

Scripture Reading: Revelation 15

“15 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. 2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.””

“Come and Worship”

As we look forward to another glorious Advent and Christmas season here at Church of the King, we are going to take several weeks to once again review how and why we worship God! I strive to do this every few years for the benefit of any new members, for our growing children who have a greater and greater understanding AND as a helpful reminder to us all about the importance of our worship!

In the course of these sermons we will cover a number of details and may step on a few toes, but I want to begin with an important reminder: We must remember that learning all the forms and details of what has been called covenant renewal worship is not enough...

- **There are many apostate churches who have long ago left their first love, Jesus, but who still get most of the liturgy right in their services, & even make it sound & look beautiful!**

It is what Dr. Francis Schaeffer and others refer to as dead orthodoxy! At bottom we must remember & teach that right worship is ALWAYS:

- **Christ Centered!**
- **Spirit filled!**

I would also caution that this must not become an issue of pride where we think we get everything right and look down on how other churches worship. We will all stand before God one day and it is He who will determine what was gold, silver & precious stones as opposed to wood hay and stubble...

- **Not only in our individual lives, but in our collective service as well.**

Remember the religious leader who had Jesus over for dinner thinking he was doing what should be done to show proper respect to a great teacher, when in fact it was the lowly woman who approached the feet of Jesus who gave Him proper worship.

- **With that said, the proper worship of God is important and thus we do strive to always to better.**

This series also comes at an appropriate time as we have finished up the first chapter of Ephesians: There we learned that we can be those who retreat, those who grasp for power or those who serve as the Saints of God; desiring that He use us in carrying out the Great Commission.

- **Right worship will remind us of the power of the resurrection and teach us how to be good servants in all areas of our lives.**

We see this in the example of Isaiah which we highlight often in our liturgy:

Isaiah 6: “ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged.” 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?”
Then I said, **“Here am I! Send me.”**”

Once again, this will be a back-to-the-basics series covering familiar material, which is appropriate when it comes to right worship...

- **Novelty is not a good thing!**

Thus, we will study the major elements of what we call **Covenant Renewal Worship:**

- **A Call to Worship our Triune God**
- **A Confession of our sins & proclamation of forgiveness**
- **A time of Consecration of the Saints**
- **A Communion meal with our Savior**
- **A Commission to disciple the nations!**

It will be important to remember that in each of these elements God is the one who acts or commands and we are those who respond to Him: We do not gather for worship to be spectators, but as those who come to worship our Triune & Holy God!

IF we are going to be effective as the Church scattered, then we must be serious about the Church gathered. The Call to Worship may seem like the simplest of these five elements and yet it is one of the most profound, and perhaps, one of the least understood in the modern Church here in America.

- **We gather on Sunday morning because God calls us together!**

If we **REALLY** believe that:

- **It changes how we approach the worship service on Sunday!**

So how can I be so sure God wanted us here at eleven o'clock this morning? First we know from our study of the New Testament that the Saints gathered on the first day of the week

- **The day of Christ's resurrection!**

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews in chapter four tells us not only to come but to come boldly:

Hebrews 4:14: **“14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy & find grace to help in time of need.”**

- **Hebrews then goes on to explain how our great high priest Jesus accomplished all that was foreshadowed in the Old Testament tabernacle and temple worship.**

This is why as we go through the elements of worship we use today we will see how they are informed by and in some ways patterned after those Old Testament Laws & commandments. The writer of Hebrews then comes back to that same point about coming into God's presence boldly:

Hebrews 10:19 “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

- Do we as individual have access to the throne of grace because of what Jesus did?
- Yes, but this is NOT the focus of what is primarily taught there in the Book of Hebrews.

We are called the Body of Christ, each being members. We are called a nation of priests, with each of us serving as a priest in our own right.

- BUT when God calls us together on the Lord’s Day, He is not calling us to gather as a bunch individuals, but as His Body, as His Nation, as His Church, assembling together.
- And yes, how we respond is important.

The Bible would encourage us to think of this in the military context:

- If a general calls the troops together for a very important battle and some of them don’t show up, some show up late and others forget about half their gear, they would likely lose that battle!
- If on the other hand they are there early and excited, well equipped and focused, then it would instill fear in their enemies, and lead them to victory.
- Such is the case with right worship!
- As Jim Jordan likes to remind us we can truly say that worship is warfare [*the great example of Joshua!*]

So, I hope you can begin to see the importance of showing up on the Lord’s Day, but we still have the question of why here at eleven o’clock.

God has placed pastors and elders over His churches and they are the ones who prayerfully consider when & where the congregation is to be gathered.

