

A Theology of Worship

Lesson 2: The Most Important Thing We Will Ever Do

Chapter 2

- No matter what your week looks like, the most important thing you do all week is come to worship on Sunday. Why? because the most important thing we could ever do is happening—every week—on the Lord's Day in the Lord's house by way of the means of grace He's appointed.
- Are we overreaching when we say this? Why is Lord's Day worship the most important thing we will ever do every week? For two reasons:
 - I. **Internal Design** — First, because we were created to worship. The fall messed up a lot of things about what it means to be human, but it couldn't eradicate our innate desire to worship. It's built into who and what we are as creatures made in the image of God, creatures created to worship, WSC 1. Our hearts yearn for and desire after the worship of God, Pss 63, 84—which is why Augustine said, *Thou hast made us for thyself O Lord, and our heart is restless* (despite our perpetual worship of everything under the sun!) *until it finds rest in thee* (in worship).
 - A. The sense of deity
 1. Every human being is created with the knowledge of YHWH as his God, Rom 1.18-25, such that there's nothing more natural to the man *as created* than the worship and adoration of God. Before the fall, worship was so natural that it was in a sense instinctual; and it was certainly delightful and joyful.
 2. This innate sense of deity, this sense of God's being and worth, is what drives man—now a rebel and idolater—to worship. Man's refusal to worship God as God cannot annul his internal drive to worship; so he makes idols and worships them. As cliché as it may sound, there's a God-shaped hole in every man's heart, a hole that can only be filled through worship and only through the worship of God as God—which explains why man's perpetual attempt to fill that hole with the worship of anything else is so disappointing, dissatisfying, and vain, Ps 4.6-7
 3. Adam and Eve were made with this hole and they knew the One who could fill it. But then they sought their own glory instead of God's (Gen 3). Thus what plunged humanity into the curse and bondage of sin was an act of misplaced worship.
 4. God didn't simply place in the human soul the *ability* to know and commune with Him (i.e. worship Him). He placed in every human soul the *need* for Him, a need that the fall did not change. What it did change, however, was what we desire to worship. Now we run after idols. The pride now bred in our heart (refusing to ask God for help) and the enmity against God now abiding in our heart (determined to live independently of Him) drive us into endless forms of idolatry, because we can't run from our need for gods (read: God) and our need to worship (God).
 5. Thus, as Paul says in Rom 1, the truth of God is suppressed by sinful man, but worship is not—because it can't. We will worship whether we like it or not. It's because this is how we were made. It's what we were made for. The least religious people in the world—even rank pagans—are all worshipers.
 - B. A worthwhile endeavor
 1. In his helpful book *You Are What You Love*, James Smith argues that humans are not primarily thinking things; instead we are wanting-and-worshipping things. We order our lives around what we want, and whatever we want we worship. Augustine was right again, when he said, *wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me*. We desire those things that we believe will give us *the good life* (because we all seek it), and so we order our lives

around whatever we've determined that may be. That desiring and ordering of everything around a thing is called worshipping. Whatever is most important in our life is the thing we worship—which is the same as saying that *worship is the most important thing we do in our lives*.

2. But the problem with the world is that people worship creaturely things (Rom 1), things that are utterly worthless and unworthy of worship. God alone is worthy of worship (Rom 4.11), which is why God alone satiates human worship.

C. Wanted: Worshippers

1. Another evidence of the importance of worship is that ever since the fall God has been in the business of reclaiming worshipers, redeeming the lost from their worship of the creature unto the worship of God and His Son—the way it was meant to be, Jn 4.23-24. It's significant that the only time in Scripture the word seek is used of God is in connection with His seeking true worshippers. God is seeking to reclaim a people who do what they were designed to do, what they will really love doing. He comes to point our inward desire toward Him, its intended end, to answer the soul's cry for a god with Himself, God. So worship is the most important thing we will ever do because it's the thing we were made for.

II. **Eternal Destiny** — Second, worship is the primary activity that extends from this world to the next. Worship is undoubtedly the supreme undertaking of the believer in glory, Rev 4.10-11; 5.11-14.

- A. Moreover, the scenes in Revelation also help us see how it is *corporate worship* in particular that's to be preeminent in our lives. Our entire lives are an act of worship in a general sense (Rom 12.1-2) but corporate worship is the picture and oasis of what goes on in heaven, of our eternal destiny. Private worship will be foreign to heaven because one of the primary blessings of heaven is our shared unity as a body of Christ, our corporate worship. That's why we can't excuse ourself from corporate worship on earth and think we're fulfilling God's desire and design for His people. We were created to be and worship together as the body of Christ.
- B. The church's primary task is often mistaken to be evangelism. A closer reading of Mt 28.19 reveals that the primary verb is "make disciples". Going/evangelizing is for the purpose of and in service to the church's primary task: making disciples, i.e. discipling worshippers.
 1. Hence, it is *the church at worship* that fulfills the Great Commission. Evangelism is only the beginning of the process of making disciples, disciples who are trained up in the faith and mature in their understanding of the things of God by engaging in biblically robust worship week in and week out.
 2. Of the church's three tasks: worship, discipleship, and missions, worship is central and the other two serve it. As Piper said, "missions exists because worship doesn't." We go out in missions because we're joining the Father in search of worshippers, and discipleship (in the context of the church, under the means of grace) is the link that joins missions and worship.
 3. "It is imperative that worship be given priority in the church. When any other function is accorded priority, then the God-centered interest is displaced by the man-centered. Man's chief end is to glorify God. This governs all of life and is exemplified by the fact that worship—*specific, corporate, and prescribed* worship—is its principal function." —Murray 1.239
- C. Thus, nothing has eternal significance like worship. Every Lord's Day worship is a taste of heaven and serves to fit us both for our eternal home and joy. The corporate worship of God on earth is a kind gift of God to give us a taste of what's in store for us and to sustain our longing hearts until we arrive.

See DPW I.B.4-7