

TRUE AND VIBRANT WORSHIP – Gospel Awakened Worship

Worship is at the core of our humanity. We were created to ‘glorify and enjoy Him forever.’ Our tendency, however is to look elsewhere for our joy and happiness. Christian worship exists to turn us away from the trivial and artificial objects of worship which have captivated our hearts and return us to the person of true worship – The Living God.

Jeremiah 2.13 – For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out broken cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Read Jeremiah 2.11-13; 4.1-2

Context & Meaning

Human beings were made to worship God. They were made for God and his glory (Ps. 96.7-9). Or as the Westminster Shorter Catechism has put it, they were created to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And yet, with the entrance of sin through humanity’s rebellion against God and his word, humanity has exchanged or substituted the glory of God for a lie. And as a result, they’ve sought to worship that which promised much, but in the end was never able to deliver. To put it another way, as a result of humanity’s brokenness, the ‘worship impulse’ which every human being possesses is no longer directed toward God and his glory, but toward our own self-defined glory and joy. Humanity was created to find their ‘all in all’ in the Fountain of Living Waters (God), and yet they have settled for broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2.13). The heinous result of sin isn’t that humanity ceases to worship, but that they worship anything and everything other than the Living God.

This is what Jeremiah brings out so clearly and forcefully in this passage. The people of Israel, in ceasing to worship God, had actually changed their own glory (their God-given glory of being worshippers of the Living God), for that which did not profit (2.11). They had turned away from him who was their foundation and life in order to go after that which was false and could never satisfy. They forsook Truth himself in order to go after deception and death.

And yet, even light of this, God holds out to them an amazing promise. He promises them that if they return (repentance) to him then he will restore them and they will once again become ones who worship him genuinely (4.1). This promise has been fulfilled in Christ. In and through Christ there is redemption. In and through Christ the ‘worship impulse’ is no longer continually directed toward that which is trivial and artificial, but toward him who is Truth and Life.

The first response of a life freed by the Gospel of Grace is to give praise to the God all grace. True worship begins and ends with the Living God. Our feelings and emotions, or what we may or may not get out of worship is secondary to God and who he has revealed himself to be. He alone is the transcendent One, which means he is wholly unlike us and yet at the same time he is the imminent One, which means he has invited us into relationship with him. Worship is all about God’s glory. But it’s also about our joy as his creatures. We were created to find our ultimate fulfillment and contentment in the One who shaped us and fashioned us for himself. Sin distorted this creational drive for God and his glory by making us into people who go after all sorts of things – money, relationships, acceptance, etc... thinking that these created things will satisfy the deepest longings of our heart. True Christian worship is the great reversal of this ‘death.’ It exists to restore the ‘worship impulse’ in those who were made for worship of the Living

God. True worship is the outflow of a heart that is being continually captivated by the gospel so that we God might be loved truly as our greatest good.

Apply

At Redeemer, our worship exists to turn us away from the trivial and artificial objects of worship which seek to captivate our hearts and return us to the person of true worship – the Living God made known in Christ. Today’s clamor regarding worship styles and content reflect a growing awareness of the centrality of worship in the Christian Life. Nevertheless, the common lines drawn – traditional, contemporary, and blended – are limited and do not capture the fullness that should characterize this sacred activity. While no terms are perfect, we would say worship strives to be characterized by two words: **Truth** and **Vibrancy**.

Regarding truth, this means first of all, that we seek to be *God-centered* and *Gospel Driven*. Our primary goal in worship is to encounter the true and living God who has made himself known in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. For this reason our worship is always taking us back to the renewing message of grace that is found in the Gospel. But worshipping in truth also means seeking to be *historically connected*. We recognize the long history of true worship by God’s people through the ages and therefore we seek to draw upon the rich resources of those who have gone before us by making use of ancient hymns, creeds, and liturgy.

As for vibrancy, our worship, first of all, seeks to be *in our time* and *in our place*. We realize that we’re historically connected, but we’re also present-day Christians, living in a particular time (21st century) and place (San Antonio). Therefore we must utilize current idioms, musical styles and hymns that will reflect and speak to our culture. But worshipping vibrantly also means having an Order of Worship that seeks to *engage the whole person*, that seeks to facilitate a dialogue between the God who speaks and us who respond from a heart that’s being transformed by the Gospel.

For Reflection and Discussion – Gospel Awakened Worship (Jeremiah 2.11-13; 4.1-2)

1. What are some objects that are worshipped (other than God) in our worship? How have you participated in this? How have you, by the grace of God, sought to counter this?
2. How have you based your life on the truth that you were created to glorify and enjoy God forever? How would you seek to explain this truth to an unbeliever?
3. Discuss the following statement?

If we aim for our satisfaction in worship, then both God and we will not be satisfied. But if we aim for God’s satisfaction in worship then we’ll both be satisfied. – Skip Ryan

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

4. Do you really believe God is the source of your ultimate fulfillment? In what ways are you tempted to forget or disbelieve this truth and the go after other things (acceptance, security, happiness, relationship) in order to fulfill this?
5. How might we as a church, as a group, help one another to continue in the way of true worship, of seeing God rightly and savoring him truly?

6. How would you describe the connection between corporate worship on the Lord's Day and daily worship?

Prayer

Our Lord and our God, help us to find in You our all in all so that we might be a people who worship you rightly and savor You truly. Amen.