

The Marks of True Worship - Congregational Selected Scriptures

Introduction

Last week I spoke about the marks of true worship that will appear in an individual. They included: Fear of God, Confession of Sin, Faith in God, Confidence in prayer, the Fruit of Righteousness, Verbal Praise, Content Hearts, Suffering without Complaint and a Clear Witness. Do not be discouraged if those characteristics do not yet mark your life the way you would like. Each of them are developed as you mature in Christ, and as long as you are serious about continuing to grow in Christ, then these characteristics will develop as you become more like Him.

This morning I want to look at the marks of true worship that will develop within a congregation as the individuals within in it develop the individual characteristics. These marks are: God is Glorified, Believers are Purified, the Church is Edified, and the Lost are Evangelized. If these marks are not present, then it is an indicator that there is still a great lack within the individuals that make up the congregation.

I will again recommend John MacArthur's book, *"The Ultimate Priority,"* for those who want to do further study on their own. Much of today's sermon is based in that book.

God is Glorified

I gave the following simple definition of worship last week. *"Worship is reverence, honor and adoration directed to the Lord God."* It is obvious that if this is occurring, then God will be glorified. The word *"glory"* means *"something that is worthy of praise or exaltation; brilliance; beauty; renown."* To glorify God means to give Him praise, exalt His name, describe the brilliance and beauty of His majesty, and make Him renowned. These things are accomplished in true worship. As Psalm 50:23 states it in the NKJV, *"whoever offers praise, glorifies Me."*

This glorification of God is the primary purpose of true worship for worship centers on God Himself. The other marks of true worship I will talk about today are resulting consequences of this effort to glorify God. The purification of believers, the edification of the church and the evangelization of the lost are all good things and can be elements within worship, but they are neither worship itself nor are they the reasons to worship.

True worship is centered on God Himself and not man in anyway. Man is never to be a focus in true worship. God is worshiped by man and gains glory for Himself through what He has done for man. The only mention man should ever have in the worship of God is in that context.

It is important to clearly understand this foundational principle. God is self-sufficient and the universe centers on God for He made it for Himself and His own purposes. Genesis 1:1 is clear that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Nothing existed until God created it declaring in Isaiah 44:24, *"I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the earth all alone."* The deity of Jesus Christ is demonstrated in that He is also the creator of all things as stated of Jesus in John 1:3, *"All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."*

The purpose of creation is for the Lord. As Paul states it in Romans 11:36, *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things."* The cry of worship made in heaven by the 24 elders in Revelation 4:11 (KJV) is based on this, *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

Perhaps you are here this morning and struggling with this idea of giving glory to God. Perhaps God does not fit well into your ideas of what He should be like. Perhaps God has not done for you or someone else what you want Him to do. You may even be thinking that God is not good or even fair. Let me very direct. The fact that you exist at all is enough reason in itself for you to give glory to God. He created you, not the other way around. In addition, it is only because God is longsuffering and has withheld His judgement of you that you are currently still breathing and not in the torments of eternal hell for your sin. That is even more reason to praise Him. He is patient, merciful and gracious. It is by God's own good will that He created us, sustains us, and *"saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity"* (2 Timothy 1:9).

You must have it very clear in your mind that God does not need you or me or anything else to have glory. God has intrinsic glory. You cannot make water wet. You cannot make the sun bright. They are those things by their very nature, and by analogy, so it is with God and His glory. Glory is an aspect of His very nature and not something He gains from some outside source. As Stephen stated in Acts 7:2, He is *"the God of glory."*

The inherent glory of God is not dependent on what any aspect of creation does in response to it. It cannot be added to. It cannot be taken away from. Or to be more direct and personal, you add nothing to God if you do glorify Him and you take nothing away from Him if you do not. God is completely self-sufficient. It is the whole earth that is full of God's glory as stated in Isaiah 6:3, and not God that is full of the earth's glory. However, it must also be stressed that God will not share His glory with any other, for as He says in Isaiah 48:11, *"My glory I will not give to another."*

The brilliance of God's intrinsic glory is so great that man cannot live in its full presence. In Exodus 33:18 Moses prayed that God would show him His glory. God answered in verses 20-23 saying, *"You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*²¹ *Then the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand [there] on the rock;"*²² *and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.*²³ *"Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."* God protected Moses from seeing the full display of His glory and allowed Moses to only see the afterglow, but even that made Moses' face shine so much that he had to put a veil over it so the people would not be afraid of him (Exodus 34:29-33).

