

Does God Care How We Worship? Part 4 of 5

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Good evening to each of you again.

We are going to pick up our study of worship here and we are going to pick up sort of where we left off last evening.

I would like to as we begin review the principles of worship that I introduced right at the close yesterday, as the church has dealt with issues of practices in worship it has had it has taken basically two different approaches and tonight we are going to look at the fruit of those approaches, we are going to do some historical theology for those of you who are in the hermeneutics class in the daytime and we are going to look at what the church has done over the past 2000 years, will get to that in a minute.

But these two basic approaches or principles or attitudes or postures that the church has taken regarding worship are these and the first one is called regulative principle.

The regulative principle is basically the attitude that says we will then worship only do those things that God has commanded us to do, we will not do other things, we will just do what God has commanded us to do.

The other approach has been the normative approach to worship and the normative approach says we are basically free to do whatever we want provided God has not prohibited it.

You understand the difference?

Sometimes we parents expect our children to operate by the regulative approach, sometimes we allow them to operate by the normative approach don't we.

How do we know the difference?

We have to tell them don't we, if we expect them to operate and do only what we have told them to do then we tell them that, if we are giving them freedom to do whatever it is they feel right to do providing we have not prohibited it we tell them.

Do you think God tells us which is which in this matter of worship as we reviewed it last night?

The reason for the review of the Scriptures last night was to try to help us understand that God does care an awful lot about how He is to be worshipped, He has given very specific commands about what to do and what not to do and He has judged rather harshly it seems those people who have not done what He has commanded.

And just for some clarification, a couple of brothers raised this with me afterwards and I really appreciated it, the comments I made about some of these Old Testament examples particularly Cain and the others who got judged, I made some comments to the effect that we don't really know what their heart was like in this all we know is they did the wrong thing and God judge them for it and I insinuated perhaps they might have had good intentions but they still did the wrong thing and that's why they were judged, and that's really what it says, it said God says if you would have done the right thing then I would be pleased with you.

Now even if we give them the benefit of the doubt and say yes maybe they didn't know or maybe whatever at least God gave Cain another chance didn't He? He basically said Cain now you could do the right thing here.

But instead of doing the right thing Cain rebelled even further and ended up killing his brother it's a very sad tale.

But the reason that I mentioned that I was said that or at least made that provision was that so often from our perspective we say well I intended to do the right thing, my heart was right and why is that not okay? And I want us to hear God saying if you do the right thing I will be pleased with you. Okay.

You see we are not that the judge even of our own hearts, even of our own actions – God is the judge, and we can have all the best intentions and we can have all of the best ideas but if those intentions and those ideas do not line up with God's instructions we are disobedient and we saw last night the disastrous consequences of that.

And so that's the clarification, I was pushing back against this idea that somehow if our hearts are right and we have good intentions then it's all to be okay. I'm saying that is not the way it is.

Now having said that let me also quickly say that should not necessarily cause us unreasonable fear, okay, we shouldn't just be so living in fear that we are afraid God is just going to whack us dead for the slightest infraction – that's not the nature of God either.

But on the other hand this matter of worshipping God is very serious, God says in the second of the 10 Commandments I am a jealous God.

God is a jealous God, He is jealous especially for his own glory and we see this over and over and over again and I hope we don't take away from that an irrational kind of fear but we do need to have some fear, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God and Hebrews chapter 12 which I read the other night says: 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 for our God is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:28-29.

Alright this is serious business, I don't want us to think flippantly about it, I don't want us to be casual about it, I want us to understand the gravity of this, this most important Christian activity, the thing for which God says He is most jealous is our right worship and so let's approach God with reverence and awe, let's understand that He is a God He is a consuming fire, He does have that right and that capability to judge those who do not obey him and those who do not worship him in fear.

But we also do need to emphasise God's grace and as I suggested in one of the stories last night, you'll remember the story of Uzzah the guy who reached out and grabbed hold of the ark, the Philistines had been handling that Ark in one form or another for quite some time and they had not been struck dead, it seems that genuine ignorance probably does affect God's judgement in some form or another and I cannot take you to a whole bunch of Bible verses and spell that out for you in detail but there are some clues and also on that same subject faith does enter in here.

In Romans 14 it says whatever is not done in faith is sin. (Romans 14:23b)

So if we come to God with hearts of faith and trusting him I believe He will honour us, okay, He will not, that's what He is really after He is not after mere obedience, He is after obedience but not merely obedience and as a matter of fact He says to obey is better than sacrifice. (1 Samuel 15:22b)

So we can have all the obedience, we can have all the sacrifices, we can have everything down to the T but if our hearts are not inclined towards God it is worthless, what God wants is obedience and faith, He wants both, He wants hearts of faith and acts of obedience that flow out of that faith and anything less is not enough.

