

**Entering to Worship:  
The Dangerous Delight of Dutiful Worship  
*The Expectations and Requirements for Worship***

**Worship Matters!  
Palmetto Baptist Church  
Summer Series 2023**

**Texts: *Psalm 15; Psalm 24; Isaiah 33:14-16; Ecclesiastes 5:1-2; Hebrews 10:19-25***

**Psalm 15:1-5**

*A PSALM OF DAVID. <sup>1</sup> O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? <sup>2</sup> He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; <sup>3</sup> who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; <sup>4</sup> in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; <sup>5</sup> who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.*

**Psalm 24:1-10**

*A PSALM OF DAVID. <sup>1</sup> The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, <sup>2</sup> for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. <sup>3</sup> Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. <sup>6</sup> Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah <sup>7</sup> Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! <sup>9</sup> Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah*

**Isaiah 33:14-16**

*<sup>14</sup> The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: "Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" <sup>15</sup> He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, <sup>16</sup> he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.*

**Ecclesiastes 5:1-2**

*<sup>1</sup> Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. <sup>2</sup> Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.*

**Hebrews 10:19-25**

*<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast to our confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

## **Introduction:**

**For some weeks we have been listening to the Spirit and examining the Word to discover what God has said about the glad worship He desires from His people each week.**

**Goals: I want to remind us of the five big goals our pastors/elders have for this series and for which we are praying:**

- **That joyful worship would fuel our glad service to God as a church.**
- **That thankful worship would be our response to the grand story God tells in the Bible about His glory.**
- **That our corporate worship would both glorify God and help us intentionally magnify His beauty to the nations around us.**
- **That our personal participation in gathered worship would transform us into the likeness of the One we worship each week.**
- **That we would see worship as so important that each of us would give it our spiritual focus and intentional engagement each week.**

**Where we have been and what we have seen thus far on our journey:**

**Psalm 95 introduced us to the “Call of Worship” and helped us see the biblical framework God designed for the gathered worship of His people as they come to bow down before Him in joyful, humble, Word-obedient worship!**

**Romans 5:1-2 reminded us of the “Hope of Worship” that fuels our hearts with exuberant, triumphant joy as we celebrate what Jesus has done to**

regain for us and restore in us the “glory of God” that was lost when Adam sinned.

Last two Sundays we looked carefully and prayerfully at Isaiah 6, which showed us the “Power of Worship” to transform our lives by *convicting and cleansing us from sin and consecrating us to God’s service to the nations for His glory!*

*This morning we want to do something we have not yet done, and that is to establish a working definition/description of the kind of worship we have been talking about together from the texts we have examined together.*

As I began preparing for this series, I pulled from my shelves the books on worship that I thought would be most relevant to the series, and I counted 52 major works written specifically on worship, of which 20 or so have been primary sources and of great help to me in preparing these messages. You would think that with those many different qualified authors, there would be a very clear and agreed-upon definition of what worship actually is – but I actually discovered the opposite. There are almost as many definitions of worship as there are authors! And while many of them have basic similarities and common components, there are also significant differences among these many definitions.

I also noted that many of these authors put their definition at the very start of their books on worship and framed up the rest of the book in ways that unpack their particular definition. This is not an unworthy method – but it does tend to shape the rest of the book to conform to the definition or perspective of the author. While I have been greatly helped by and spiritually benefitted from their different definitions, I thought it might be most helpful for our congregation if I took an approach that differed in three significant ways. First, I thought it might help us not to start with a definition of worship but to arrive at one as we looked at the key texts of Scripture together. Second, I thought it would be more helpful to allow the biblical authors to lead us to a description rather than a definition of worship so that we can see what worship looks and sounds like more than just knowing what it means. And third, I have focused

