

Does God Care How We Worship? Part 3 of 5

Linford Berry

The Shepherds Institute Minnesota

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Transcript by Joseph van Loon.

Good evening to each of you and thank you for coming tonight and let us begin with a word of prayer.

Our Father God we come to you this evening requesting your presence here, requesting your Spirit to be with us in our spirits and to illumine your word to instruct us and teach us and help us to understand and then to go with us from this place as we attempt to carry out what you have taught us here and so guide us to that end we pray in Jesus name, amen.

I see a few of you that were not here the previous evenings, I'm sorry for you, you missed out, but I'll try to catch you up just a bit anyway and I'm going to start this evening, we are studying about the matter of worship and the focus here is on corporate worship that is what we do together as God's people when we come to worship God together and we are attempting to ask and answer the question "Does God care how we worship?"

And we have been walking away through this a little bit and we still have two more evenings after tonight, it's hard to believe we are only halfway through, but this evening what I'm going to do is tell you a story, you all seemed to like that last night so I thought I'd try it again.

Now this story is a little risky because you see it is my story and sometimes when we tell our own stories it is not always the best so I hope this will be redemptive and productive and the reason I'm going to tell you this story is because I want you to know or I want you to be able to understand where I come from and why I have the perspective that I do and I hope and I think I trust that you will resonate with my story because my story is a lot like most of your stories and so hopefully you can understand these things as well.

In looking back at my childhood memories of corporate worship and number of things come to mind, one is that the services I attended as a child were all alike, I mean always like, I never remember being surprised by some new or different element of worship, it was always the same, the order was the same. On some rare occasions, my father was a pastor and we travelled to a lot of different churches all across mostly the eastern United States from time to time so I attended a wide variety of Anabaptist churches as a youngster and I remember the services were always the same no matter where we went, sometimes the order of preaching and Sunday school were switched and sometimes there was a different number of songs but that was about the extent of the variety.

The singing was always a cappella, the prayer were always extemporaneous that means they were not written they were just delivered as the person praying thought of it, and the preaching was almost always the central activity at least on Sunday mornings.

Another notable observation was that there was very little emotional or physical expression.

As a child I remember being a bit surprised and a little bit intrigued when we visited a small mountain church and I noticed an older brother vigorously tapping his feet to the singing, that was noteworthy to me as a youngster.

It was even a relatively rare occasion when somebody would utter and amen or some other audible expression during the service. It seemed to me as a youngster that going to church was a serious and very sober activity which must be attended with the utmost reverence and respect.

Now from a child's vantage point this meant no turning around looking at people behind me, no running around in the church house or even outside the church house afterwards, always keeping my collar buttoned when I was in church, never whispering or making any noises except for singing that was allowed.

There was also a certain air of reverence around the pulpit, only ordained people would speak from behind the pulpit and lay brothers who had a part in the service would speak from or lead from a lower podium but then after the benediction things were quite different, conversation would break out immediately all around the room, if the weather was good sometimes we would migrate outside, sometimes loud laughter and backslapping would occur, sometimes it would get so loud depending on the acoustic environment it would get so loud you could hardly even talk to someone directly. Many times we would stand around this for 30, 40 minutes maybe even an hour after the service and it was clear to me that the fellowship was quite different from the worship.

It also became clear to me as I grew older that the content of the communication in the fellowship was very seldom related to the content of the worship, it became apparent that many young people of my age group and many older people, quite possibly most, came to church primarily for the social interaction and for the social connections that it afforded and not so much for the spiritual content or for the experience of worshipping God.

Now that might not be a fair judgement but that is how it appeared to me.

And then through a series of events and over a period of time a couple of years after my wife and I were married I became rather disillusioned with the setting, the church setting I grew up in, and issues of worship were not my main concern at least I didn't identify it that way at first and I won't go into details about what all that was but basically I was confronted with some questions that I did not know the answer to and as I sought answers for my questions I found that led to more questions and people at church, especially and including church leaders, were not able to answer my questions at least not satisfactorily to me.

