness' with this phrase; 'worship God in holy attire.' In the Old Testament they tried to get that point across with audio visual when the priest would come to worship on behalf of the people. God had designed all these marvelous vestments that were absolutely stunning but now we have come to the New Covenant where we're all priests. In reference to holy attire I think of my granddaddy who only had one suit because he didn't have a lot of money. He called it his 'Sunday go to meetin' suit.' It wasn't an expensive suit and he had it tailored at J.C. Penney. He would get married in it, go to church in it and get buried in it. The point is that worship is unique. I just wear this suit to that. I set this suit aside for that. I'm not saying this to argue whether you wear a suit or not to worship but my point in this is that there was something unique, that he did when he went to worship.

What does that mean for us in the New Covenant? Forget about dresses and coats for a minute. Our holy attire is that we come adorned in the Gospel, adorned in the

righteousness and the blood of Christ. We come adorned in the Gospel of grace in the presence of God, consumed with Him who has snatched us from the fire and who has saved us from our sins. Therefore when we come to worship it can't be explained any other way than this is the unique gathering of God's people with reverence and awe, but joy overflowing. There is this joyful gathering of reverent people that is a unique and glorious statement. So what is acceptable worship of the Triune God? It is a unique act of adoration by God's people adorned in the saving beauty of the Gospel of Christ, whether its life worship or gathered worship.

I want to give one more thought to you. I beg you, let's give God thanks for every blessed effect that accompanies the worship of God, but please, let's not make those blessings the focus of our worship but God. When you do that worship itself of God will become unique and sacred, wholly other. It can't be explained as a knock down version of a concert. It can't be explained just to get together and sing a few hymns and learn something from our preacher. It can't be explained to say I get to see all the people I haven't seen or that you were recalibrated and got back on track. All of that happens and hopefully you'll learn, God will recalibrate, He'll renew and unbelievers will be drawn but when we come we have consciously said "This is the moment where the Thrice Holy God is worshipped in a way that He finds pleasing." It's not the applause of men that we're looking for. I'm not saying you can't applaud in worship but we didn't come for the applause of man. There is only one applause and it's the applause we want when we've worshipped God and it's the applause of those nail scared hands that Christ is pleased. He is lifted up and in His Name the Father is glorified and the Spirit moves freely upon us and in us.

My last thought is simply, our view of God and our relationship with God will determine the priority and practice of life worship and gathered worship. Small God – small worship. Disconnected from God intimately, personally, relationally this week – small worship, disconnected worship. Just count the time for I've checked the box, let me move on. Let me flip what I just said. Our view of God and our relationship with God will not only determine the practice and priority of worship in our life but the worship we did today we're sent out to life worship. Our (my view, your view) worship today revealed our (my view, your view) view of God. It revealed my relationship with God. Is it intimate and vital? So will my worship be. It will be passionate, reverent and joyful. Do I see Him high and lifted up?

When I was writing that down this last week, I came to a point before the Lord and said "God, I have to ask the people to forgive me." It is my responsibility in my preaching, not yours but if in any way in my preaching I have not exalted God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and you have a small view of Him because the pulpit has not exalted Him, please forgive me, because if we did a right view of God and if we have a vital relationship with God then we won't have diminished and disconnected worship. It will be unique, sacred, reverent and rejoicing.

A 17 Century saint was known as Brother Lawrence. You may have read his book titled Practicing the Presence of God. He is an interesting man. He came to the end of his life and he was about to die. He is on his death bed struggling for his breath and his compatriots, colleagues and disciples gathered around him. They leaned closer to him just to try and hear whatever he would say. They are watching him. His eyes opened and they looked at him. He said "What are you doing?" They said "We're here to be with

you as you're dying." He said "I'm not dying." They said "Then what are you doing?" He said "I'm not dying. I'm doing now what I've endeavored to do with my whole life, I'm worshipping God and now I'm going to meet Him." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the privilege to live lives that are unique and sacred. We always stumble but Your grace is sufficient to forgive and renew that we might live lives unique and sacred before You, full of reverence and joy, awe and yet intimacy with our God, transcendence yet eminent upon us, in us and with us. Thank You that gathered worship cannot just be a utilitarian tool although it has so many blessings and we know that but we haven't gathered to do that. We have gathered to praise our great God. O God, be pleased with Your people. You made them to worship. You saved them to worship. You gave them breath to worship. Praise Your Name Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.