COALDALE MB CHURCH

followers of Jesus seeking to glorify God

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July 6 Devotional (for Sunday July 12)

Worship Series - 1

"Worship Service"

What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "worship service"? Take a moment to think about it.

We had the privilege of leading several teams while serving with Venture Teams International both in Canada and around the world. While in rural Canada we were unloading and setting up for a church service. There was a noticeable reaction to the drum kit from several people. One man approached and declared, "We don't use drums here". As team leader I approached our host and a leader of the church to ask his input and let him know we could use a Djembe instead. The response was, "No, go with what you had planned and as we had previously discussed." We did, but prayed specifically about this in our pre-service prayer time. Crystelle was our music leader and our drummer. I encouraged her to lead the way she always did. After the service the man who had approached me earlier came quickly and intentionally toward me. He said, "When the drummer is connecting with God like that you can use drums anytime!" Worship is a response to God not a performance before people. And worship is much more.

There are different ways we could study worship in scripture. We could start with the most commonly quoted passages and move to the more obscure. Or we could simply consider the passages in order they appear when we search 'worship' in a concordance. However we pursue this worthy topic we are sure to discover things which are both confounding and comforting. Aspects of worship should rock our lives and perceptions as well as awaken the potential of great reward.

What is worship? How do you describe it? What words, pictures, experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions come to mind? Don't just read on looking for answers. Stop and try to articulate what you believe worship is, or includes, or is definitely not. There are many helpful ideas and ways to consider worship. Work to clarify your own thoughts and questions. Write some down and state some out loud.

If you are finding this a hard task there are good reasons for it. Worship, like many concepts in scripture, unfolds over time through revelation. There is no one easy or simple definition for worship. Worship is dynamic and relational. It is both commanded and central to how we are created. What or who we worship affects all of life. There is a very real sense in which the object of our worship has both 'caught us' and 'directs us' even when we are unaware. There is much more to be said about worship but let's look specifically at some of what has already been said. Through this series let's look through scripture together to discover how God describes worship and why worship is essential to our lives as followers of Jesus.

Let's go back to the basic question. What is worship? Before working to answer this more specifically let's consider more why this is such a complex question. The New Bible Dictionary starts a description of worship this way,

> **WORSHIP**. 'Worship' (Old English 'weorthscipe'='worth-ship') originally referred to the action of human beings in expressing homage to God because he is worthy of it. It covers such activities as adoration, thanksgiving, prayers of all kinds, the offering of sacrifice and the making of vows. Nowadays, however, 'worship' is used for any kind of interaction between God and his people, expressed in (but not confined to) cultic or formal activity by a religious group or individuals. It therefore includes not only the human approach to God but also the communications of God with his people, and the whole communal activity that takes place when the people gather together religiously. Such activity is the formal expression of spiritual attitudes which should characterize

God's people at all times (Rom. 12:1). Insofar as serving other people is a divine command, the fulfilment of it is a part of worship.

The term 'worship' is misunderstood if it gives the impression that the major element is what *human beings* do or offer to God. Biblical religion is primarily concerned with what *God* does for his people (Mk. 10:45). This is particularly evident in the NT, where words expressing the human activity of worshipping God are surprisingly rare in descriptions of church meetings (Heb. 13:15f.; 1 Pet. 2:5). Worship is human response to a gracious God, and it needs to be placed in this context if it is to be properly understood.

In the OT there is an extensive vocabulary of words expressing this response to God (especially *histaḥᵃwâ*; Gk. *proskynein*, 'to bow in reverence').[1]

Do you hear in the first paragraph just how deep and broad and penetrating worship is? Worship is not just between you and God and then disconnected from other relationships and the rest of life. Read again how this paragraph ends. "Such activity is the formal expression of spiritual attitudes which should characterize God's people at all times (Rom. 12:1). Insofar as serving other people is a divine command, the fulfilment of it is a part of worship." Worship impacts every relationship and all aspects of life.

