

SLIDE 1. Series: Everyday Disciples

Teaching: *How Do We Worship God?*

Sunday November 24.2024

This teaching this morning is an extension of a pre-service conversation I had a couple of Sundays ago with some of our Music Team members, Pastor Bryan, our Service Host, and some of our AV people.

You may or may not know this – but all these aforementioned good folks meet before the service every Sunday morning to go over the order of service and to pray – to pray for each other as we lead, to pray for you as you come in the door, to pray that our time together would be both encouraging and challenging, and to pray that the Spirit would fill us and lead us.

At a point in that conversation – I referred to our Music Team – coming up before or during the prayer just after the announcements. I intentionally referred to our Music Team as – Music Team – as opposed to Worship Team – out of deference to our friend, Elfrieda Klassen – who was part of the Music Team that morning – who rightly pointed out some time ago to me that worship isn't relegated to just music.

I agree.

In fact, that morning, I'd said "worship" is not an adjective – it's a verb.

In the same way that "Christian" is a noun, not a descriptor.

It's as if – in today's church – worship and music are synonymous.

It's as if the announcements and the prayers we pray and the sermons we digest - aren't worship.

That music is the worship we do that sets us up for those other things!

But I think – rightly understood – worship is a lifestyle – not just music, not just praying, not just opening the bible together – not even – just the gathering of people who know and follow Jesus on a Sunday morning.

That worship doesn't begin when we come to this building – when the music starts.

That worship – I hope – is something we are doing all week – so that when we come to this building on Sunday mornings – we just pick up where we left off – and worship together!

Which led one of our Music Team members to say – that'd be a good sermon.

And so here we are.

SLIDE 2. Worship is a verb.

Here is a survey of Hebrew words that we translate to English as “worship.”

SLIDE 3. Hebrew words = “worship” in English

The most common: **Shachah (shaw-khaw’)** = **to bow, to show respect, to demonstrate honor and value**

Abad (aw-bad’) = **to serve**

Caged (saw-gad’) = **to prostrate oneself**

Here is a survey of Greek words that we translate in English as “worship.”

SLIDE 4. Greek words = “worship” in English

Proskuneo (pros-koo-neh’-o) = **to kiss** (like a dog licking his master’s hand; to fawn or crouch to – to prostrate oneself in homage)

Sebomai (seb’-om-ahee) = **to revere, to adore**

Latreuo (lat-ryoo’-o) = **to minister** (like a menial worker)

So – to summarize – from the Hebrew and the Greek – “worship” is to humble oneself before God AND to serve others in the name of God.

Now – understanding these words is a good start to understanding the nature and scope of worship.

But there’s more to words than their technical meaning.

So, let’s look at a few of them in context.

SLIDE 5. *At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in “shachah” (in worship) and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised* (Job. 1:20-21).

At this – at the **loss** of all Job’s livestock and camels and servants thereof – AND his sons and daughters. ALL at once!

Job expressed his grief and mourning – by tearing his robe and shaving his head – classic, ancient symbols to express deep sorrow.

But he also expressed worship – by falling to the ground – by prostrating himself before God – who he blessed/praised despite his tragic circumstances.

Job then offers us a model for how we might respond to God in our suffering – to grieve and to trust – to express our sorrow AND to worship God at the same time.

Worship is a posture of humility towards God.

In the book of Exodus – the Hebrew word “abad” is used repeatedly in conversations between Moses and Pharaoh about the Israelites going out to the desert to serve / to “abad” / to worship the Lord.

In the book of Numbers – the Levites served / “abad” / worshipped in the Tabernacle of Moses.

This might make more sense if we think of it this way: that God owns the whole world in which we live – as if He were our employer – we His employees - so that our worship of Him is a matter of respect for the one who is Master and Provider – a matter of humility and gratitude for who He is and all that is good in our lives.

That we would aim to do the work God has given us to do because we believe in God and His aims.

Another biblical word for this is – “obedience.”

We might also think of it this way: that everything we do - can be done in the name of the Lord: whether ministry (like the Levites) or mission (like the Israelites as testimony to Pharaoh).

In context...

SLIDE 6. Paul wrote the Colossian Church re. ministry: ***Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*** (Col. 3:17).

In context...

SLIDE 7. Paul wrote the Colossian Church re. mission: ***Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters*** (Col. 3:23).

So – we might say - to worship God is to serve in the church and to serve in the community – in the name of the Lord – in both cases.

Now to the NT.

“Proskuneo” (from pros = before + kuneo = kiss or adore) is the most prominent word for “worship” in the Scriptures.

In the ancient Oriental (esp. Persia) – the mode of greeting between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips – if the difference in rank was slight – on the cheek – but if the difference in rank was much greater – the inferior was to fall to his knees – touch the ground with his head – which is to say – prostrate himself – and throw kisses to his superior as he was bowing – as a token of reverence.

Proskuneo!

This is the word used when the "magi" came from the east to "worship" the Christ child (Mt. 2:2).

They fell prostrate before the one who was worthy to be worshipped – which involved at least 2 things: the attitude of humility on the part of the "magi" – who knew their inferiority - and their understanding and recognition of being in the presence of the One who was worthy of worship – who accepted the superiority of Christ.

As one commentator put it: "It is a response word, not an emotion, but an immediate response to the presence of deity." Wayne Barber

(<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=36099>)

There are 59 uses of the word "proskuneo" in the NT: homage by tokens of reverence and/or by prostrating oneself.

This word is never used as a synonym for any assemblies or gatherings or meetings in the Scriptures.

