

Series: Draw Near**Sermon: Pursuing the Discipline of Worship****Sermon Text: Psalm 100 and Revelation 4:9-5:14**

Sermon Summary: This study looks at the discipline of worship by examining the Old Testament passage of Psalm 100 and the New Testament passage of Revelation 4:9-5:14. Part one explores what worship is, who we worship and why. The second part explores the how of worship by examining John's glimpse of worship in heaven in the book Revelation found in chapter 4 and 5.

Full Sermon Notes

"I won't bow to idols, I'll stand strong and worship You
If it puts me in the fire, I'll rejoice 'cause You're there too"

The world sure has its idols. They worship people, positions, power, prestige, possessions, and pleasure. And they think we're fanatics for worshipping the One who gave us life, sustains our life and gives us hope of eternal life! And the ridicule we sometimes face is the fire we must walk through. I'd rather be a fool for Jesus than to live in the foolishness I see in the world out there. I'm not perfect, to be sure, and I'm not better than anyone else, but I am better off because of Jesus and for that I unashamedly worship Him! Let's pray and ask God to teach us about worship today! Pray!!

We have an Old Testament and a New Testament text for today. Our Old Testament text will help us find out what worship is, who we worship and why! Our New Testament text will help us understand how we are to worship! Kids, I'm so glad you're here this morning! When you're asking questions about a story you want to know what, who, why, and how! That's what we're going to find out about worship today! So let's jump right in.

Part 1 - What/Who/Why**1. What is Worship?**

Psa 100:1 A psalm. For giving thanks. Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Psa 100:2 Worship the LORD with gladness...

Worship: Worship is the means by which an individual both expresses love to God and experiences love from God! Worship takes place in solitude, in group settings, in silence, in singing, in worship services and in serving as worship.

William Temple wrote these words back in 1942...

"To worship is: To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God

To feed the mind with the truth of God, To purge the imagination by the beauty of God

To open the heart to the love of God, To devote the will to the purpose of God.”

Why is worship considered a discipline? Even though we have been created with a desire to worship, if we are not disciplined in worship, we will be distracted by the things of this world and worship will fall prey to those distractions. Worst case scenario we will be drawn to worship the wrong things. A disciplined life of worship that includes a healthy private and public worship can help us discover the beauty and excitement of genuine worship!

Worship is the response of an individual or group to the presence of God, (where God is), the person of God (who He is), the provision of God, (what He's done), and the power of God, (how God does what He does).

Worship is loving God! Some people think God has an ego problem because of His desire that we worship Him. But worship is how we love God. Let me say something and then ask you a question. Happy Mother's Day to all you moms out there! We love you and thank God for you! Now here's my question: Is it weird, strange or egotistical for a mother to desire that her children, to whom she gave birth or adopted, love her, respect her, honor her, and even give her gifts and say nice things about her on Mother's Day? That's not wrong! And this should not happen just on Mother's Day! So if that's acceptable and not egotistical, why can't we love, respect, honor and say nice things about our Heavenly Father who created us and has shown us His love by sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins? How an individual responds to this love is a choice given by God to every human being. Each has been created with a capacity to know and interact with God. We see this in the universal desire to worship that permeates every culture and race across the globe. We are born with an innate longing for fellowship with God and while we may reject God's overtures of love, our heart nonetheless yearns for a right relationship with God.

Worship as a discipline includes both private and corporate worship. Private worship should be an ongoing activity that permeates our daily lives and activities. Richard Foster put it this way...

“While living out the demands of our day, we are filled with inward worship and adoration. We work and play and eat and sleep, yet we are listening, ever listening, to our teacher.”

That's individual worship!

In corporate worship there becomes a sort of synergy of worship that many have experienced but few can readily define or describe. This flows out of the fellowship that develops between the people and from the presence of God by way of the Holy Spirit.

Synergy is the extra energy you have when something is done as a group as opposed to by yourself.

In fact the Bible tells us...

Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

As I mentioned, worship is sometimes misdirected to other persons or things rather than God. The pursuit of the spiritual discipline of worship can abate this negative potential! Sometimes people try to define worship by describing a certain style. Traditional, contemporary, blended, emergent, high church, etc. While it is okay to describe various types of worship. Worship is not defined or confined by a certain style. True worship is defined by the heart and spirit of worship!

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Richard Foster says...

"Nowhere does the New Testament prescribe a particular form for worship. In fact, what we find is a freedom that is incredible..."