The second paragraph makes it plain that scripture shows worship to be primarily about responding to God and the third starts with the appropriate posture of worship. "Worship is human response to a gracious God, and it needs to be placed in this context if it is to be properly understood. In the OT there is an extensive vocabulary of words expressing this response to God (especially *histaḥᵃwâ*; Gk. *proskynein*, 'to bow in reverence')."

This all plays out in the verses mentioned. Consider Romans 12;

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
Romans 12:1-2 ESV

The therefore refers back to what has come before, chapter 11. Read the whole chapter and see how these verses are a response to God, his mercy, grace and goodness. Verses 32-36 summarize what he has been talking about and lead into the 'therefore' of chapter 12.

"**32** For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"
35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." Ch. 11 ESV

Worship is indeed a response to Awesome God!

Then Romans 12 continues with specifics on how the grace of God and the character of God in the believer's life are both results of worship as well as part of worship themselves. Using our spiritual gifts and loving genuinely are worship when done humbly before God, in response to God, and for the glory of God.

Consider again Romans 12:1-2.

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[1] Marshall, I. H. (1996). Worship. In D. R. W. Wood, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 1250). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2 ESV

What stands out? As you ponder our gracious God how will you present your body to God this week? How will you worship?

Thinking about this reminds me of the story Bob Record and Randy Singer share at the beginning of their book ‘Made to Count”.

> Andy was building a new home. As often happens, his construction crew was having an awful time with their subcontractors, suppliers, and schedule. Nothing was going right, the boss was frustrated, and the men were grouchy. The weather was hot and humid, smothering the men like a wet blanket. To add to the misery, the construction site’s port-a-john reeked with odors that made the crew gag. The company that was charged with keeping it serviced hadn’t been heard from for days.
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> Suddenly, blaring music pounded the air as a truck rolled down the street toward the site. The music seemed to fill the block with its rock beat, and everybody’s attention shifted to the vehicle that slid to a stop in front of the partially completed home. They noticed that it wasn’t the regular maintenance man who got out of the truck. Instead, it was a big, burly guy, covered with tattoos, flashing a huge smile, and singing at the top of his lungs. He greeted the entire crew with a contagious grin, grabbed his materials and headed – enthusiastically! – into the odiferous disaster. Just before stepping in, he yelled across the yard that the former man had quit, and he would be taking over. Then he disappeared into the four-by-six cubicle. Rumblings began inside the port-a-john and grew louder and louder, as though he were attacking every inch of the relief station. It almost sounded like he was wrestling with a tiger in there.
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> The construction crew suspended work temporarily, their gazes drawn to the spectacle of the port-a-john. A few snickered. They knew that the only thing worse than the smell of a port-a-john that hadn’t been maintenance well was the smell of cleaning that same port-a-john on a hot and humid day. But this guy seemed to stay inside forever. Every man on the site wondered how he could stand it and thought of how quickly they would have raced in and out just to escape the stink.
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> After a while the crew noticed something radically different. An inviting smell drifted across the yard. Then Mr. good-natured finally emerged with his smile still intact. “Hey,” he said, “the guy taking care of this for you wasn’t doing a very good job. From here on out, I guarantee this will be the best it can possibly be, because I’m here to serve you.” With that, he hopped in his truck, grinned, waved, turned on the blaring music once again and began to back out of the driveway.
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> Dumbfounded, one man yelled to the driver, “How can you do that? More important, *why* did you do that?”
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> “Oh, it’s simple,” replied Mr. Good-natured. “You see; I work for the Lord. And I do every task as though I were doing it for Him. See, you next week!” And with a smile, and singing at the top of his voice, he drove away leaving the awestruck crew with their mouths on the ground.

What the port-a-john cleaner did was a worship service. What Crystelle did was worship service. Romans 12 makes it clear we are one body with many functions. When we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, this is our spiritual worship. This is worship service. Again, how will you worship the Lord this week?

Pastor Gary