And so operating out of this kind of built-in conviction that the Bible was where the answers were I began to study at and I studied it in a little different way than I had before, I approached it in a different way than I had before, one of the things that I determined to do was to take it at face value and just let it say whatever it wanted to say and not try to cram it into any kind of idea of my own and over time the text of Scripture became alive to me, texts that I had read many times before suddenly became crystal-clear, and it was almost as if I was reading it for the first time and what I found in my study of the Word of God affected me in ways that I would have never have imagined, I began to genuinely hunger to know God, I wanted to experience what I was reading about not just know about it in my head but actually experience it.

I began to learn about the attributes of God, the character of God, I began to get glimpses of God's greatness his Sovereignty, of his holiness, of his love.

You see the study of theology brought me to worship, theology is the study of God, it is the study of who God is and what He has done and so I started on search for a more authentic relationship with God and I don't think I am alone in this, I think many of you have went through similar kinds of journeys.

Well anyway in all of this we began attending various different churches of different denominational flavours and in some of these churches the worship style and even the content was quite different then what I was accustomed to was a child, in some cases I saw people respond very visibly and very emotionally to what was happening in the worship service and I figured that they must have something going on there, there must be something, something real there, something that I ought to have an in my limited perspective on worship the main difference that I was seeing revolved around methods or revolved around technique or worship style if you want to use that term.

And so I began to try to join in and try to get whatever this was that these people seemed to have but it turns out that this did not bring about the desired closeness to God or the feelings that I thought would indicate a true worship. You see I found out that many of the people around me were basically just going through the motions too, only thing is their emotions were different than the emotions I was used to.

One of the things that did impress me as a fear of the churches we attended was the centrality of the Word of God in the service and especially the preaching, it was the reading and preaching of the Word of God that seem to have the most impact on my soul in terms of actual worship as I now understand it. You see music could conjure up some feelings but they kind of tended to kind of start and stop as quickly as the music itself but the preaching and the reading of the Word of God would often keep affecting me after the service.

Now in the end just to finish this part of the story in the end we did end up at a church not too far from where we started but there was something different.

On our way home from our first visit to Calvary Mennonite Fellowship 1999 [1] I told my wife I have never preaching like that in a Mennonite church!

Here was a church, here was a pastor who looked to the Bible for what it actually said and what it actually meant and made no apology and no excuses and Brother Paul Emerson was preaching that Sunday he was preaching in the book of Titus he was in chapter 3 and he let the text speak for itself, no ifs, no ands, no buts, just a plain and simple “thus saith the Lord”

You see in God’s gracious providence he had brought us home.

And yes the worship style was very slightly different, the order wasn’t quite the same as what I grew up with but you see the style of music or the order of the service no longer seemed so important to me, I was beginning to realise that the worship of God was about more than just arranging things so that I felt a certain way. The worship of God was more about listening to what God had to say and then responding to God with praise and service in the community of faith.

That’s my story.

Your story is probably somewhat different but I hope that you can resonate with my story in terms of what you have experienced.

Now this week we are looking at the theme of “Does God care how we worship?”

Monday night we looked at some of the definitions of worship, what is it we are talking about?

It is worth – ship ascribing value to God, it also has to do with giving the right opinion of God ascribing the right value to God that’s the word glory.

And we saw how that worship changes the worshipper, worship affects us, there is also things we need to do postures that we need to have when we come to worship, we need to surrender to God, listen to God, we need to declare his praise and glory, we must give of ourselves.

And then we looked at kind of why we worship and who we worship, we worship because we are created to be worshippers God made us this way, God made us to worship him and we will also worship something if not him it will be ourselves or something else.

And then we asked the question; really who am I worshipping?

You see we tend to worship something other than God, that is our natural human tendency apart from Christ, we worship self and or the created world, it is part of our rebellion against God.

Last night we looked a bit at kind of when and where we worship and particularly I would remind you those of you who were here about the source of the worship, we looked at how our bodies are not a place where worship starts, our bodies do interact with worship, even our soul our emotions is not where worship starts, worship actually informs our emotions, worship trains our emotions, worship produces emotions but worship at its basic and most fundamental level is a communication of our spirit with God’s Spirit – it is a spiritual activity – and it fleshes itself out in bodily ways and in emotional ways but let us not confuse bodily motions or even the emotional feelings for worship, those are products of worship they are not the worship itself.