When the Holy Spirit touches and moves a human spirit, style of worship is irrelevant!! Some bow in reverence, while others lift their hands. Some are silent while others are more vocal! If God touches your heart through an old hymn, speaks to you through an oft repeated ritual, or you are more moved by new and contemporary styles, what matters is that you are responding to God's love with love! Of course there may be times when you would want to shout to the Lord like the Psalmist! That's cool! Just remember this, when we are in corporate worship we want the attention to be on the Lord and not on us, and we wouldn't want to cause someone who has come seeking and who does not understand the full range of worship to be turned away. Now I know this is not totally fair to us, because they do not think it strange at all to shout at a Saints game or a concert, but remember, it's not about us, it's about the Lord! And let me just explain the raising of hands things real quick. We all do it at times, just not at church. When you're on a vacation and you see an amazing natural site you might take your hands and lift them up at the mountains or the ocean and say, "Wow, would you look at that! How awesome is God's creation!" You are using your hands to communicate something outwardly that you feel inwardly! That's what happens when someone gets a glimpse of our awesome God in worship and they express that with uplifted hands! And it's all because of...

2. Who we Worship!

Psa 100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Look closely...

He is The Lord God!

He is the Creator God!

He is The Shepherd God!

Lord God!

In other places the Psalmist says...

Psa 7:17 I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

Psa 47:2 How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!

God told Moses this...

Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

Exo 3:15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Moses later sums it up like this...

Deu 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

Not everyone accepts His Lordship, but that does not diminish His Lordship. Those of us who accept Him as Lord, worship Him as Lord God!! But He is also...

Creator God

The Psalmist said...

Psa 100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Isaiah said...

Isa 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth...

Paul put it this way in Colossians...

Col 1:16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Col 1:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Let me share with you a quote ...

"Unless you assume a God, the question of life's purpose is meaningless."

Who do you think said this? Billy Graham? Rick Warren? The Pope? Augustine? C.S. Lewis? It was Bertrand Russell, an atheist. Even some well known atheists believe without God, life loses purpose, it's just life - deal with it, bad or good, no purpose, it just is what it is. Of course not all atheists agree with this! Secular humanists are atheists who have developed a purpose statement for life based on their atheism! I think they realized they were more known for what they were against, a negative, and so they decided to be a little more positive in their thinking. However, I will say this: no matter how positively you spin something that's not true it is still untrue. This is not a put down on anybody, I have some very dear friends who are atheist, but I do lovingly challenge their reasoning.

As we discover more and more about the complexity and detailed organization of creation, it seems more difficult to deny God's hand in it all, but for many it's not the truth they are seeking, but what they want the truth to be! The Bible says we were created in the image of God, but humans want to create their own God in their own image! Many today worship the creation instead of the creator! For some the new religion is "earth care" I'm probably one of the greenest pastors you'll ever meet because I believe a part of my worship involves good stewardship of God's creation, but make no mistake about it, we should worship the Creator not the creation!!

The Bible speaks of this issue...

Rom 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Rom 1:21 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.

Rom 1:22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Rom 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Pursuing the spiritual discipline of worship will help ensure we do not exchange the glory of God for something else. However, God didn't just create the world and walk away from it. The God we worship is the...

Shepherd God

Psa 100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Get to know your Shepherd!

Psa 23:1 A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. (He provides)

Psa 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, (He guides)

Psa 23:3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (He forgives)

Psa 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, (He protects) for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (He comforts)

Psa 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (He blesses)

Psa 23:6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (He Saves)

Knowing Who we worship leads us to our final truth from this Psalm...

3. Why We Worship

Who we worship is why we worship!

Psa 100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Psa 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

We worship because...

He is The Lord God!

Psa 89:7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him.

Psa 89:8 O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

Moses said...

Deu 32:3 I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!

Deu 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

We worship because...

He is The Creator God!

Psa 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psa 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

We worship because...

He is The Shepherd God!

He is the amazing Shepherd who leads us, who provides for us, who comforts us, and who redeems us. Listen...

Psa 77:12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

Psa 77:13 Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?

Psa 77:14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Psa 77:15 With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

We worship because...

He is The Faithful God!

Psa 100:5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

All the way down to the New Testament and to us today. Jesus said...

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--

John 10:15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Part 2 - How to Worship

We worship God because He loved us so much He was willing to take on human flesh, walk among us and then lay down His life to pay for our sins. Jesus, our Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep! He is worthy of our worship, and He is worthy of our highest praise and worship! Amen? How do we give Him the worship He is worthy of? In order to find this we now turn to our New Testament text and get ready, because you are about to get a glimpse of worship in heaven. The beautiful thing is we don't have to wait for heaven to experience true worship! In order to experience heaven's worship here on earth we must examine how to worship and for that we turn to John's vision of heaven. One of my most favorite passages in all the Bible. Revelation chapters 4&5. How we worship is found in this text...