**our discussion together around the corporate gathered worship God has called His people to render to Him.**

**On this last point, to be sure, our private worship of God is not unimportant and, as we will see, what happens in our private walk with God and before others has significant bearing on the acceptability of our contribution to gathered worship. But the emphasis of Scripture clearly gives priority to the responsibility upon each of us to participate in the gathered, corporate worship of God with His people. In other words, as important and essential as our own private worship and devotion to Him is, it must not replace or displace our duty to engage in corporate, gathered worship.**

**In our day and age with its emphasis on individualized living, a statement like this may jar our sensibilities (as it has mine). However, this is not a new or modern concern – the Puritan writers expressed similar statements. In fact, one of our pastors sent me a sermon preached by a Puritan pastor who took the church where John Owen served after Owen’s death. The text of his message was Psalm 87:2, which states, *“The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob!”* The title of his message was “Public Worship is to be Preferred before Private,” and he gave no less than 12 compelling biblical reasons to make his case to his hearers.**

**We live in a day and age where many believers actually do the opposite: they prioritize private worship over gathered worship and in fact, often excuse themselves from gathered worship on the grounds that they are giving themselves or their family to private worship. We must not neglect the cultivation of our love for God through private devotion; however, we also must give careful attention to the responsibility God has placed on us to not neglect the assembling of ourselves for corporate worship (Heb. 10:25).**

**Which brings us to the place where we might be greatly helped by a description of gathered worship drawn from the texts we have examined and confirmed by the texts that we will look at together in the coming weeks and remaining messages in our series.**

***Worship is***

***exulting (celebrating) over God's glory (Rom. 5:12)***

***eagerly***

***joyfully***

***thankfully***

***humbly/obediently (Ps. 95)***

***repentantly***

***confessionally***

***expectantly***

***so that we are transformed (Isa. 6)***

***by that glory***

***into that glory***

***for God's glory!***

**This morning we want to see why this kind of worship, while unbelievably delightful to our souls, is at the same time (as Isaiah 33 reminds us) a dangerous duty! Hence the title, "The delightful danger of dutiful worship."**

**Which brings us to a striking and important question – How can something so delightful to God and to us, pose such an incredible danger to our lives? And to find the answer to this question we need help from two important psalms of David (15 and 24) that help us navigate the warning found in Isaiah 33: 14-16.**

**I. A Striking Contrast. (Ps. 14:1; Ps. 15:1)**

***Psalm 14:1 – The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.***

***Psalm 15:1 – O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?***

**A. Two Individuals**

- **Psalm 1 introduces us to two individuals:**
  - **The fool rejects God's counsel, refuses to live according to God's ways, and mocks and recoils from God's values – this is what a biblical fool looks like, what he acts like, and how he thinks.**

- In contrast to this “fool” is a man who loves the Law of the Lord and meditates on it so he can internalize its wisdom and live a life that honors, obeys, and delights in God.
- We meet these same two individuals here in these two psalms.

### ***B. Representing Two Generations***

- David describes these two individuals as representing two groups or “generations” of people, and he singles out one particular group – *“the generation of the righteous”* – as the group that God will be with (14:5) and that will receive blessing, righteousness, approval, and salvation from Him (24:5-6).
- “Generation” is not talking about a group of people who live at the same time for a certain number of years. David is using the term to describe a group of people who share a common set of moral and ethical characteristics, qualities, or values.
- In this case he is describing two very different groups of people, each of which is marked by *specific moral character, displayed in obvious ethical activity, driven by a particular way of thinking about God, verified in their attitude toward God’s Word that dramatically affects their worship.*
- The contrast could not be more striking – and it extends beyond just what these two groups are doing with their hands to who they are in their inner being (*the fool has said in his heart*).
- Which brings up the question, where are these people and what are they doing in these two psalms?

### ***C. Living among God’s People***

- This stark contrast is not between Israelites and the pagan nations around them, such as the Canaanites or Philistines.
- The contrast being made is between two groups of people who are Israelites – they are members of the same nation, they have received the same covenant, they bear the same covenant marker of circumcision, they recite the same Torah, and they come to worship at the same tabernacle/temple with the same prayers, ritual washings, and sacrifices.