And then we looked at the kinds of places we worship, all of life being worship, Monday through Saturday, Sunday through Saturday, all of life is worship but when we gather together as God's people we worship in a slightly different way, a distinct way, and God has commanded different things for the worship of his people when they gather together than when they are in the rest of life, there is a special aspect of worship that happens when God's people come together for the purpose of worshipping him.

And as I said at the beginning that is the focus this week, it is corporate worship when we worship together, that is what we are primarily focused on, we could talk about worshipping in our private lives, in our family devotions, all these things are wonderful and good and right but that is not our focus here of this week.

So again the question we ask is: Does God care how we worship?

And it seems like an almost unnecessary question to ask but I ask it anyway, we certainly know that God does command us to worship him but does He also command how we are to worship him, are we free to worship him any way we choose?

I think the answer to these questions should be fairly obvious to most of us but let me start by stating kind of stating the obvious, I believe God does care how we worship him, not just that we worship him but how, and we must turn to the Scriptures for our instructions about this and so tonight I hope you have your Bibles with you we are going to be doing a walk through the Scriptures from beginning to end and we are going to be looking at texts that relate to this idea and answer this question does God care how we worship.

Are we worshipping in an acceptable way?

Last evening I closed with Hebrews chapter 12 and I will remind you with that 2nd to last verse says just to get started here again, Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. Hebrews 12:28.

Are we worshipping in an acceptable way?

Are we worshipping in accordance with the instructions He has been giving, does your corporate worship here on Sundays accurately reflect the instructions and the commands given by God? How do you know? Do we understand why we do the things we do in church or are we just doing things out of tradition and habit?

And I will tell you something – for new students of mine in the daytime class here is what we are doing okay, we are doing hermeneutics here all right, and we are going to application, we are going to do historical theology tomorrow night, we are going to do application on Friday night and the application is the dangerous part okay.

So if you want to hear about the application about how we might actually do this come back Friday night, okay.

My sense is that what happens most of the time on Sunday mornings in many of our churches happens out of a sense of tradition rather than out of hearts that really understand what we should be doing and why we should be doing it, my concern has been that if we don't address this issue our traditions will not be enough to continue to carry us along for eternity, we will lose some things if we do not take note, and if we do need to make changes let's make changes by design based on God's instructions to us rather than by default based on whatever seems right in the moment or whatever seems right to a certain group of people.

So let's take a look at the Scriptures and what they have to say about this issue.

What does God say about this?

Turn with me first to Genesis chapter 4.

Genesis chapter 4, and I'm not going to be reading large sections of this text but I do hope you'll follow along in your Bibles we don't have time to read all these accounts all these stories but I do want you to know where they are and I want to show you that I'm not just pulling this stuff out of thin air, okay, this is here.

Cain and Abel the story you know it, what does it say about this?

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a work of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. – Sounds very good doesn't it, sounds like good worship.

And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry and why has your face fallen? If you do well will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well sin is crouching at the door, its desire is for you but you must rule over it." Genesis 4:2b-7

Well we have a worship problem here don't we and we get a little clue about this we get some insight, some commentary on this in Hebrews chapter 11 verse four where it says this, By faith Abel offered to God and a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts and through his faith though he died he still speaks. Hebrews 11:4

Abel is still speaking to us tonight about worship, okay, are we going to listen, are we going to understand what Abel what Abel is saying or what God is saying through Abel?

This passage tells us that Cain's offering was rejected by God, Abel's offering was accepted by God. It also tells us that the reason, God's reasons for rejecting Cain and accepting Abel was not a difference between the brothers the difference was there is something with the sacrifice.

You see I imagine I mean it doesn't tell is any different I imagine that Cain was sincere in bringing this offering there is no question of his motive here, this is a question of was the sacrifice acceptable, was it the right kind of sacrifice?