1. With Humility - “They fall down”

Rev 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever...

Humility is an attitude that flows from a humble spirit. A humble spirit flows from one who understands his or her weaknesses, shortcomings, and needs. The Hebrew word translated as humility is similar to another Hebrew word meaning "to be afflicted." In Old Testament thought, humility was closely associated with individuals who were poor and afflicted. Are we not all poor and afflicted? Have we not all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? Are we not all spiritually impoverished? If we acknowledge this spiritual poverty, Jesus has something to say...

Mat 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Only those who are willing to humble themselves and admit their need for God will ever really know God!

2 Chr 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Psa 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Why bow down? Bowing down shows submission. A prideful heart will not bow. True worship can only happen in an atmosphere of humble submission! Bowing shows deep respect and complete trust! When a person bows before another, they are vulnerable to that person. They are relinquishing control. True worship requires that we allow ourselves to become vulnerable to God and that we relinquish our heart and soul to Him! We may not always be in a position to bow down, but we must remember...

True humility is not the position of the body but of the heart!

This leads to the second characteristic of true worship...

2. With Abandonment - "They lay their crowns before the throne"

Rev 4:10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne....

Abandonment in true worship encompasses the acts of giving and surrender. What does God want us to give? What does God want us to surrender?

Our crowns!!

But I'm not a King. I have no kingdom and no crown. Yes you do have a kingdom.

What do you mean?

Your kingdom is your life, your possessions, your goals, your desires, your passions. God wants you to allow Him to become your king, and your Lord over all of these things!! The crown we lay at His feet is the surrender of our will to His! When we abandon our will to His, and allow Him to become our Lord, we soon discover God is a much better king than you and I could ever be!! We recently read these verses, they apply...

Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

Rom 12:2 Do not conform any longer 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.

Once you abandon your will to His and allow Him to be your King you'll discover His presence, His power and His resources are available to you! How exciting is that? By the way, most theologians believe the 24 elders were representatives of the church! And where might they get this idea?

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. NIV

That leads us to our third characteristic of true worship...

3. With Acknowledgement - "You are worthy"

Rev 4:10...they lay their crowns before the throne and say:

Rev 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

True worship acknowledges: God's worth! God's Glory! God's Power!

True worship acknowledges: God as creator! God as sovereign! God as sustainer!

God is worthy for a million reasons: He's a just God! He's a loving God! He's a forgiving God! He's a God of second chances!

God's glory is displayed in a million ways: His Righteousness! His Holiness! His Goodness!

His power is evident in a million actions: His defeat of death and the grave!! His provision for His children and His church! His protection of His Word down through the ages!

God's creative work is evident in trillions of daily displays...

(There are some pictures on the video cast)

God's sovereignty is evident in all things...

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Do we not experience God as sustainer of life in the millions of ways He provides for each of us on a daily basis?

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Many of us in this room have experienced this provision! And this takes us to our fourth characteristic of true worship...

4. With Seeing - "And I saw!"

Rev 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

Rev 5:2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

Can you imagine how John felt as God allowed him this glimpse into heaven? He was exiled and alone on the Isle of Patmos and yet God allowed him to escape his circumstances by giving him a view into heaven. He sees God on His throne holding a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. He hears a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice. He eagerly writes it all down so that he can testify down through the ages what he has seen and heard. Have you ever witnessed God do some mighty things in your life and you wanted to testify to what you had seen or heard? Once you get a glimpse of the majesty of God it is hard to be silent!

5. With Transformation - "I wept and wept!"

Rev 5:3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

Rev 5:4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

True worship will have an impact on the worshiper. A human being cannot come into the presence of almighty God and remain unchanged! John sees God in all His glory and power. John is given a glimpse into the secrets of heaven. There is a book, a scroll with information vital to the salvation of humankind. However, it initially appears there is no one worthy to open it.

John is emotionally devastated. He weeps bitterly. This is not an unusual worship experience. Many times our first contact with the almighty shines the light on our hopelessness, our lostness, and our sinfulness! But it does not end in weeping!

Rev 5:5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Rev 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Rev 5:7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

Rev 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

6. With Action - "To serve our God!"

They played harps. They had bowls full of the prayers of the saints. They sang a new song. They sang loudly. They encircled the throne of God.

And how does this all apply to me today? Please don't miss this! This is the take home for today...

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Rev 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Rev 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

Rev 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Rev 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Rev 5:14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The greatest way to worship God is to leave the worship service and continue to worship by serving God with your life.

Let's pray!