- We should be careful to note that the same striking contrast that existed in David's day exists in our own day.

#### ***D. Rendering Corporate Worship to God***

- Both groups have come to God's tent/tabernacle to offer praise, prayers, and worship.
- They have come to the right place, at the right time, to worship the true God . . . but . . . the worship of one group is empty and profits them nothing while the worship of the other group is accepted by God, brings great joy, and results in much spiritual profit to those worshippers.
- Again, we should note that the same scenario plays out in our own day and among our own churches.

*When and where is this contrast lived out?*

## **II. A Chronological Context (Ps. 24)**

- Psalm 15 and Psalm 24 mark the opening and closing of a group of psalms that all have to do with one of these generations (the righteous) and the King who leads them in righteous paths.
- Psalm 15 opens the section by introducing us to someone who speaks for the righteous generation and expresses a deep longing for something –  *dwell in the presence of the Lord as a beloved sheep and a welcomed guest* (you will see these images again in Psalm 23).
- The “fool” in Psalm 14:1 has no regard for God and lives as a functional atheist. In stark contrast, the righteous representative loves God and longs to be in His presence. And this “longing” characterizes the rest of the psalms in this section.
- Listen to this representative express this longing for God: *Preserve me, O God (16:1); Show me your steadfast love (17:6); I love you, O Lord, my strength (18:1); Let the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer (19:14).*
- Then these righteous ones begin to pray for their righteous king who fights to protect, preserve, and provide for them! *“May the Lord answer you*

*in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you! May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!” (20:1-2)*  
They give thanks to the Lord for the righteous character of this king and long for God to bless and establish him: *“O Lord, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults! You have given him his heart’s desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. For you meet him with rich blessings; you set a crown of fine gold on his head.” (21:1-3).*

- However, in Psalm 22 this righteous king begins to express his own desperate longing for God’s presence and deliverance – *“They (his enemies) have pierced my hands and feet – I can count all my bones – they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!” (22:16-20).*

- In Psalm 23 this king appeals to God to protect and preserve his life as a Good Shepherd (23:1-4) and to provide a table filled with joy and blessing as a Gracious Host (23:5-6).

- All of this longing culminates in the 24<sup>th</sup> Psalm, which reveals the identity of the One who is both the Good Shepherd and the Gracious Host in Psalm 23 – He is the creator of the earth, sovereign over all of its affairs, and is the righteous champion who fights for those who long for His presence!

- Listen to how David presents these realities!

### ***A. Founded on Creation (Ps. 24:1-2)***

*The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,<sup>2</sup> for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.*

- David makes a case for these wonderful realities by pointing us back to Creation, when God founded and established everything in the world in which we live and have our being.
- God can be a Good Shepherd because He owns it all!
- God can be a Gracious Host because He controls it all!
- But David continues his case by pointing us forward to a future reality to which all of creation looks with longing (Rom. 8:18-25).

### ***B. Accomplished at the Consummation (Ps. 24:7-10)***



<sup>7</sup> Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! <sup>9</sup> Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah.

### **1. What are the gates?**

- The gates are a reference to a city – one well known and deeply loved by the generation of the righteous – Jerusalem.
- This city was precious to God’s people and it was significant to God Himself – it was the city He chose for Himself.
- So what is in view by these gates is the city of Jerusalem.

### **2. Who is the king?**

- The King in view is obviously not David!
- This King is identified as the Lord, strong and mighty.
- This King is the One we met back in Psalms!

### **3. When will this happen? (two stages)**

- This King is described as the Lord of Hosts (armies) and He returning from a mighty battle where He has been victorious.
- There are two places where we see the Lord riding up to Jerusalem – one is in Matthew 21 where He rides up on a donkey to make peace by defeating Satan and making an atonement for sin.
- The second is in Revelation 19 where the Lord appears on a white war horse and delivers the earth from the presence of Satan and the effects of the curse under which creation currently groans.