And we don't know what God had told them before this, we do not know what the expectations were or what God had laid down as the expectation all we know is one of these sacrifices was proper and the other wasn't but both men brought of their firstfruits and by all indications they brought it with good motives, with pure motives,, we don't know that for sure but it is very obvious that the sacrifice was the problem and so that was acceptable worship and that was unacceptable worship.

God didn't want people just worshipping him however they please or however they thought best He had a specific way and the consequences were very serious, very serious, and this actually caused Cain such distress that he killed his brother out of jealousy – a very tragic story.

Moving on to Exodus chapter 20.

Exodus chapter 20 is the 10 Commandments you ought to know those by memory so I should not have to read it to you but the first commandment is the commandment about who we should worship, who we must worship, who they must worship depending on who you are talking about here in the context, You shall have no other gods before me or beside me – is the first commandment.

But then the second commandment, You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for either LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. Exodus 20:3-6

In the first commandment God declares himself to be the only true God who alone must be worshipped.

In the second commandment prohibition He informs us of the kind of worship of the how to worship but He does so by issuing a kind of negative prohibition, so He says do not worship me as with images, do not worship me with images of anything in heaven or on earth.

There is a certain kind of worship with which God wants to be worshipped and images do not fit that category.

Now we will understand this later as we unpack this into the New Testament why this was such a big deal because you see God says I am Spirit, and if we reduce God to an image, a likeness of anything, what have we done?

We have diminished God have we not? And so God says you may not do this.

Acceptable worship will not be with images and God is concerned with how we worship him because of what it says about him, okay, so remember the word glory or doxah giving the right opinion of God, so our methods our means of worship do say something about the God we worship do they not.

And so it becomes very important that we understand how this works and we understand the importance of worshipping God rightly, acceptably, and we start to get a picture of this because God says I'm a jealous God, he is jealous for right worship.

And then we go on in Exodus to the instructions that God gave for the tabernacle, we don't need to read all that you can read it if you want you can find it in Exodus 25 and 24, but here we have detailed instructions that God gave Moses about how the temple or the tabernacle was to be constructed and how it was to be decorated and who was to do what and how and it says this at the very end of Exodus, and see that you make them after the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain, Exodus 25:40. See to it Moses that you do this exactly how I tell you. That is what God is saying. And this was very detailed, I mean very, very detailed.

See, I have chosen Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts. I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I command that, they are to make them just as I commanded you. That's Exodus 31. Very, very precise instructions.

And what we have said about the tabernacle is even more true of the temple when we read about this in Solomon's Temple in first Chronicles we read about this it says when David gave Solomon his son the pattern of the porch of the temple, its buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms and the room of the mercy seat and the plan of all that he had by the Spirit.

David had gotten this plan for the temple by the Spirit and he gave this to his son Solomon who was to build the temple and he gave it in great detail. He says there was nothing in it of his own concoction to the contrary all this said David have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of the LORD even all the works of this pattern.

God was very intent on giving precise instructions about his temple would be built and constructed and then how it would be used and we can read all through the Chronicles and we can read the instructions about how God gave instructions for the music and for the service, the sacrifices, all of this stuff in great detail.

Now why was this so important? Why did everything have to conform to a pattern given by God first to Moses and then to David?

Well we believe the reason is self-evident God may not be worshipped in any way that He has not commanded.

Now we turn to Leviticus chapter 10 and we start reading some sad, sad stories.

Leviticus chapter 10 the sons of Aaron the high priest Nadab and Abihu each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered an authorised fire before the LORD which He had not commanded them.

Okay, here are the sons of the high priest, these are the men who are supposed to be the ministers of God they are supposed to be doing these acts of worship but they are not doing them the way God commanded it to be done and we don't know what their motives were, we don't know, we don't know if this was a

simple mistake, we don't know if this was a intentional mistake, we don't know if this was some kind of subversive attempt to do something, we don't know, all we know is they did this, they offered this fire before the LORD and it was not the fire He commanded and we see what happened and it says in verse two and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them and they died before the LORD.

Whoa, the worship of God is serious business brothers and sisters.

Then Moses said to Aaron, this is what the LORD has said, Among those who are near me I will be sanctified and before all the people I will be glorified. Before all the people I will have a right opinion about myself, okay, and Aaron held his peace. What else was he going to do.

