

“Whom Do You Worship?”

What’s the Point, part #2

Isaiah 6:1-8

[47] Welcome, friends. I’m glad that you all decided that to make a return trip to church. Either my last message was good, or you were hoping for more coffee and cookies after worship today. Either way, I’m so glad you are here.

Look around you. Tap someone on the shoulder and tell them, “God loves you.” You know, you are not here by accident. We need each other. We cannot be the church alone. Would you pray with me?

Lord, if you have something to tell me, I’m ready to listen. Search me and know me, God. Look into my heart and see where I need to change. And help me live in your eternal way. In Jesus we pray, Amen.

[48] Last week I made the case that you and God form the important love relationship of your life. We read in 1st John 4 that God is love. The takeaway from that message was this: If we invest the time and attention that #1 love relationship deserves, we will find God blesses our other relationships, too. As the apostle John put it, “Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the children of God.” God’s love is amazing.

[49] Over the next five Sundays we will look at different elements of that important love relationship. Today, we are going to focus on WORSHIP.

Have you ever heard someone say, “He worships the ground she walks on”? We may say of professional athletes, actors, and musicians, “their fans worship them.” When we say, “We idolize them,” are we being serious, or just exaggerating?

[50] The word “worship” means giving worth to something or someone. When I was a college student, a friend of mine asked me to do a photo project with her on facial expressions. She needed me to project “worship and awe.” We went inside Alice Millar Chapel at Northwestern University, a huge gothic church, and I stood in front of this massive stain glass window. And I tried to project “worship and awe.” I failed. I don’t know why, but I just looked goofy. I couldn’t summon the correct gaze on command. I guess that’s why I am not an actor.

It always bothered me that I couldn’t summon an attitude spirit of worship on command that day. Yet, three weeks ago at summer camp, I saw the most

amazing sunset. I thought, “Wow, God.” Last week, our family went to Canyon Falls. I said aloud, “Wow, God. Amazing.” Have you ever gazed at the stars, or the fall colors, or a beautiful sunset? Have you ever listened to Christian radio and just the right song came on? Have you thought, “Wow, God. How blessed am I?” In those moments, worshipping God is completely natural.

[51] There is a reason we have those moments. Listen: We were created to worship God. Every single one of us. You. Me. Your neighbor. Your friend. Your parents. Your children. All of us were created to worship God and enjoy a loving relationship with God. We were “planned for God’s pleasure.”¹ It is our life’s purpose.

When you discover your purpose in life, you have two choices. You can live your life according to it, or you can ignore it. I’m no genius, but when things work the way they were designed, generally, that’s good. You can try to turn a screw with a hammer, or pound a nail with a screwdriver, but that’s silly. The same is true when we try to worship something that doesn’t deserve our worship.

[52] Take this video for instance. (*Religious Idol video*)

[53] It’s silly when we worship something that doesn’t deserve it. We were created to worship God, only God. So let’s talk about what that looks like. Let’s look again at Isaiah chapter 6.

[54] Isaiah is in awe of God. He doesn’t have to fake it. God is BIG. There are angels flying all around, the hem of God’s robe fills the temple. There’s smoke. There’s earthquakes. Isaiah sees God face-to-face.

What is Isaiah’s response? Humbleness. He says, “Woe is me. I’m lost. I’m as good as dead. I’m a sinner.” Isaiah realizes his place before God. Even the angels cover their faces. When we enter the presence of God, we feel small.

[55] Isaiah knew the two foundational truths of the universe. #1 - There is a God. #2 - That God is NOT you. Awe and humbleness are where worship begins.

[56] Psalm 8 says, “O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!... When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful

¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Drive Life*, 2002.

of them, mortals that you care for them?” Look up at the stars some night. The universe is so big. Just the right size for God. Not so much for me. I’m so small.

[57] As Isaiah considers just how small and insignificant he is, something amazing happens. An angel flies down with a live coal and touches Isaiah’s lips. Isaiah experiences forgiveness. He is suddenly aware that God is aware of him. Isaiah understands, as the psalmist says, “Yet you have made [people] a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.”

Remember how we say “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”? Isaiah saw how God is worshipped in heaven. That is how it is meant to be everywhere. God’s will is that everything and everyone would worship the Almighty Creator, the Lord of Hosts, on earth and in heaven. We were created to worship God.

[58] When we come into God’s presence, when we realize how small we really are, when we experience forgiveness, then we realize that we were created to worship God. Remember, I told you there should always be a “SO WHAT?” moment in every sermon. We were created to worship God. So what? So honor God with your life.