- Some call them together morning and evening each week to stress Sunday as the Lord’s Day.
- Some call the meeting in the afternoon because that is when a facility is available.
- Some have multiple services to make room for everyone who wants to attend.

Here at Church of the King, we gather at the traditional American time of eleven and follow our service with a fellowship meal giving us an extended time together as the Body of Christ.

- Does making sure you are here by eleven mean we have fully answered the Call of God? Not completely!

IF we really believe that God is calling us together, we would not only want to make sure we are on time...

- But also prepared mentally and physically to meet our Holy God.

I would remind us that though our worship begins at eleven we have a short time of reviewing the songs that will be sung that week and learning some new ones at ten-thirty.

- If you miss that on a regular basis, you are not going to be as prepared as you could be to worship the King with Psalms & hymns!

We should think again about the military example and relate that time to boot camp where we learn to be good soldiers and to work together! I would also add that if we don't use that time to help our children learn more about how to sing in church, we are not taking their discipleship as seriously as we should?

- And please remember that just because you struggle to sing does not mean your children, or grandchildren will as well!
- But, being on time, even making it for the music practice, is still not all that is involved.

Are we as ready as we can be to worship God rightly: Have we put some thought into what we are wearing, both culturally and Biblically? Or just thrown on whatever is clean?

- Did we get the rest we needed the night before?
- Did we eat some breakfast, so we are not fading right about now or thinking only about what is for lunch?
- Did we think through our schedules for Sunday morning and even Saturday night so everyone is not a basket case by the time we get to church? *[story of Sunday breakfast]*

Now much of this may seem like silly legalistic details... But they are NOT if we again focus on the important question:

- Do we really believe that God is calling us together to worship as the Body of Christ on the Lord's Day?
- Do we put as much thought and effort into getting ready for worship, as we would for a visit to a human Governor or President or even to attend a marriage ceremony or job interview?
- Lord willing, we always will!

So, we are all here and ready:

- Now what happens during the call to worship portion of our service.

As a final part of all those preparations we have the pianist begin to play music about five minutes before the service. That is when the conversations should be paused, seats should be taken and perhaps a moment of prayer would be in order.

Then we see the first of God's actions and our reactions:

- It is God who calls us into His presence...
- We are not asking Him to come join us!

We read from Scriptures like Psalm 95, "Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving!"

We immediately respond by singing a hymn of adoration just as we saw the angels & Saints doing in our morning reading or in Rev. 4 & 5 *[homework!]*

We have always used O Worship the King as our song of adoration and we do so each week so that our youngest children can begin to participate, even before they can read...

- They have better memories than we do, but we need to encourage them to use them & participate.

One of the elders then proclaims the salutation: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" & we respond with a hearty AMEN.

We worship the Triune God of the Bible, & we remember that we truly are in God's presence when the leader then says, "Jehovah be with you and we respond with "and also with you."

- We are reminded that we are now in the presence of God and that we are here to worship as participants, not just as spectators!

- **We are not in the presence of just any god, but the Holy Triune God of the Scriptures!**

We have addressed God by His name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

God is not like Allah, the monistic God who needed to create something to relate too, or the eastern gods who strive toward Nirvana or nothingness.

- **When the Bible declares that God is love, it is declaring that the three Persons of the Godhead have related to & loved one another from all eternity.**

All that we know of earthly love and relationships is derived from this true nature of God...

Into Whose presence we are now called. Remembering who God is and how His character gives meaning and purpose to the whole of His creation should inform all of our worship.

- **Right worship by God's people is pleasing to the Father as we bring glory to the Son through the ministry of the Holy Spirit!**

Thus, we have been called into the presence of the God of the Scriptures and we shall see over the next three weeks how He will renew His covenant with His chosen people.

We have been commanded to come boldly into the presence of God and again we will learn why this is possible and the richness of our relationship with God in Christ! God will remind us that our sins are forgiven, He will instruct us from His Word and accept our gifts and prayers and then we will fellowship with Him around this Table before He sends us out again to serve.

- **This is why we gather on the Lord's Day & it should be a central focus of our Christian lives.**

This is something that our children must learn not just intellectually, but practically in their lives.

We have the obligation to teach it to them not just intellectually...

- **But practically by giving them the proper example to follow as they see us responding each week to His call to come and worship!**

Communion Meditation: Psalm 65

"Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion;

And to You the vow shall be performed.

2 O You who hear prayer,

To You all flesh will come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me;

As for our transgressions,

You will provide atonement for them.

4 Blessed is the man You choose,

And cause to approach You,

That he may dwell in Your courts.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple."