

Order of Worship

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, August 23, 2020

WELCOME

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 104:24-35 UMH p. 827

HYMN 73 *O Worship the King* LYONS

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

HYMN 592 *When the Church of Jesus* KING'S WESTON

SCRIPTURE John 4:1-26

MESSAGE *Worshiping Together*

GENEROSITY, INVITATIONS and CELEBRATIONS

HYMN 723 *Shall We Gather at the River* HANSON PLACE

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Worshiping Together John 4:1-26 Pastor Rebecca

When you hear the word “worship”, we think of people of faith gathered in a worship service. The word “worship” itself is an old English word, *worthscip*, meaning “the state of being worthy”. That means that whatever we value with our words, time, actions, and financial commitments can be objects of our worship.

There are many things of value that God has given us, such as our health, families, friendships, pets, nature, homes, cars, etc. God clearly said that these are gifts that we are to be faithful stewards of, but never to elevate to a place of worship. Misdirected worship is called idolatry. When we value any gifts more than the Giver, or even more than the Giver wants us to, we fall into the trap of idolatry.

It is a convicting but necessary experience to recognize how we worship the wrong things. Often when the things we value are taken from us we realize we have been worshiping them instead of stewarding them. For example, if news of the Big 10 football season being cancelled caused you anguish, there is a chance that at some point you crossed the line from Supportive Spectator to Wisconsin Worshipper. I won't only pick on football fans – everyone of us has parts of our lives that rival our love and commitment to God. We can “worship” our health, children, homes, yards, and our favorite politicians or celebrities. Again, these things are indeed gifts from God, but we must be intentional about making our worship of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – our primary passion and constant commitment.

In today's Scripture reading from John 4, Jesus and a Samaritan woman have a deep talk about worship. He reminds her that water from that well is indeed a good and necessary gift. As an outcast in that society, she avoided the morning crowds around the well and went in the middle of the day. Like us all, she needed water, but she also needed to protect herself from the stares and glares of others who judged her for her ethnicity, multiple marriages, and unconventional relationship. Jesus doesn't condemn her – instead he communicates with life-giving hope and healing. He offers her water that is more than an every-day necessary gift. Jesus offers himself – the Living Water. He is saying to her, and to us, *“Let me pour my life and love into you. I alone can eternally satisfy your deepest desires.”*

Augustine defined sin as “disordered love” because the root of all sin is idolatry. We think that accomplishing this, having that, attaining this, or associating with that will bring us the satisfaction that we seek. Some of those things may happen, but it is first and ultimately God's grace that makes us worthy of anything. And when we give disordered love or value to anything, we easily end up worshiping the wrong thing. If we take an honest look at how we spend our time and money, we'll probably get a good sense of what

we worship. For instance, when people complain about how the “church just wants our money”, the truth is that generously putting the gifts God gives us back in God’s hands frees us from idolizing money and the things it buys us but can’t ultimately satisfy. God holds both individuals and churches responsible for being good stewards of the gifts God gives us. When we fail to be good stewards, we also fail to be faithful worshipers.

We have also been confronted with the question of where worshiping God should happen. We have this spacious and beautiful building that is a place of significant spiritual moments for so many people. I trust that God will bring us back here together again. But perhaps God is using this time away from gathering in this building to remind us that we are called to worship the Trinity at all times and in all places. Just as Jesus had to tell the Samaritan woman, worship is not confined to Jerusalem, the holy mountain, or 903 3rd St. Jesus says, *“true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* The woman said to him, *“I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ).* *“When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”* Jesus said to her, *“I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”* (John 4:23-26)

In that last sentence is an extra word that is not in the original Greek text. Jesus doesn’t say, “I am **he**...” He simply says, “I AM...” Those two words are living water to the Samaritan woman. She instantly recognizes Jesus is the Messiah because as a Samaritan, she was taught that the Messiah will be recognized as a form of Moses, who heard God reveal himself in the burning bush as “I AM”. The Jews were conditioned to recognize the Messiah as a form of David, the king of Jerusalem and the reunited Kingdom of Israel. The Great I AM is greater than our religious assumptions and greater than our idols.

The Messiah – God in human flesh – now stands before her and explains that worshiping God requires us to worship in spirit and truth. Both words are simple and complicated at the same time. I will try to illuminate both by explaining the nuances of some Greek and Hebrew Bible words translated as worship. This will hopefully lead your spirit to know the truth about how to worship God. The primary Greek word for worship is *proskuneo*, a verb that means to “kiss toward”, showing both affection and submission. The word

shabach is the most common Hebrew word for worship, and it connotes expressing confidence in God’s ability. Another common word is *barak*, which literally means to kneel down in humility to bless someone. As a counterbalance to the quiet and reverent form of *barak* worship, *hallal* literally means “shiny”, and it describes exuberant praise through shouting, dancing, and boasting about God. The word “hallelujah” is made by combining *hallal* (Praise) and *Yah* (God). *Yadah* and *towdah* are worship words of extending and raising hands to show our gratefulness and adoration of God. *Taqa* and *kara* describe worship by clapping and dancing with joy and victory. This is not all the Hebrew words, but it is plenty for now.

When Jesus sat and talked to the Samaritan woman, he was also demonstrating how worship is something we are called to do both individually and together. Worshiping together is much richer when you’ve spent consistent time nurturing your relationship with God individually. We are not created to live our spiritual lives in isolation – we are called to worship together as well. Singing praises, praying laments, confessing sins, offering gifts, and opening and expanding our understanding of how great God is are all aspects of worship. Worshiping God is intended to involve all of our heart, soul, mind, and body. So let out a big cheer of praise for God! Clap and shout *Amen!* Let tears of surrender and joy flow. Kneel in humility and trust. Learn and live God’s priorities.

Even though we are not worshiping in our building together, we are still able to be united in God’s Spirit as we join in worship online or growing in our mutual understanding and worship through reading the worship bulletins and sermons that come in the mail. True worship, like God, transcends time and space. As you watch this now, we are joined in worship by a great cloud of witnesses.

In order to worship God in truth, we have to take an honest look at whatever is in our lives that may be competing with our worship of God. How is God calling you to look at everything you value and make sure you are being a good steward of it rather than worshiping it? What is your next step in using your whole life – mind, body, and spirit - to praise God? God has done great things, given us great gifts, and called us to celebrate the great victory of the resurrection. Let us worship God together in spirit and truth!