We often talk about or read a passage that says we are to *"give God glory."* Please understand that this does not mean we add anything to His intrinsic glory, for again, that is His by His very nature. To *"give God glory"* is to participate in the privilege God grants to us of ascribing glory to Him. Though we cannot add to God's glory, we can confirm it, praise Him for it and increase the understanding of others about it. This is what the Psalmists so often talk about. For example, Psalm 29:1-2, *"Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength."*² *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in holy array.* The KJV says, *"give,"* instead of *"ascribe,"* but the meaning is the same. We *"give"* or *"ascribe"* to the Lord glory when we first recognize God's glory ourselves and then tell others about it. The rest of Psalm 2 describe some of the various ways in which God displays His glory to man. This includes in storms and with thunder, in earthquakes, and in the display of stars in the heavens.

In a sense, to *"give God glory"* means we become reflective of it. Psalm 19:1-6 states, *"¹ The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ² Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, ⁵ Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. ⁶ Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat."* The heavens declare the

glory of God by reflecting His majesty and power. Likewise we are to reflect the various aspects of God's glory by declaring Him to others and being conformed into the image of Christ.

When true worship takes place, God is glorified. Reverence, honor and adoration are directed to the Lord God. His nature and works are praised. His name is exalted. His brilliance and beauty are described. He is made known to all.

Believers Are Purified.

We saw an aspect of this second characteristic that Believers are Purified last week in the marks of true worship in the individual. When Isaiah was given a vision of God in His glory in Heaven, he was immediately confronted with His own sinfulness and need for cleansing (Isaiah 6:1-7). When we approach God in true worship, we are confronted with the reality that we cannot enter into His presence unless we are clean. David describes this in Psalm 15. He begins the Psalm with the questions, *"O Lord, who may abide in Thy tent? Who may dwell on Thy holy hill?"* He answers the questions in the rest of the Psalm with verses 2- 5 stating, *"He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. ³ He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; ⁴ In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the Lord; He swears to his own hurt, and does not change; ⁵ He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken."*

Psalm 24 is similar. It begins with a declaration of God's ownership of everything by virtue of being the creator, and then asks the question in verse 3, *"Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?"* The answer is given in verse 4, *"He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully."*

Those who seek to give true worship to God will be confronted with the need for personal holiness. Praise the Lord that He has provided for that cleansing through Jesus Christ. As Hebrews 10:19 puts it, we can *"have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,"* for, as stated in 1 John 1:7, the *"blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin."* True worshipers want not only a right standing before God, but also a close, intimate fellowship. Therefore they do not hide iniquity in their heart, for they know the Lord will not hear them if they do (Psalm 66:18). Instead, they will confess their sins knowing that the Lord is faithful and just to forgive their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Those who try to worship God and fail to come in the purity of holiness will not only find their efforts frustrating because, as already pointed out from Psalm 66:18, not only will the Lord not pay attention to them, but they also run the risk of God's punishment. Let me remind you again of Aaron's sons, Nadab & Ahihu, in Leviticus 10. Though they had received very detailed instruction on how to carry out their priestly duties, they were not careful and disobeyed the Lord's commands. They *"offered strange fire before the Lord"* with the result that *"fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD."* Moses' response to the death of his nephews was, *"It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.'"* The worship of God is serious and is never to be done in an irreverent manner or contrary to how He says He is to be worshiped.

In true worship there is a quest to be drawn closer to God and with that comes a great desire for holiness. This should be most obvious at a Communion service in which everyone is to make careful examination of themselves and confess their sins prior to partaking of the elements, which is an act of worship. The holiness of the individual and of the congregation is the key factor in the quality of their worship. At the same time, the quality of worship by the congregation is a key factor in their own holiness because it drives them to greater holiness. In true worship Believers are Purified.

The Church is Edified.

The next mark is that the Church is Edified. By that I mean that in true worship the church is built up. It grows into greater maturity. It is transformed into a greater likeness of Jesus Christ whose body it is. Worship should be something that changes us and how we live. Too often people evaluate worship based on how they feel when it should be based on how they have been challenged by the proclamation of the attributes and works of God to be more like Christ.

The book of Acts demonstrates that when the church is truly worshiping the Lord, then it is built up. Those who should be saved are added to it, they then fill the area with the Lord's teachings which then turns their world upside down for Christ. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit comes and the people responded by declaring the mighty deeds of God (vs. 11). Peter then gave a powerful sermon that disturbed sinners because it pierced them to the heart (vs. 37) with the result that about 3,000 were saved (vs. 41).

In Acts 4 we are told that after Peter and John had been released from prison they gave a bold testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ with verse 24 stating they "*lifted their voice with one accord*" and gave praise to God as well as made request that God would grant them to speak God's word with confidence (vs. 24-30). They then did speak with boldness (vs. 31). The result in the church itself was a greater concern and care for one another so that no one was left needy (vs. 34).

In Acts 19 Paul preaches in Ephesus and a church is born. Verses 18-20 record that they continued to preach and witness, "*Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.*"¹⁹ *And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and [began] burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.*"²⁰ *So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.*" The effect on this community was so great that the idol makers were concerned their business would drop off both locally and internationally because Artemis, the pagan goddess of Ephesus, and her temple were in danger of being disregarded as worthless. If the Ephesian Christians did not have transformed lives, then the idol makers would have ignored them. However, the world cannot ignore those who truly worship God because they will always feel threatened by lives that are being changed into the image of Christ.