It is only mentioned once – in a church meeting - in 1 Cor. 14:25 – where an unbeliever could fall down and worship and exclaim, "God is really among you!" – because the truth of God was clearly articulated.

Another commentator puts it this way: "*Proskuneo* is never used to represent any religious assembly though the English word "worship" is used that way today. Though by necessary inference, *proskuneo* does certainly include praise, prayer, the Lord's Supper, listening to teaching, and benevolent giving that occur in Christian assemblies." (<https://godsbreath.net/2015/03/05/greek-words-for-worship-in-the-bible/>)

SLIDE 8. *A leper came to Jesus, and bowed down to Him (proskuneo), saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean" (Mt. 8:2).*

The leper addressed Jesus as *Lord*. He more than acknowledged the gap between himself as less-than-equal to Jesus. The leper recognized the *deity* of Jesus. So he bowed down to Him.

On another story - Jesus heard that the man he healed of blindness was thrown out of the temple after he was interrogated by the Pharisees.

SLIDE 9. *When he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." The man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him (Jn. 9:35-39).*

Worship is the response of those who have a sense of God and His kingdom at work.

Proskuneo!

And worship is also service: "latreuo."

After Paul spent 11 chapters in the book of Romans explaining what it means to come to God through faith in Christ – he begins chp. 12 by appealing to believers to live a certain way: a life of worship in response to God's mercy.

SLIDE 10. *I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper* ("latreuo") ***worship*** (Ro. 12:1).

In short – Paul is making a comparison here – between the Levitical priesthood of the OT – and the NT priesthood of all believers (1 Pt. 2:9).

The priests of Israel offered sacrifices of dead animal flesh.

What could we reasonably offer as a comparison?

Our living bodies!

Which is to say – ourselves – our embodied souls as "our spiritual act of worship" – as it says in other versions of the text.

To give our lives as a sacrifice to use for His purposes – right now – every day – with every choice we make that reflects His aims for us and for others.

I can't improve on how one commentator put it: "Animal sacrifices under the old covenant sacrificial system had to be set apart from the herd for that purpose and chosen with care to make sure they were acceptable—unmarked and unharmed.

As living sacrifices, God has *already* set us apart for His purposes and declared us acceptable because He sees us in our position in Christ. In other words, we do not have to wait to be better people before we offer our bodies and lives to God.

As people in Christ, He will receive the sacrifice of our everyday lives right now."
(<https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/12/Romans-12-1.html>)

SLIDE 11. So then: *How do we worship God? With humility and service.*

This is both a vertical posture – towards God – and a horizontal response – towards others.

As it relates to corporate worship...

The humility it takes to pack yourself into a car to participate in a Sunday morning gathering of believers – as if to say, "I could do a lot of other things right now – but I choose to do this – because God and His kids are worth my time and energy."

The service it is to share announcements – or as I like to call them – "missional opportunities." The service it is to lead others in songs of praise.

The humility it takes to play or sing songs – to lead a congregation – because God has gifted you that way – not because “you’re all that and a bag of chips!”

The service it is to teach. And the humility it requires.

The humility it takes to pray together. Closing our eyes. Bowing before God.

The service it was – last weekend – to package and to transport our GALA and Sunday morning leftovers of cakes and carrots, potatoes and stuffing, gravy and turkey – to the Salvation Army Gateway of Hope – to feed those in our community who – for whatever reason – find it hard to do for themselves.

This filled me with joy to do on your behalf - and it reminded me of Isaiah’s text to *share your food with the hungry... Work hard to feed hungry people. Satisfy the needs of those who are crushed. Then my blessing will light up your darkness...* (Isa. 58:7, 10).

As it relates to personal worship...

The humility it takes to *value others above ourselves* (Phil. 2:3) – to treat people as equals or more. Whether you want to kiss them on the lips or blow them kisses from the ground is – your call!

The service it is to drive someone to the hospital and stay with them (even though all you wanted to do was go home after a great night at a GALA).

The humility it takes to say, “I was wrong. I’m sorry. Would you forgive me?”

The service it is whenever we see a chance to share our food with the hungry or satisfy the needs of those who are crushed.

I had lunch @ Popeye’s recently. A man came in behind me and up to the till. He announced that he didn’t have any money and wondered out loud if there was anything “they” would be willing to give him.

I got my order and... that gentleman sat down beside me.

I laughed. I prayed to myself, “Seriously Lord!”

His name was (and is still) Paul. He is on disability and lives in a care home not far from Popeye’s where (he admitted) they fed him well enough, but (he complained) the food wasn’t very tasty.

I laughed again. And I prayed again, “Shall I feed him, Lord? He’s getting food. He’s being cared for by social services. He doesn’t really need Popeye’s chicken, does he?”

I seem to sense God say to me in my spirit, “He is your equal, Rob – an image-bearer of mine. Delight him. Delight yourself. Delight in Me. Ask him what he usually gets!”

I got him the popcorn shrimp combo. 😊

The humility it takes to recognize and acknowledge who God is and what He's done for us – such as Paul does in his doxology to end Ro. 11...

SLIDE 12. *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen* (Ro. 11:33-36).

The service it is to do everything we do as if working for the Lord (Col. 3:17, 25)..

Worship is a verb. Worship is a response, not a feeling. Worship is a posture of humility and an act of service.

ALL of these things that I have just listed – both corporately and personally – can be worship – whenever they demonstrate the value we place on God over and against our selfish interests.

Whenever I come in humility.

Whenever I submit to His aims.

To God be the glory forever! Amen.