What does that mean, “honor God with your life?” What happened after Isaiah humbled himself and experienced forgiveness? God asked, “Whom shall we send?” And what did Isaiah say? “Here I am, Lord.” When Isaiah entered worship, he expected to be called. Isaiah said, “Me! Pick me! I want to be on God’s team!”

[59] What are your expectations when you enter a worship service? Do you expect to be awed, humbled, forgiven, and called? Do you expect to be challenged? I believe we should enter every worship service with the expectation that something is going to happen, and it’s going to challenge me to honor God with my life.

So often we diminish worship, regulate it to the hour we gather on Sunday morning...you know, the “worship service.” We say things like, “What time is worship? 10:00, Sunday.” We say things like, “Wasn’t worship good today?” Our worse, we leave saying, “I didn’t like the worship today.” But what do we mean? We might mean, the music. Or the preaching. (Or the cookies.) Listen, our music and my messages may have their ups and downs. That’s not the point. You were

created to worship God, not the songs or the sermons. You need to honor God with your whole life. Music and teaching? Those are just vehicles to help you get to your final destination.

[60] Let me give you three simple ways to worship God. First, consider your relationships. We said we want all people to be in a loving relationship with God and with each other. Try honoring God in your relationships. When you choose forgiveness, compassion, patience, and integrity in your relationships, you are worshipping God with your life. You doing God’s will here on earth as it is done in heaven.

[61] Relationships are one way to honor God with your life. A second way is your time. To worship God, you must desire to give God “enough” time and attention. There is no formula. There is no “X” amount of minutes per day you should worship God. Simply consider how you spend your time each day. What activities bring God honor? It’s different for everyone. Each of us has the same 24 hours a day to use to deepen your relationship with God. How wisely do you use your time? They say, “love” is spelled T-I-M-E. Are you giving God the time so that your relationship can go deep, or is it just casual?

[62] Honor God in your relationships and with you time. And third, honor God with your possessions. What we do with the things God has entrusted to us speaks volumes about our souls. When we support the Bride of Christ – the Church – we are worshipping God. Worshipping God means giving with no strings attached. It means trusting God and not clutching to what we have. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, you can’t worship two masters. You can’t serve both God and possessions equally. One of them always wins out in the end. Real worship might mean some stuff needs to take a back seat in your life. We should never worship our security; we must always trust God.

God set a tithe as our standard for worshipping him with our possessions. I realize there are those who can give a tenth, more than a tenth, and less than a tenth. It’s not about the comparison game. Honoring God with your possessions means you prayerfully consider what you can give. It’s not about the guy or gal two pews in front of you. It’s a deeply personal question, asking God to show you how to trust him. [63] C.S. Lewis said in his book, Mere Christianity,

“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc, is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little.”

I promise you, if you have never tithed before, you do not know the joy this discipline gives you. Try it for two months and see if I’m crazy. I believe God always meet our needs. Furthermore, I know we are created by God to be generous. Tithing is a discipline; it doesn’t come naturally; it must be practiced. And it is definitely an act of worship.

In our relationships, time, and possessions, we need to prayerfully consider what “enough” to each of us. God will tell you.

[64] So, whom are you worshipping? What do your relationships, time, and finances say about your priorities? That is a challenging question. And it is very personal.

Isaiah was willing to give his everything to worship. He worshipped God with his whole life. He had his priorities straight. In my life, the three most important things, in order, are my faith, my family, and my profession. God first, my family second, and my job third. It is really tempting as a pastor to get those out of order. In fact, I need you as a church to help remind me of what’s important. It’s mutual. I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again and again and again. We need each other. We cannot be the church alone. We cannot worship God alone. We cannot grow in Jesus alone. We cannot make disciples for the transformation of the world alone. We must do this together.

So let’s grow together in Jesus. Let’s grow together in worship. Let’s experience the awe of God that leaves us trembling in our boots, that opens us to receiving healing and forgiveness, that makes us raise our hands and say, “Me! Pick me! I want to be on God’s team. I’ll go! Send me!”

You were created to worship God. Honor God with your whole life. Will you do that, starting today? I certainly hope so. Let’s pray.

Memory verse:

“Love the Lord your God with all Your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

Reflection questions:

- If someone tracked where you spent your time and money, what would they discover about your priorities?
- When you think of worshiping God, what's the first image that comes to mind?
- Are you more comfortable worshiping God in church or a different setting? Why?
- What is one way you can ask God to help you worship Him more this week?

Based on Rick Warren's "The Purpose-Drive Life", 2002, with Doug Fields Youth Ministry resources.