Keep in mind that a radically transformed life is to be normal in true Christianity. Romans 8:29 reveals that a purpose in salvation is that God "*predestined (us) [to become] conformed to the image of His Son.*" Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us that we are to meet together to "*spur one another on to love and good deeds.*" If true worship is taking place, then this transformation will be taking place. If the people are not being edified and becoming more like Christ, then there might be a nice religious service with beautiful liturgy and a wonderful, emotional social gathering, but there is not true worship.

Every Christian should be becoming more like Jesus Christ, and while this process is going on, each individual believer also gets better at using the gifts God has given them for the purpose of building each other up in Christ. Ephesians 4 describes the importance of this happening. Two things happen as everyone in the church builds one another up in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Christ to maturity as measured by Christ's example. First, the whole body is built up in love to become stronger with the weak being watched over and cared for. Second, God is glorified. Edification of one another becomes a part of our worship.

The Lost Are Evangelized

The final mark of true worship by the church I want to discuss today is that the Lost are Evangelized.

I have already pointed out some examples of this from Acts. When the church truly worships, then those around take notice and are effected by it. 1 Corinthians 1:21 states that "*God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe,*" yet, I think it is safe to say that the testimony of both the individual and the church that is truly worshiping God has a greater impact on the lost than most sermons. Why? Because it is hard to refute or ignore a life changed to become a true worshiper of God. The transformed life is evidence of the truth of the message preached.

Those who truly worship God are also moved to be involved in evangelism. When something is important to you, you will tell other people about it. This is obvious truth. What sports fan does not tell other people about “their” team? What fisherman or hunter will not tell about or show everyone their trophies? What new mom does not talk about her baby? What engaged woman does not tell all her friends about her fiancée? This also distinguishes politicians from statesmen. Statesmen talk about solutions to problems regardless of the origin of the ideas. Politicians talk about things only in relation to themselves. Each talks about what is important to them.

When a person is a true worshiper of the Lord, then Jesus Christ is the most important thing in their life, and they are just going to naturally talk about Him whenever they get an opportunity. They are going to want to tell other people what the Lord has done in their own life and what He can do for them. They are going to want other people to know and experience what they have. They will want other people to join them in worship of God.

We make a mistake when we separate worship from evangelism. When a person is telling someone else about Jesus Christ and what He has done to save them from their sins, then they are performing an act of worship because they are giving God honor and praise in presenting the gospel message. In addition, worship is the great purpose of evangelism. God did not send Jesus to die for our sins so that we can escape hell. That is only a wonderful side benefit. Jesus redeemed us from sin so that we could be holy and blameless and properly worship Him. We were freed from sin and enslaved to God resulting in the outcome of sanctification and eternal life to the praise of His grace (Romans 6:22; Ephesians 1:6).

Worship is also the central question of evangelism. Who or what do you worship? In John 4 when Jesus talked with the woman at the well, the core issue was her incorrect worship. She was an unbelieving, immoral, Samaritan woman, and Jesus could have brought up any of a number of issues to discuss with her. He could have condemned her for having five husbands and then living with a man to whom she was not married. Jesus does not do that. Instead, He corrected her on her ignorant worship (vs. 22). Jesus then told her about true worship and that He was the messiah. She in turn told the whole village, and they came out to hear Jesus and many believed in Him (John 4:39-42).

In Acts 17 Paul began his discourse with the Greek philosophers on the core issue of worship instead of any of the many points of philosophy that could have been discussed. They were a religious people that worshiped what they did not know (Acts 17:22-23). Paul declared to them that God was the creator of all things and wanted them to seek and find Him. He also warned them that the times of ignorance were now past and God was now commanding them to repent before judgement came through Jesus Christ whom He had raised from the dead.

In Matthew 19 the rich young ruler comes to Jesus wanting to know “*what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?*” Most modern evangelists would have found a way to have that fellow signed up for heaven in no time at all. Instead, Jesus made it difficult because the core issue was this man’s wrong worship of God. He thought he was a true worshiper and had even kept all of God’s law, yet he knew something lacked. Jesus carefully led him to see the point of deficiency. First, He pointed out that only God was good. Second, He showed the man that his efforts at keeping the law were not enough. Then Jesus struck at what the man really worshiped which was his wealth. The man’s commitment was to trust and follow his wealth rather than the Lord.