## ***C. Celebrated and Commemorated under the Curse (24:3-6)***

<sup>3</sup> Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. <sup>6</sup> Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah.

- So what is life like in the middle time between Creation and consummation for those who claim to know and worship this King?
- They are to seek the presence of the King (v. 3).
- They are to live for the purposes of the King (v. 4).

- They will share in the preeminent glory of the King (vv. 5-6).

*And therefore, those who know Him and love Him desire to be with Him in the here and now! Which brings us to an important question asked three times in the texts before us.*

### III. A Sobering Consideration (Isa. 33:14-16)

#### *A. A Serious Question – Who Can Enter In? (15:1; 24:3)*

- The location they desire to enter is described as a tabernacle/temple on a mountain that belongs to God.
- This is physically located in Jerusalem, but it is intended to remind them of the garden-temple called Eden!
- Every time they entered into the glorious temple God had given them through Solomon, it was to remind them of something God was bringing about through them and for the nations – a return to Eden!
- Note – *for us, Jesus is our temple and we are organically part of that temple (church) indwelt by the Holy Spirit, energized by the Holy Spirit, and flavored by His presence (fruits).*

#### *B. A Sobering Answer – He Who Has Clean Hands and a Pure Heart! (15:2-5; 24:4)*

- What God requires of the ones who want to enter His presence is that they have a life of moral integrity and ethical righteousness coming out of a heart that is unified in its loyal love toward Him!
- In other words, the “fool” in Psalms 1 and 14:1 is not qualified to enter into God’s presence, and when he does, he ignores the grave spiritual danger before him.

#### *C. A Spiritual Danger – God’s Consuming Fire (Isaiah 33:14)*

*“Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire?”*

- Why is this so serious a question? Because of the intensely holy nature of the One who dwells there.

- I still don't see the danger. Listen more carefully to Isaiah, who tells us He is a burning fire that consumes anything or anyone that is not like Him.
- This explains why the fool does not want to go beyond external performance of empty worship rituals. But the godly/wise do – they want to enter in and enjoy God and they want to know what this holy God requires of them for that to happen!
  - a pure heart (undivided, uncontested loyal love)
  - and clean hands (a Word-shaped, Spirit-governed life of loving obedience to God and to others)

#### **IV. A Spiritual Confirmation (Ps. 15)**

- What does this actually look like in a worshipper?
- Expressly illustrated in 10 statements (Ps. 15:2-5)
- Summarized in three qualities:
  1. Longing for God with an undivided heart (15:1)
  2. Living according to His Word by walking blamelessly and doing what is right (15:2)
  3. Loving others like God loves (15:3-5)

#### **V. A Settled Consequence (Isa. 33:16; Ps. 15:5b)**

*Isaiah 33:16 – He will dwell on the heights.*

*Psalms 15:5b – He who does these things shall never be moved.*

##### **A. What Can Such a Person Expect? (Ps. 1:5)**

- He will stand approved on the day of God's judgement.
- He will never be removed from the congregation of the righteous.

##### **B. Why Will This Person Be Able to Stand? (Ps. 1:6)**

- Because the Lord knows his way (his character and conduct).

*But you and I both know that this is impossible – how are we ever going to get this kind of righteousness in our external life, much less in our internal life?*

## **VI. A Stunning Contemplation (Ps. 24:7-10)**

<sup>7</sup> *Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* <sup>8</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!* <sup>9</sup> *Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* <sup>10</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah.*

- **Psalm 24 ends by announcing that a mighty divine Champion has appeared to fight for us and provide us with the righteousness that we lack and that God demands!**
  - **This righteous King will win a great triumph for us and for His people. He will win this triumph in two stages:**
    - *First*, He will ride up to Jerusalem and enter her gates on a donkey – to win a victory that has the power to deliver people from sin (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21).
    - *Second*, He will ride up to a bigger and better Jerusalem on a white war horse after winning a victory over Satan that delivers the earth from the curse (Zech. 9:10-14; Rev. 19-20).
  - *But who is this mighty champion and glorious king?* The answer is repeated twice! He is none other than *God Himself!* The “Holy One of Israel” who transformed Isaiah!
  - The Lord of Glory will step off His throne and, as David faced Goliath alone, will by Himself face the ancient enemy of God and redeem His people by defeating Satan, destroying death, and removing the ancient curse!