But this is a tragic tale, this is a very sad story.

Then we come to 1st Samuel 13 we have another very sad story.

First Samuel 13, a very promising young man, very able young man named Saul is selected as king over the children of Israel, he is put in place by God, he is given a charge by God and here is what happened: So he went up to fight the Philistines, this was two years after he had been reigning over Israel, he went on to fight the Philistines they had come to fight him with 30,000 chariots and 6000 horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude, these guys were ganging up on him, and they came and encamped in Michmash east of Beth-aven and when the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble, they were in trouble, big time trouble, the people were hard pressed, the people hit themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in cisterns and some Hebrews cross the Fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal and all the people followed him trembling.

This was a bad deal, this was a really high pressure situation.

Now it says Saul waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal. What was he waiting for?

Saul was waiting for Samuel to come and offer sacrifices to the LORD so that they would receive God's blessings so that they could fight these Philistines and be victorious.

But remember the pressure is on and Saul did wait seven days, evidently Samuel had said I'll be there in seven days and Samuel did not come and the people were scattering from him, the people were saying oh boy this don't look good! And so Saul said bring the burnt offering here to me and the peace offering and he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him and Samuel said, What have you done?

And Saul said, When I saw that the people were scattering from me and you did not come within the days appointed and that the Philistines had mustered that Michmash I said the Philistines will come down against mid Gilgal and I have not sought the favour of the LORD. So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.

Now what would you have done? I mean be honest, if you are in Saul's situation what would you be doing? What would you be feeling, what would you be thinking?

Well the sad story goes like this, Samuel said to Saul, You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have establish your kingdom over Israel forever but now your kingdom will not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and the LORD has commanded him to be Prince over his people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.

Another tragic tale about wrong worship, un-authorized worship, it wasn't that the sacrifices and the peace offerings were the problem it was that Saul was doing it and he was not supposed to be Samuel was supposed to be doing this, the priest of God was supposed to be doing the not the King but the king took matters into his own hands, well-intentioned I'm sure I'm very sure actually that Saul really had good intentions here, I mean he saw what was happening and he saw that this was not going well and he said I have given Samuel his time and now we've got to take matters into our own hands and he forced himself and he did this, okay. Let's move on.

Second Samuel 6 verse seven, another tragic story, second Samuel 6 and you know the story here is when the Ark was coming back to Israel it had been with the Philistines for some time, the Ark of the Covenant, and now it is coming back it is a great day and David and all the house of Israel was celebrating before the LORD, this is verse five of chapter 6, they were celebrating before the LORD with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals and when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it for the oxen had stumbled.

So here is what is happening the Ark is coming and they get about there to the threshing floor of Nacon in the oxen stumble in the Ark is about to slide off the cart and Uzzah reaches out his hand, probably almost instinctively kind of like you and I do to catch something from falling, and he reaches out his hand and he grabs hold of that Ark and it says the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah and God struck him down there because his error and he died there beside the Ark of God.

Now we don't like this and David did not either it says David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah. And David was afraid of the LORD. How can the Ark of the Lord come to me? And David wasn't even willing to take the Ark into the city for fear of what was happening but he left the Ark with someone and they were blessed because the Ark is there at their place and so he ended up bringing it back to the city.

But here is what is important about this.

God struck down Uzzah and said he had erred, why? Because he was not authorised to touch that Ark, he was not authorised to carry that Ark.

God had given specific very specific instructions about who was to carry the Ark and Uzzah was not one of those. Now Uzzah was very well-intentioned I mean he was trying to save this but God killed him.

The Levites were expressly commanded to bear the Ark, actually it was a certain tribe of the Levites that were to bear the Ark, the manner of bearing it was also commanded and they were forbidden anybody else was forbidden to touch the Ark upon pain of death.

Now it deserves consideration here that the Philistines had been touching this Ark all along and they had not died, they had not been killed for handling the Ark but when God's people who should have known better did this, bam, God takes them out.

