



ELMWOOD MB CHURCH

January 12th, 2025
“Worship: What we are Made For”
Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Isaiah 40:25-26
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Good morning. Today we begin a new series looking at the distinctive marks of the Christian church. That word ‘distinct’ means to be “Recognizably different in nature from something else of a similar type” You see a group of people, what makes them different? Religions, what are the differences? This is huge in marketing: ‘research shows that the more distinctive a brand is, the better it tends to perform.’ A challenge a Christ follower faces in our culture today is to lose their distinctive identity, become like everyone else.

So, my aim in this series is to reorient us back to what we do, what we believe, what we submit to, what we need, what we display what we proclaim...etc. all based off of ‘what’ statements—not why but ‘what,’ in the affirmative.

This passage in Deuteronomy telling the people of God at their base level—this is what makes you distinct—is the fact that you worship God.

Worship—what we are made for. You are made to worship God. In Dostoyevsky’s book *The Brothers Karamazov* he writes, “**So long as man remains free, he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship.**” We are looking for someone or something to give our lives meaning/purpose/identity. People try to find that meaning/purpose in jobs, in children...looking for something to worship.

Definition: “**Worship is the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honour and worth to their Creator-God precisely because He is worthy, delightfully so.**” D.A. Carson The word in Hebrew means to ‘bow down’; worship/bowing down is the right response to God. It is much more than we know.

More than singing. When you hear the word ‘worship’ you likely attribute it to music. People may ask, ‘How was worship today?’ or ‘I’m going to the worship night/service.’ In Luke 4:8, on the verge of Jesus beginning His ministry, the devil tempts Him by saying, “I’ll give you all the kingdoms of the world...if you will worship me.’

Jesus responds with, “**Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.**” He wasn’t talking about singing. He is quoting Deuteronomy—the people of God worship Him alone; no one and nothing take His place as first and foremost. Worship is first and foremost an internal response to God before it is an external expression of that. It is more than singing.

I have heard people say that unless we do multiple hymns, it was not good worship. Or if we are not playing upbeat music, it’s not worship. They are generally stating their preference to musical style, not worship. But music is important; the Psalms are generally written to a tune, Jesus and the disciples would sing together...music has

been a distinctive mark of the Christian life—we use music as a means to worship God. But instruments are tools to help us to worship God.

Psalm 150

**“Praise Him with trumpet blast,
praise Him with harp and lyre.
Praise Him with tambourine and dance;
praise Him with flute and strings.
Praise Him with resounding cymbals;
praise Him with clashing cymbals
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!**

So, music is a tool, useful for the purpose of corporate worship—helping us to turn our attention away from ourselves and onto God. That is its purpose. The music instructs our emotions on how to feel and how to engage with the words that are being said/sung.

The Bible gives scant attention to details about our services (choirs, etc.) and overwhelming attention to the worship of the heart. Consider **Psalm 95:1-2: “Come, let us shout joyfully to the LORD, shout triumphantly to the rock of our salvation! Let us enter His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout triumphantly to Him in song.”**

Let me ask you—does that describe the way you approach our time of corporate worship? Shouting joyfully, with thanksgiving...3 times it says we should ‘shout’ in worship! In Revelation, the angels bow down in worship.

It is undeniable that when the Bible describes worship, it begins with a change of the heart but moves outwardly and affects the emotions, actions and lives of the community—it is a right response to who God is.

When we gather and sing songs that help us to worship God, what is your heart’s condition? Do you know it’s rather deflating for the worship team to watch you not sing or stand with folded arms and angry eyes. That is your ‘outward expression’...does that reflect your heart? You say, ‘I’m not a singer.’ I didn’t ask you if you are a singer—you are to be a worshipper of God. But I tell you that children and those looking for answers might come in on a Sunday and look at you, they might wonder if you actually believe what you are saying.

You might say, ‘I don’t like the music here; it’s not my style—I can’t worship... **‘You cannot find excellent corporate worship until you stop trying to find excellent corporate worship and pursue God Himself.’ -D.A. Carson**

Worship is more than music. Music is a tool to help us to worship God; it is a tool to help us when we come together reminding us of truths about God. It’s not about the music—it’s much more.

More than Sundays

It's a lifestyle of worship, not just a Sunday morning thing.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” Romans 12:1

Worship is more than Sunday mornings. If you only worship God on Sundays, something is off in your soul. Worship is more than music; it is more than Sunday mornings. One writer suggests that this is actually not a ‘worship service;’ this is a gathering to edify each other. What we do—singing, praying, giving, hearing the word preached, etc., is a means of edifying/encouraging and strengthening each other to worship God as we go into our week. Yes, we are corporately worshipping God together, but worship is more than a Sunday morning.

How you treat your spouse, your children, your finances, your time, your sexuality, your relationship with neighbours, colleagues, fellow students, friends and enemies all stem from what you worship. Worshipping God is self-control, not being mastered by sin; it is internally ‘bowing down’ to God all week long. Worship is active, it’s warfare—it is working at ‘bringing God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven’—shalom, peace in all its aspects we work to that end. We are as salt and light in a dark and decaying world. It does not remove itself from the darkness but rather penetrates it.

