

“What Did You Bring to Worship?”

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 • Romans 11:33-12:8

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

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What is the most important thing you have to do tomorrow? What about this week or this month? What’s the most important thing you do ever? Think about that for a moment. Maybe you have an important meeting with a client coming up. Maybe you believe the most important thing you do is spend time with your family or your friends. Maybe it’s the volunteer work you do. What is the most important thing that you do Monday through Saturday? This morning we’re going to discover that it might not be what you think.

It’s worship. Worship is the most important thing you will do this week. Not just today but every day. It may seem strange to talk about worship as the most important thing we do. After all, we just show up and sing some hymns, listen to some prayers and an anthem and a sermon and then we go home—after lunch, of course. Is that really the most important thing we ever do?

The problem is that’s not worship. Worship is more than we think it is. The music, the readings, the call to worship, the anthem, even the sermon are not worship. Those are all things that help *lead* us into worship. You see, worship is not just something we do for an hour on Sunday. Worship should be the most important thing we do in our lives. Worship is a lifestyle.

If you want to know what’s most important to someone, look at how he spends his time and his money. Today the average American spends nearly 30 hours per week watching television. Allowing 8 hours a day for sleep, that adds up to about 98 days of TV watching a year. The statistics for video games are similar, too. Why do people watch so much TV or playing video games? Because it’s what’s important to them. Consciously or not, they have made a decision to spend their time and money watching a screen.

In the late 19th century, the painter James Whistler was at the height of his artistic career. A wealthy patron purchased one of his paintings

on the condition that the artist would help select the spot in his home to hang the picture. When they arrived at the mansion, the man began holding up the painting in different areas, each time asking, “How about this?” Finally Whistler said, “You are going about this all wrong. What you must do is remove all the furnishings from the room, hang the picture where it will be best displayed, and then arrange the furniture in relationship to the painting.”

Many people approach worship the way the man approached the painting. They simply try to add worship to their already crowded life. But God stops us and says, “you’re going about this all wrong.” The Bible tells us that worship is the most important thing in our lives and that we should arrange every thing else around that. The Westminster Shorter Catechism, which used to be required memorization to join the church, begins with the question, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer is, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” Our highest purpose is to worship God.

That means that worship is something we do all day, every day, not just on Sunday. A.W. Tozer once wrote, “If you will not worship God seven days a week, you do not worship Him on one day a week.” If we each worship privately during the week we are better able to worship together. Worship is a lifestyle.

This lifestyle of worship is exactly what the Apostle Paul is describing in this section of his letter to the Romans. The first part of today’s passage shows us *Who* we worship. Verse 33 says, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” This section forces us to stop and consider who God really is; to realize how worthy He is of our praise and worship. In fact, English word *worship* comes from the old Saxon word *worthship*. To worship God is to ascribe the proper worth to Him.

The second part of our passage tells us *why* we worship. We worship to “present our bodies

as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” The word holy doesn’t mean perfect so much as it means set apart. We also worship, according to Paul, in order to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind,” and to “discern what is the will of God.”

Donald Whitney, who has written several books on how to practice what are called spiritual disciplines, says, “Regardless of what else we are doing, we are not worshiping if we are not thinking about God.” All of the different parts of our worship service are designed to point us to Christ’s presence among us so that we think about Him. Our sanctuary is also designed to point us to Christ. We have these stained glass windows not so much for their artistic value but because they point us to Christ and help us to think about him. Each of the symbols points us to Jesus.

The final section of our passage from Romans tells us *how* we worship. We find here that we need each other. Notice that Paul doesn’t say that the church is “like” a body. He says, “we, though many, *are* one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. The reason is that we each bring gifts “that differ according to the grace given to us.” God has given each of us gifts to use in the church in order to build each other up and help us to worship.

There is something that is simply amazing when God’s people gather together to worship and that’s the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit draws us closer to each other and closer to God in our worship. Have you ever tried to light a log on fire? Or even just a stick? It’s not very easy. Even if you can get the stick to start burning, it doesn’t get very hot and will probably go out quickly. As one author put it, “One log by itself cannot burn for very long, but when many logs are put together, even if they are poor logs, they can make quite a fire.” When you combine kindling, small sticks, larger sticks, and then logs, the fire can burn for quite a long time and burn much hotter. It’s the same way for Christians.

We need each other in order to keep the fire of worship going.

So how do we develop that lifestyle of worship all through the week that prepares us to worship together more fully on Sunday? And then how do we get the most out of our weekly worship together?

First of all, make a commitment to be in worship as often as possible. I know right now it’s difficult for some to be here and I am so thankful for the technology that allows people to watch from home. But watching is not worshiping. That’s why we encourage you to interact through the comments. Look up the Scriptures and read along. Sing. It may be a little awkward but God doesn’t mind. We learn to worship by worshiping, so the best way to learn is to be here practicing.

Second, come prepared to worship and anticipating hearing from God. One of the striking features of worship in the Bible is that when the people gathered, they really believed that they would hear the voice of God. When you come to worship you should expect to hear God speak personally to you and to see Him working in the lives of other people. We often miss experiencing God in our midst because we just aren’t expecting Him.

Third, every morning before you get out of bed, spend a few quiet moments praising God. As you go about your day, look for signs of God working around you. Ask God to be present to you during the day and whenever you see His “fingerprints,” praise Him. As Richard Foster says, “Live throughout the week as an heir of the Kingdom, listening for God’s voice, obeying his word. Since you have heard his voice throughout the week, you know you will hear his voice as you gather for public worship.”

Finally, let worship move you into greater obedience. Worship enables us to hear God’s call to service clearly and to respond, “Here I am! Send me.” Be open to where God is calling you to serve.

So what about you? Do you want to be able to “discern what is the will of God, what is good

and acceptable and perfect?" Are you ready to
"be transformed by the renewal of your mind?"
Are you willing to "present your bodies as a
living sacrifice?" True worship is giving ourselves
entirely to God for Him to transform us and to
use us, "For from him and through him and to
him are all things. To him be glory forever."

Amen.