That should be instructive to us.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 says walk prudently when you go to the house of God and draw near to hear rather than give the sacrifice of fools for they do not know that they do evil.

Okay so evidently in God's economy if you know to do something and you don't do it or you know not to do something and you do it you are held to account in a different way than if you don't know if you're ignorant, we get a few clues of that along the way this is one of them but there is others okay.

Now let's go to the New Testament Mark chapter 7.

Now remember the cause for this carefulness in worship, the cause for carefulness in worship is God himself, biblical worship is tied to who God is and giving the right impression or the right glory to God. The Second London Confession of 1689 [2] says it this way, "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself and so limited by his own revealed will that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devises of man or the suggestions of Satan under any visible representation or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture."

Now that is a statement crafted by men but I think it kind of catalogues for us what we have observed so far in our survey of worship in the Old Testament.

But what about the New Testament is that same principle still in effect?

Is God's overarching concern with how He is worshipped still in effect?

Now to answer that question we're going to just go through some of these new Testament passages but before we do what you to consider one little detail, a couple of these accounts that we read in the old Testament work prior to the Law okay, prior to the Law, so when we read in the new Testament

especially in the book of Hebrews about how parts of the Law at least have now been made obsolete or have been replaced by something better we need to keep our categories straight here and realise that some of these principles we are looking at pre-existed the Law, okay, some of them were in the Law, some of them pre-existed the Law, so we have to be careful not to discard everything in the old Testament and says all that doesn't matter anymore, no, it still matters but we have to be careful about how we interpret this, remember guys hermeneutics, yeah, right.

Mark 7, And He said to them, now this is Jesus speaking to the Pharisees, and I'm going to say kind of in my own words for the sake of time, they had a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe their own tradition and because of this our Lord went on to say He said this concerning their worship, These people honour me with their lips but their hearts are far from me, they worship me in vain, their teachings are but rules taught by men.

Now no doubt the Pharisees were offended by this but that is not what matters what matters is God was offended, God was offended by these Pharisees and their well-meaning well-intentioned worship, why? First because there was a setting aside of the commands of God, they were setting aside what God had commanded and they had replaced what God had commanded with something they had come up with. So they were teaching and practising worship that was man-made traditions not God's commands.

And then we go to John chapter 4 and we looked at this a bit last night and we will look at it again tomorrow night, this is the seminal passage on worship in the new Testament because this gets, if there was a parallel to the 10 Commandments this would be it in terms of worship because it's so describes the issues and lays it out for us, this is the account of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well, and we probably know it fairly well, He talks to her about various things that she is concerned about worship and she says: Sir, (this is in verse 19) "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

And we don't know quite what the woman was after here or what she was really trying to but do here but maybe she was just striking up conversation, I don't know but Jesus responds to her in this way: "Woman, believe me, the hour is come in when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know, we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he." John 4:19-26.

God is spirit and because God is spirit that defines how He must be worshipped.

This is as I said a parallel to the 10 Commandments, God's spirit so we must worship him in spirit; God is truth so we must worship him in truth.

Our worship of God must coincide with and be ordered by who God is, acceptable worship will be worship that is spiritual and worship that is true.

So what does this mean to worship in spirit and truth?

Well Jesus says in John 17 Thy word is truth.

So to get into application just a bit here that means that our worship must be centred around the truth of God, his word, it must be centred around God's word but it also must be aided by his holy spirit because God is spirit.

Now the second thing we noticed is that there can be such a thing as false worship or false worshippers, if there is true worship then by default there is the possibility of false worship right, when the true worshippers will worship him, so there is some worship happening that is not true worship even though the people who are doing it probably think it is, there are false worshippers or at least there can be false worshippers, good intentions alone are insufficient for true worship.

Another thing we notice here is that acceptable worship demands obedience.

God is spirit and those who worship him must, this is not optional, this is not take it or leave it, this is those who will worship God truly must do this and again we see this inseparable link between how we worship and who God is.

This should cause us to kind of have a godly fear in our hearts because it means that our doctrine or our practice of worship is tied to directly who God is.