### **Conclusion:**

- So . . . what do we do between those two entrances of the King into Jerusalem? We must make our own entrance into His throne room to find grace for the dark place and hard space where He has placed us as salt and light (Heb. 10:19-25).
- Someone opened the way into that throne room so we can enter safely, confidently, and boldly! Who? The King of Glory! Who is this King of Glory? Jesus humble and lowly!

- We have been granted the kind of righteousness that will never be consumed! God joyfully welcomes us into His presence and eagerly engages with us through private and corporate worship!
- And when we live in the light of who this King is and what He has done for us,
  - all of our little kingdoms dissolve,
  - all of our frustrations are put into proper perspective, and
  - all of our griefs and sorrows are sustained by His grace and strength and not our own!

***A. We enter boldly*** with a desire to have a clean conscience before the Lord – to cleanse our conscience with His Word.

***B. We hold fast to our profession***, the marvelous doctrinal truth delivered by Christ to His church through His apostles (the Word). Holding fast means we actually shape our thinking, mold our character, and guide the decisions (big and small) we make in our lives according to that Word. We are truly Word-driven people who are not governed by our frustrations, our hurts, our irritations, or even our strong desires for things. We are driven deeply by the careful and accurate application of His Word to our lives.

***C. We provoke one another to good works***. The word “good” is the concept we see in Genesis 1 (“tov”), which means these works are first pleasing to God (obedient to Scripture); second, beneficial to others (loving others like God loves us – selflessly, sacrificially, and at times in ways that are painful to us); and third, advantageous for the gospel. In other words, we live our lives like Jesus lived His – for others (Phil. 2).

Do we really make our personal life decisions along these lines? Or do we make them along the lines of our own personal desires and simply cloak them in the appearance of superficial spirituality that sounds good but does not hold up under the light of God’s Word rightly examined and applied? This is what it means to provoke one another to good works – to live consistently in ways that are like God and that show forth the fact that we actually treasure Him, His

**Word, and His kingdom (of which the church is the present expression) more than we treasure our own kingdom.**

- **Which brings us back to what we saw in Psalm 15.**
- **When we truly worship and actually allow the Word of God to shape our lives, we will be the kind of people who**
  - **long for God's presence,**
  - **live according to God's Word, and**
  - **love others selflessly, sacrificially, and truthfully.**
- **This goes far deeper than just claiming to love God or to honor the Scriptures. One commentator observed, *"We are a nation of Christians who have familiarity with the Bible; we own many copies of the Scripture; and we make many claims about our Bible and our love for God – but when you look at the way we live our lives, shape our values, and make the multitude of daily decisions we make – the Bible has very little influence or impact on us. We are, in essence, happy with a God who loved us enough to die for us, but we are not sure we want that God shaping our lives to the degree that we actually become like Him."***
- **This is a powerful, painful statement, and as John the Apostle encouraged us, *"If we have ears to hear, let us hear what the Spirit is saying to us"* in these marvelous texts.**
- **When we embrace the wisdom found in God's Word and see the beauty of the Good Shepherd and Gracious Host, we long to be like Him . . . and one day we will awake in His likeness (Ps. 17:15)!**
- **But we can grow into that likeness now as we meditate on His Word and enter into His courts with worship that has the power to change us internally and conform us externally by the righteousness He won for us by His obedient life and atoning death!**