

20250302 Surrendered Worship: Giving Your All to God – Ps Bijoy

Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

What is worship? Well, the dictionary definition of 'worship' is 'the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity'. When we actually look at the 'etymology' of the word 'worship', or the history of the English word 'worship', we find that it is directly related to the concept of worthiness.

Yet this word 'worship' has come to be used casually in many ways. If I ask you what is the the first word that came into your mind when I say worship, I wonder what it would be? It would be interesting. For some people it's 'singing', 'shouting', 'raising your hands', 'prayer', or other forms of demonstrative praise. However, worship may incorporate all of those things, but worship is not the same as merely singing, shouting, raising your hands, praying, or doing other forms of what theologians call 'adoration to God'. Those things are indication/signs of worship, but they are not essentially the essence of what worship is. You can do all of those things without worshipping. In fact, conversely, you can worship without doing any of those things.

Worship in Old and New Testament

The common Hebrew word for 'worship' in the Old Testament is the word 'hishtachavah'. It's used 71 times in the Old Testament, and it literally means - it literally means 'to bow down with reverence and respect'. So, the idea is that the body is being used to be prostrated before God, 71 times in the Old Testament. The New Testament equivalent of that word in Greek is 'proskuneo', and that word is used 26 times in the Gospels, mainly of people coming and bowing before Jesus and worshipping Him; and then it's used 21 times in the book of Revelation at the end of the New Testament – but not much in epistles.

In the Gospels Jesus is with mankind, So He is there in bodily form, so people prostrate themselves before Him, they can see Him. When we go into the book of Revelation, there are a lot of heavenly visions, and Jesus is in heaven, and we read of the elders, the cherubim and the seraphim, the heavenly hosts, all falling down and worshipping Jesus. But we are in a period, like those who received the epistles in the New Testament, when Jesus is not with us in bodily form, but are we not supposed to worship Him, nevertheless?

In John chapter 4, Jesus is talking to the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. This woman had been married five times and now was living with a guy that wasn't her husband. And we can see a discussion that Jesus is having with her and Jesus offering her water that would mean she would never thirst again, in verse 20 the woman says: 'Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place

where one ought to worship'. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth'.

Now, understand here, the main Hebrew word to do with worship is to do with what you do physically, prostrating yourself before God, It's there in the Gospels when people come before Jesus and bow before Him; it's there in Revelation where, in the heavenly realm, people are bowing before Jesus in bodily form and worshipping Him physically; But what Jesus is saying here is: there is a time coming and now is when it's not about what mountain you worship at, it's not about the physical place; it's not about form; it's not about ritual, it's all got to do with the heart! Worship will not be localised, but rather internalised. Rather than being an external thing, worship is going to be in the depths of the heart. Jesus says here in John 4 that true worship happens in spirit and in truth. So, it's without a place, without this mountain or that mountain, without this Temple or that shrine; but rather worship is carried along by the Holy Spirit, interacting with our heart, according to the truth of who God the Father is and who we are related to Him.

I want you to see what Jesus is doing here in John 4: He is breaking decisively from all outward forms as a definition of what worship is. In the New Testament, the New Covenant believer is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, God dwells within you, you are the sanctuary of God. Indeed, whatever we do, whether we eat or whether we drink, we are meant to do it all to the glory of God. That's worship for a New Testament believer.

Living sacrifice

Sometimes I wonder, have we somehow, without realising it, lapsed back a little bit into the Old Testament understanding of what worship is? We have connected with procedure or behaviour, rather than what is going on deep down in our hearts. Jesus spoke about this when He cited the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Matthew 15: "Hypocrites! Well, did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'". So, to define worship, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. It's all about the heart.

Graham Kendrick says: 'Worship has been misunderstood as something that arises from a feeling which 'comes upon you', but it is vital that we understand that it is rooted in a conscious act of the will, to serve and obey the Lord Jesus Christ' - that's powerful. We can get taken up with feelings - feelings are not unimportant, but you can get feelings at a good concert, you can get feelings in the theatre, you can get feelings at the cinema, at the football match. True worship is something different, it's an act of the will where

we consciously serve and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Worship is where God isn't moved by the quality of our voice, but by the condition of our hearts'. The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart.