Now let's go to 1st Corinthians and now we get into the Church age and we get into some instructions, corrective instructions by the Apostle Paul to the church, the fledgling church in Corinth and I'm not going to read all this but I want you to note especially starting in verse 6, well the whole chapter really, you will see instructions that Paul gives about how they are to conduct themselves when they come together, we looked at this earlier in first Corinthians last night when they were eating and drinking in a wrong way now they are worshipping in a wrong way evidently and the Apostle Paul is attempting to correct this and he is saying some important things about worship.

Verse 26, What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷ If any speak in a tongue, let there be only one or two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 1 Corinthians 14:26-27.

So there is particular restrictions that are put in place here it is not just a free for all, people can't just do whatever, there are some specific regulations and the reason for these regulations is found at verse 33, the reason for these regulation is for God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

So if in our worship service there is confusion what is that saying about God?

It is not giving the right opinion of God is it? It is giving the wrong opinion about God and so therefore it is not glorifying God therefore it cannot be true worship because remember true worship is tied to who God is, and so because God is not a God of confusion He is a God of peace then our worship must be orderly, and it says in verse 40 all things should be done decently and in order. Why?

Because that is who God is.

Alright so there were specific prohibitions, specific instructions about what was allowed and what wasn't based on who God is.

God also put restrictions on who would speak and who would prophesy, He regulates the number and the order of people allowed to exercise their spiritual gifts during corporate worship.

Now remembering back to last night remember that this does not apply in the same way to all of life as we worship, okay, the Apostle is not making these pronouncements about when people are at home he is talking about when they gather together, so they could go home and they can talk in tongues all they wanted as far as we know there is no prohibition against that but when they come together it needs to be done in a certain way so as to maintain order and peace, okay.

Galatians chapter 4 we will look at yet and then we will close.

Galatians chapter 4 Paul's letter here there is a clear mention of un-authorized worship he says now you have come to know God or rather to be known by God how is it that you turn your back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observed days and months and seasons and years!

This is their worship they are observing these things.

I fear for you and perhaps I have laboured over you in vain.

Now here the people of Galatia were evidentially observing some Old Testament feast days and holy days and ceremonial system they were still under the Law, they were still observing these things in their worship and the Apostle Paul says, What, why you doing this? You are doing this in vain.

The Apostle Paul found it necessary to correct their worship.

The whole book of Hebrews if you wish to read it is really an application an extended discussion of worship and we read part of Hebrews chapter 12 last night and the book of Hebrews will give us some instructions about the difference between old Testament worship and new Testament worship and we are going to look at that tomorrow night and then tomorrow night also in the last half we're going to look at history, the history of worship in the church and how the church has actually practised these principles over time.

Let me close with this, what we have been trying to answer, the question we've been trying to answer tonight is does God care how we worship?

What do you think? Does God care how we worship?

Now there are two ways that people in the church, there is two ways that God's people have approached this and we will give you two principles or two attitudes and there are some names attached to them, the names are really kind of insignificant but here is what they are:-

The first is the approach to worship that says we must not do anything in worship in terms of the forms of worship, the practices of worship unless it is directly commanded by God, so unless God has authorised it we're not going to do it – that is called the regulative principle of worship.

And if you go to Wikipedia and type in regulative in support of worship it'll say this: The regulative principle of worship is a teaching shared by some Calvinists and Anabaptists on how the Bible orders public worship. The substance of the doctrine regarding worship is that God institutes in the Scripture everything He requires worship in the church and everything else is prohibited. This is the historic Anabaptist position from the very earliest days, it is not just an Anabaptist position but it is a historic Anabaptist position.

The other attitude, the other approach is called the normative approach.

The normative approach teaches that whatever is not prohibited in Scripture is permitted as long as it is agreeable to the peace and unity of the church.

Now which principle do you think best reflects God's design?

You think about that tonight – we will figure it out later.

Thank you.

Transcriber's Notes:

[1] *Calvary Mennonite Fellowship Harrisonburg Virginia, Website: www.cmfva.org*

[2] *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, also called the Second London Baptist Confession, was written by Particular Baptists who held to a Calvinistic Soteriology in England to give a formal expression to the doctrine of salvation*

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