

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.

Isaiah 6.3 – ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’

Read Isaiah 6.1-8 & Acts 2.42

Context & Meaning

In this well-known passage of Scripture we, the readers, are given a wonderful opportunity of ‘witnessing’ the prophetic call of God to Isaiah, the son of Amoz - a call that happens at a precise time, in a particular place, and which includes a grand vision, and willing response. But Isaiah 6 is not only about a precise and personal prophetic call, it also serves as **a helpful Biblical pattern for gathered worship**.

True and vibrant worship, which we focused on last time, must always be according to God and his Word. God’s Word alone sets the terms for God-centered worship. It gives us the ‘principle parts’ that constitute worship (**Apostle’s Teaching, Fellowship, The Sacraments, and The Prayers**, see Acts 2.42) upon which we, in freedom, ‘order’ our worship in our particular time and place. Seen in this way, authentic and Spirit-filled worship is never left *solely* to man’s devising, but instead always rests upon God’s prescribing as it is found in his Word. It is God’s Word that gives us the elements of worship, but it is also God’s Word guides us in the way we freely organize those elements in our corporate worship.

And this is why Isaiah 6 is so helpful for us with regard to worship. Not because it gives us a particular style of worship, but because it guides us in the way we order our worship. In other words, the call of Isaiah takes us through what it looks like *for us* to enter into the presence of the One who is ‘high and lifted up’ (v. 2) and whose glory fills the entire earth (v.3) - a powerful encounter that results in a pattern of **praise, renewal, grace given and grace received, and blessing**. It’s in praising God that we come to know him and his greatness (vv. 2-3), and at the same time we also come to know ourselves as sinners in need of his forgiving grace (vv. 4-5). And it’s in experiencing his grace (vv. 6-7) that we discover our place as his forgiven people sent out with his blessing in order to serve the world on his behalf (v.8).

Apply

Fundamental to our weekly corporate worship at Redeemer is the commitment that we will only worship in the way God has prescribed for us in his Word. Yet, the Bible, to our surprise, teaches very little about the nature of corporate worship. We’ve been given the elements of worship in Acts 2.42, yet the organization of those particular elements is nowhere specified for us in the New Testament. So what do we do? Do we make it up as we go? No, we instead turn to the ‘Gospel Logic’ of Isaiah 6 where we find a compelling ‘Order of Worship’ which we have freedom to utilize. We, therefore, following Isaiah 6, order our worship at Redeemer around the pattern of *God’s Greatness, God’s Renewal, God’s Grace, and God’s Blessing* (notice our bulletin headings).

Our worship, if it is truly worship, must begin and end with God. It begins with God calling us to worship him in his majesty which in turn should evoke within us a sense of reverence and awe concerning him as well as a sense of desperate need concerning ourselves, a need that can only be met by God's compassionate renewal of us through the confession of our sins and the assurance in Jesus Christ that those sins are indeed forgiven by his grace - a fact that enables us to live unshackled from sin's guilt and power. After this time of renewal, God, the Shepherd of our souls, addresses us, feeds us, and nurtures us with his Word verbally (preaching) and tangibly (sacraments). Here God speaks his life-giving Word to us intimately and personally. Finally, God sends us out with his blessing (benediction) in order that we might serve as his change agents in his yet to be fully redeemed world.

During worship our hearts should expand in awe and in love for the One who has redeemed us in Christ, a 'heart expansion' that will inevitably spill over into every aspect of our lives - our relationships, our work, and our play. In other words, what happens in corporate worship on the Lord's Day should give shape and meaning to all of our days. For a heart that is opening up to God in worship will be a heart that reverences God, experiences brokenness and renewal, listens to God more faithfully, and continually learns the true value of gentleness, love, compassion, and patience with those whom we rub shoulders with on a daily basis.

For Reflection and Discussion – Gospel Awakened Worship (Isaiah 6.1-8; Acts 2.42)

1. Why is gathered worship on the Lord's Day so vital in the Christian Life? On a similar note, why do we confess our sins together and recite certain prayers and creeds together every Sunday? Do these set prayers and creeds lead you further into worship? Why or why not?
2. As you look at Redeemer's bulletin do you see the pattern of Isaiah 6? Have you ever noticed it before? Where do you see the 'elements of worship' (Acts 2.42) in our worship? Do you think it's important that God's Word guide us in the way we worship? Why or why not?
3. Again looking at the bulletin and its structure, do you see a two-way movement between God and us, his people? What sorts of emotional responses should this movement evoke in the worshipper? How has this happened for you?
4. Worship is not a 'spectator sport,' it is rather it is a 'contact sport' requiring participation and reception. In what ways do we participate in worship and in what ways do we receive in worship?
5. What does it or would it look like to come expectantly to worship? Does this involve prior preparation? If yes, what does this preparation look like?
6. In worship how does God reassure us of his love and grace and what does it look like for us to renew our commitment to him as our King?

Prayer *Father, captivate our hearts as we gather to worship Your holy name Sunday after Sunday. Amen.*