“Without action in the world, the adoration of God is empty and hypocritical, and degenerates into irresponsible and godless quietism” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

This is the kind of ‘worship’ that God hates. It’s people who worship on a holy day but then go about their business as though God does not see or even exist. **“Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me...I cannot bear your evil assemblies...When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you...Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! (Isaiah 1:11-17).** Or what about Jeremiah: **“Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are safe’—safe to do all these detestable things?” Jeremiah 7:9-10).** Their worship was an abomination because their hearts/lives were impure...their worship services had become offensive. So worship is more than music, more than Sundays and...

More than you understand

Here we come to the ‘crux’ of the sermon. This actually is the most important part of the message. Worship is more than you (or I) understand. Missions is necessary, discipleship is crucial, prayer is needed...but worship is what we are made for.

“To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out

their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.” Isaiah 40:25-26

Recall the question the disciples asked each other after Jesus, with a word, calmed the terrifying storm. ‘Who is this that even the waves obey Him?’ It’s a great question. Who is this that uncontrollable forces of nature submit to His voice? The logic is this—if winds and waves obey Him...who is He? And...can I even stand in His presence?

Anytime in the New Testament when people saw Jesus’ power, they worshiped, because worship is the proper response to God. Psalm 95:6-7 **“Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture...”** 1 Chronicles 16:29 **“Ascribe glory that is due to His name.”**

If you want your life to change, if you want to be reoriented, start to worship God. You have probably heard it said, you are made for a relationship with God—true, but incomplete (even misleading.) Ultimately, it is to worship God. And as we worship Him as God, we learn how to relate to Him.

Do you ever wonder why God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden? Why is it there? Just take it out and there would be no problems, right? But the tree is not there to give people ‘free choice’ Not to have choice, but a chance to worship; when they failed to honour God as God, it all fell apart.

This is the crux of our lives. This is why people leave Jesus: because they don’t want to submit to Him, they don’t want to ‘worship’ Him as Lord, they want Him to worship themselves! They want Jesus to serve their needs and fix their problems...but we start to align with God when we worship Him first...then we submit our problems (and their outcomes) to Him. Consider Job, when he lost everything what did he say?

Job 1:20-21 “At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”

I’m not saying that is easy; Job tore his robes in grief and brokenness...but he worshiped. As one writer put it, ‘the way you forget about yourself and not get consumed by your troubles (and there are many by the way!) is focusing on God.’ Worship actually helps you in your trouble. How? It elevates your mind from temporal trouble (real yes, but temporal... ‘light and momentary trouble’) and brings your mind and heart onto eternal realities—namely God Himself.

This is where music is helpful. Music plays a role to pull us out of our feelings of self-pity, discouragement or just simple distractions. Music is a tool, that’s all—used to focus our minds and reasoning on moving us out of ourselves and onto Jesus. Songs are picked that elevate the attributes of God: His work, His character, His promises. That is what we need to hear every week: those songs are selected that honour God but edify

your soul. You don't need a 'worship service' that entertains you—you have Netflix and Disney+ for that. What you and I need, what our souls need, is to be recalibrated back to what we are made for; we are made to worship God.

Revelation 19:6-8, when Jesus returns: **“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’”**

This is the wedding of Jesus and the church—we are made to worship Him. Not just know about Him, but actually your life, my life is to be oriented around king Jesus in worship. Does that mean you live on a mountain wearing robes? No...but worship is all of your life and it begins with you and me *being*. The old 'Westminster Confession' asks, 'What is the chief end of man?' Answer: "The chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever"—that is worshipping Him!

In John 4, Jesus has a conversation with a woman by a well. They cover a lot of topics, but it ends on the topic of worship. She is convinced that proper worship occurs in a location on a certain time of the week—many people today believe that. Here is how Jesus responds, **John 4:23-24 “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”**

Jesus is making it clear that worship is more than about music, it's more than Sundays—or even about a certain place. Jesus is saying that where He is, is where we worship. That He alone is worthy of worship. **Psalm 16:11 “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand is pleasures forevermore.”**

That is the experience of those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth. No pretend, no facade, no 'putting in the motions.' It is recognizing that He is God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep under His care. But it begins with worship. Worship: It is what you and I were made for. It is what you and I will do forever and ever and ever with all the saints, from every tribe, tongue and nation. You could say we are rehearsing when we come together; we are tuning the instruments of our hearts when we worship.

So do it. It's more than music, but music is a very helpful too. It's more than Sundays—you will go home and continue to worship at home and at work, at school and all your travels. Ultimately it is more than you can fully understand...for who will you be able to compare God? Who else and what else is worthy of worship? No one.

So, when we gather, our primary focus is to worship the Lord God, to worship Jesus. It is a distinctive mark of the Christian church because it is the mark of a Christian.