

The Place Where Worship Begins

What is God's purpose for you in life?

Our Vision: "God Changed Lives"

Slide: Our Purposes:

Connecting, Growing, Serving, Reaching, Worshipping

Slide: This month: Worshipping

The Westminster Catechism asks this question famously: "What is the chief end of man?" The well-known answer, "to glorify God and enjoy him forever". A.W. Tozer, thinking of that answer, phrases it in his own words: "**God made us to be worshipers.**"

That is true, and maybe surprising to discover. **Everybody worships something.** Worshipping is honoring what you value most. So, everybody worships, but not everybody worships God. Religious people worship. Atheists worship. Agnostics worship. Church going people worship. Stay at home people worship. Everybody worships what is most important in their life. What is important is what you worship, who you worship.

Here's **how you can tell what you worship. If you lose it, your life falls apart.** Some people worship their houses and if they lose them, their life tanks. Some people worship financial accounts or careers or pleasure or relationships. And when they lose them, they feel like their life is over.

Life rises or falls upon what you worship. That's true because what you worship forms the **core** of your life and the **character** of your life. Listen to how Psalm 115 puts it:

their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men.

They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot

see; Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

Psalm 115:3-5, 8

Where you bend your knee and burn your incense will shape your character and form your destiny. If you worship money, you will become greedy. If you worship pleasure, you will become addicted. If you worship the true God, you will become like Christ. **Worship is important.**

I want to start our series by thinking about where you worship. We are used to **associating worship with places** – like sanctuaries or a special prayer place. The Bible is full of stories about **special places for worship**. All the places to worship God in the bible – synagogues and temples and homes and special altars and churches – all of them have one thing in common, that makes them a place of worship. Look at Romans 12.1...

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Rom 12:1

Would you say "*in view of God's mercy*"? That is what makes a place a place of worship. It is a place where you can see God's mercy.

Worship always starts with God's mercy. For 11 chapters in Romans, Paul has been tracing God's mercy. He creates us. He chooses us. He rescues us. He forgives us. He protects us. He welcomes us to his family. He fills us with his Spirit, He puts us on his team. It is all mercy. And so, as he gives this famous sentence on worship, Paul says, "*in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices...*"

That is worship language. He gives to us, and **then** we give

back to Him. Whenever you offer yourself to God, that's called "spiritual worship". And that brings pleasure to God. (say the word, "pleasing") It delights Him, and gives Him joy!

The best place for worship is where you can see God's mercy. Because his mercy is what draws out our love. His love draws our lives, offered to him. **If you stop looking** at his mercy, you will stop loving him, stop worshipping him. Because real worship is **loving God back**. He first loves us (that's his mercy) and we love him back, offer ourselves to him (that's our worship)

I want to look at two passages with you today that have a clear view of God's mercy, one from the OT and one from the NT. In one of these passages we see the **language of worship**. In another we see the **actions of worship**.

Psalm 145

1) The Lord is Great

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

Psalm 145:3

Evidence:

vs 4 they will tell of your **mighty acts**

vs 5 on your **wonderful works**... I will meditate

vs 6 They will tell of the power of your **awesome works**

vs 12 make known... your **mighty deeds**

Testimonies of his wonderful deeds in small groups or family circles...

His greatness is unsearchable. You will never get to the bottom of it! This is the language of a man/woman who stands in view of his mercy.

2) The Lord is Good

*The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.*

The Lord is good to all;

he has compassion on all he has made.

Psalm 145:8-9

vs 8 **good to all** "*he make the sun rise on the good and the bad...*" "*He gives to all their food in due season...*"

This is the language of a man/woman who stands in view of his mercy.

3) The Lord is Gracious

Vs. 14 *The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.*

Example: WeebleWobbles! Upheld by the hand of the Lord, we stand.

Vs. 18,19 *The Lord is near to all who call on him... He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.*

The Lord is Great and Good and Gracious. "He has been better to me than I deserve." This is the language of a man/woman who stands in view of his mercy.

Luke 10.38-40

This is the home of Martha and Mary, and Jesus is a guest. Martha is busy preparing the meal for her guests, but her sister Mary is sitting at the Lord's feet...

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. Luke 10:38-39

"Sitting at his feet" means she is a disciple of Jesus; it was

almost unheard of that a rabbi would make a woman a disciple. But there she is. A disciple was someone who is called into a special personal relationship with Jesus. There she is.

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Luke 10:39-40

We are so like **Martha**. We serve him by our busyness. Why? Because we believe that **our busyness will bring his blessing**, his acceptance. And that is how some people approach worship, approach life. If I pray much, worship well, serve long, give abundantly, then he will bless me, love me, honor me... The short word for this is "**earning**". It is **easy to be deeply religious and earning your way along**.

But it is **not working**. **How can you tell?** She is stressed and anxious and angry! "I am working so hard! Don't you care??? Tell her to get back in here and help me." That is how earning projects go. And **Jesus does not answer her prayer**. He won't sign on and bless it. Isn't that interesting?

Mary has not, by the way, been lazy. "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me?" She was working alongside Martha, but she **left work early**. Why? **Because Jesus was there**, and he is the one dominant priority of her life. **Face time** with him is more important than anything.

Why (again)? Mary had never had a man love her like Jesus loved her. She was used to men using her, then leaving her. But not Jesus. Jesus loved her, and lifted her. His love had brought hope to her life and healing to her heart. She **had to sit** at his feet. And when she sat there **she listened** to his words. Really listened. **Martha didn't**. She was too busy with her earning projects. But Mary did.

This is **the action of someone who stands in view of God's mercy**, in sight of the love of Jesus, in sight of the cross.

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42

John Newton

*Our pleasure and our duty, though opposite before
Since we have seen his beauty, are joined apart no more.
To see the law by Christ fulfilled and hear his pardoning voice
Transforms a slave into a child, and duty into choice.*

When you stand in view of his mercy, you don't see so much a **duty** but a **beauty**. The beauty of his grace, his love. It is the place of worship, the place where lives are freely offered, where duty becomes glad choice and high privilege.

Maybe you have drifted, and **worship has become an earning project**. All about getting God's blessing on your projects. But it is not working, and under the surface you are anxious and worried and angry. Maybe it has been a long time since you have sat at his feet, in view of his mercy, listening to his words. Today I call you back. Will you let some things go, and come back to his feet?

Maybe you have been **worshipping someone else, something else**. And that's not working so well either. And you don't like the kind of person you are becoming. Idols will always disappoint you, always fail. But Jesus will not fail you. Will you let some things go, and come back to his feet?

Today I **call you back to the place of worship**, the place where you stand in sight of his grace, "in view of his mercy", to learn the **language of worship** and the **actions of worship**. I call you back to one on one time with Jesus, to sit, to listen, to worship.