I have become convinced from my study of the Scriptures that the failure of the church in America in reaching this nation with the gospel is actually a failure in worship. Most evangelism efforts are centered on man, not God. Both the message and the purpose are man centered. The message given out is that “*God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life*” if you will “*accept*” Christ. This is a marketing of an eternal fire insurance policy along with a promise to get whatever will make them happy. The purpose in such evangelism is to see how many people you can claim to have saved and/or get into your church or group. The “gospel message” commonly given in America has been severely distorted by a man centered approach.

The truth is that God's "*wonderful plan for your life*" includes troubles, trials and persecution for "*His name's sake*" (Matthew 5:10-12; John 16:33). His promises to provide for you are conditioned upon His will and your seeking first His kingdom and righteousness (1 John 5:14,15; Matthew 6:33).

Proper evangelism springs forth from the proper worship of God, and its purpose is the worship of God. God created all that exists according to His own will for His own pleasure. Man was created to be in relationship with Him, but man's sin broke that relationship resulting in God's holy judgment and condemnation to eternal hell. God loved man and provided a way for redemption and reconciliation by paying the penalty of sin Himself in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is offered through Him and sin's bondage is broken. Through faith in Jesus Christ you can be restored to a proper relationship with God so that you can fulfill the purpose of your existence in worship of Him.

Conclusions

True worship results in true evangelism as well as God being Glorified, the Church being Edified and the Saints being Purified.

Let me mention one last point that I will expand on in a couple of weeks. The purpose of our services is for the worship of God. They are specifically designed for those who know and believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior. We welcome everyone, but we have no interest in making comfortable those who are still under God's condemnation for their sin or those who would rather play at worship. Even our air conditioning and heating is not for your comfort, but to help you physically so that you can focus on worshipping God. If you are uncomfortable here, your problem is not with me or the people here, it is with God. Those who love God will love His people (1 John 5:1). We desire to see you get things right with God so that you can fulfill the purpose of your existence. Talk with myself or any of our church leaders and we would be more than happy to help you.

An unknown puritan author well summed up the desires that should be in all who want to truly worship the Lord in this prayer.

It is the flame of my life to worship thee,
the crown and glory of my soul to adore thee,
heavenly pleasure to approach thee.
Give me power by Thy Spirit to help me worship now,
that I may forget the world,
be brought into fullness of life, be refreshed, comforted, blessed.
Give me knowledge of Thy goodness
That I might not be over-awed by Thy greatness.
Give me Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God,
that I might not be terrified, but be drawn near with filial love, with holy boldness;
He is my mediator, brother, interpreter, branch, daysman, Lamb;
Him I glorify, in Him I am set on high.
Crowns to give I have none, but what thou hast given I return,
content to feel that everything is mine when it is Thine,
and the more fully mine when I have yielded it to Thee.
Let me live wholly to my Savior,
free from distractions, from carking (burdensome) care,
from hindrances to the pursuit of the narrow way.
I am pardoned through the blood of Jesus -
give me a new sense of it, continue to pardon me by it,
may I come every day to the fountain, and every day be washed anew,
that I may worship Thee always in spirit and truth.

Sermon Notes: *The Marks of True Worship, Part 2 - Congregational*
Selected Scriptures

Introduction

The marks of true worship develop as you continue to _____ in Christ - so keep growing!

God is Glorified

_____ *is reverence, honor and adoration directed to the Lord God*

To _____ God is to give Him praise, exalt His name, describe His majesty, and make Him renowned

The glorification of God is the _____ purpose of true worship for worship centers on God Himself

God is _____ for He is the creator and needs nothing - Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 44:24; John 1:3

The purpose of creation is for the _____ - Romans 11:36, Revelation 4:11

The fact that you exist and are alive is _____ reason for you to give glory to God

God's glory is _____ to His very nature and attributes and emanates from Him - Acts 7:2, Isaiah 6:3

God will not _____ His glory with any other - Isaiah 48:11

God's full glory is _____ for man - Exodus 33:18-23

To "give God glory" is to participate in the _____ God grants to us of ascribing glory to Him - Psalm 29

To "give God glory" is to be _____ of what already belongs to Him - Psalm 19:1-6

Believers Are Purified

True worship of God confronts us with our _____ and need for holiness - Isaiah 6:1-7; Psalm 15, 24

The _____ needed to worship God is provided by Jesus Christ - Hebrews 10:19; 1 John 1:7, 9

Trying to worship God without treating Him as holy can result in His _____ - Leviticus 10

A quest in true worship is to be drawn _____ to God, and that creates a greater desire for holiness

The Church is Edified

True worship will _____ the worshiper and how they live

Acts records the _____ of the church as people were saved and became true worshipers of God.

As people came to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, their lives were radically _____ - Acts 19

It should be normal that believers help one another become like Christ - Romans 8:29; Hebrews 10:24-25

Ephesians 4 - those in the church build each other up in the _____ of faith

The Lost Are Evangelized

The transformed life of a true worshiper of God is evidence of the _____ of the message preached

You naturally tell people about what is _____ to you