So, what is true worship? What is it? Well, look at our text, Romans 12 verse 1: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service'. Paul says to these Christians in Rome: 'I beseech you', I beg of you, I implore you'. Now that indicates to us that this is a matter of the will, this is your choice to make.

Do you know that you engage your will when you worship God? You choose to do it! But let me say to you that that choice is only possible when it is in a response to the mercies of God. Look at the verse: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you do this'. The only way that we truly worship is in response to who God is, what He has done, and what He has said in His word - it's in response to His Person. It's not mere willpower, but it's when we melt before His grace and His greatness. You're familiar with the concept of sacrifice, aren't you? But this verse tells us that we sacrifice as a free will response to God's great mercy and goodness in our lives. Do you see the difference? Religion sacrifices for mercy to gain it, we sacrifice from mercy in appreciation: 'I beseech you therefore, because of the mercies of God, that you present your body as a living sacrifice, which is your true and proper worship'.

Response to the goodness of God

Now, what is he talking about? These 'mercies of God' that we respond to in laying our lives down? Well, you have to read the book of Romans - we haven't got time to do that this morning! But you need to go home and read the whole book of Romans, the first 11 chapters up to chapter 12 - that's what he's getting at. He saying: 'Look at what God has done for you, when you read these first 11 chapters, you will be bombarded by the wonderful mercies of God. Think about some of the things you read about: justification, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God', we are justified by His blood. It talks about how we are adopted, we become heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus, and we are adopted into God's family. Now we have the spirit of adoption rising up within us, not a spirit of fear any longer, but the Spirit of God's Son rising up crying 'Abba Father'. We are in the family! We are in Christ! Look at how many times you find that phrase in Romans, 'in Christ'. We are identified with Jesus Christ, we are identified with His death, His burial, His resurrection. We are no longer under law, but we are under grace, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. We have received the gift of the indwelling Spirit of God, God lives within us now! We have help in affliction, His Spirit interprets the groanings within the deep parts of our soul when we can't even pray to God with words can be uttered. We read about the great election and the purposes of God in our lives as the church. We read about the certainty of coming glory, that whatever we're going through right now, the suffering of this world is not worthy to be compared with what will be

revealed in us in a day that is yet to come. It talks about the confidence that we have, that we will never ever - as children of God - be separated from God; that nothing can separate us in heaven, earth, or hell, from His love, not even death.

Paul is saying that because of all these mercies, because of all these blessings, 'I implore you, sacrifice yourself, lay down your life, give your bodies - this is true and proper worship - because of this, present your bodies as a living sacrifice'. Do you know what the reasonable service in the Old Testament was? The reasonable service according to the word of God, was to bring a sacrifice to God, whatever that sacrifice was, whatever you could afford, you brought it to God. But in the New Testament, because the mercies of God are far greater, guess what? The reasonable service is far greater also! It's not bringing a sacrifice, it's being a sacrifice! This is priestly service - do you know that all of you, men and women, are priests of God? You're a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and as priests you're asked to bring a sacrifice, but guess what? The sacrifice is you! God is asking you, because of His great love, to bring yourself and lay yourself on the altar. It's not just your body, I know it says the body, but I think what is inferred is that the body contains the spirit and the soul. What is expected here is that God wants you to bring your entire being. Banish the thought right now that all God wants from you is your work or some charity, No, He doesn't. He wants you. Do you know something? You can do all sorts of things for God, and never give Him yourself. But giving yourself as a sacrifice to God is true worship.

"Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose, all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable." He wants all of you. The two greatest gifts I believe God can give us are a true sense of ourselves, what we really are, and a true sense of who He is. If you get a revelation of who God is, you will have to give yourself entirely to Him.

I think what Paul says here is the equivalent of the burnt offering in the Old Testament. The burnt offering was different. The burnt offering had to be entirely given to God, and that's what's being said here. Dying to yourself and giving yourself completely as an entire sacrifice to the Lord. you've been brought alive in Christ, you're now alive in Jesus - but if you are alive in Christ, you're going to continually need to be giving yourself over again and again to the Lord, putting yourself on the altar. It's a daily thing.

So I want to ask us this morning, where are you (and I)? Are you on God's altar or are you off the altar? Maybe you once were on the altar, but no longer? Let me ask it to you another way, Where is your/our heart? If this worship is all about the heart, where is your/our heart? What did Jesus say? 'Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'. What is your treasure? Is Christ your treasure?