So don't be irrationally afraid, scared, of God, come to him in faith, obey him and He is very gracious and if we do not know God somehow will figure all that out. Our God is a God who reveals himself He wants to be known and He will if we are earnestly seeking him He will reveal himself and his will to us so we don't have to live in a state of perpetually being scared but we do need to have a proper fear of God, heart of faith is what God requires.

But on the other hand just because we think we have a heart of faith does not give us a pass to do whatever seems right to us, our heart of faith must be tethered to the will of God and that is how we really actually know in the end whether we have genuine faith, that's a whole other subject for another day, but that's just to say all that to say this is a serious business and we must approach it accordingly.

Now another thing I must say regards kind of some of my opening comments my story about myself. You know I like many of you perhaps have struggled probably with the lack of visible emotion in some of our worship practices and services, maybe that doesn't bother you at all, but I want us to be careful that we don't throw out the baby with the bathwater and I hope you heard me say last night that what I discovered in my search about all of this that the motions weren't the main thing, we can all go through the motions, we can have different emotions but we can all go through the motions, and just because somebody is exercising their emotions and exercising their body in worship doesn't necessarily mean that they are any more worshipful than I am or vice versa.

Now one of the things that we do run into some times is people's ideas that somehow if we are going to have genuine worship it's going to have to be spontaneous or it is going to have to come kind of off-the-cuff. The spontaneity and the Spirit of God are almost synonymous and I want to push back against that a bit here especially as we observe what is happening in our world and in the world of worship in our nation, in our country.

Here is a quote from Robert Godfrey [1] that I think kind of captures this; "It is surely ironic that those who criticise the traditional forms of worship for their lack of spontaneity and of the Spirit often become the most careful planners of emotion."

And what he wrote about before this quote was the fact that often in the modern worship scene the worship leaders go to great lengths to make sure they have the right ingredients so that the right emotions are created.

These people seem to see no inconsistency between the Spirit and their careful planning and staging of worship yet they argue that carefully planned liturgies and sermons of traditional worship must be dead to the Spirit. They are sceptical that the Spirit will be present in the forms of worship that God has revealed in the Bible, they are confident that He will be present in their human inventions.

They seem never to fear that they are offering strange fire on the altar of God or that they might be following Israel's sincere and emotional worship to the golden calf.

And we didn't look at that story last night but there is another one, the story of Israel and the golden calf, and if you look at that story closely you will see that people thought Moses was dead and they thought that this golden calf was a replacement, a legitimate replacement for God, representation of God, they were violating God's command and God punish them severely.

Again the issue was they had taken matters into their own hands and they began to worship God in a way that He had not authorised them to worship and we see that same pattern being repeated over and over again.

Before we move to the historical let's take one other look at one other thing and that is what do we do with the differences between Old Testament worship and New Testament worship?

Has acceptable worship changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament?

And I believe if we are at all conversant with the Scriptures we would say yes, I didn't see any of you bring your oxen tonight, I don't see any bloodied altars outside in the courtyard, so I assume that you folks believe that worship for the New Testament Christians is somehow different than was commanded by God very explicitly in the Old Testament.

So what has changed and how do we know what to bring along from the Old Testament and what to leave behind?

Well we can start where Jesus did in John chapter 4, and we looked at this last night and the night before, a very critical text for this issue and that is the story of the Samaritan woman at the well.

And in this conversation, we are not going to read it I hope you understand where we are at, in this conversation Jesus informs the woman at the well indicates that the place of worship is going to be different now, whereas before there was a particular place where the seat of worship was located in Jerusalem now with the coming of Himself worship was going to not necessarily be there it was going to

be evidently other places or maybe not tied to a place at all, no longer would the proper worship only be performed in the temple, and He indicates that worship now would not be dependent on outward forms and locations but rather on a spiritual reality and the truth of Christ himself.

And so he says 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 spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:23-24.

And so once again we are reminded of the link, the inseparable link between the character and nature of God and how we worship him, if we are going to give the right opinion of God in our worship, which is what worship is, we are going to give that right opinion about God if we are going to worship God as He is jealous to be worshipped and we worship him in accordance with his nature and a big definition or a big part of his nature is that He is spirit, that is why He did not allow any images, because if you make an image of something now you have reduced it to something tangible and God cannot be reduced that way. So here again we find worship must be dependent on the nature and character of God.

If we going to Colossians chapter 2 we will see further instructions about this and I'm going to read this for you because this is a very, a very critical text and one we tend to ignore as Mennonites and probably Amish Mennonites.

Colossians chapter 2, he is just getting done describing in the first part of the chapter reality, the new reality of life in Christ and how this is what is happening and then he says in verse 16:

Colossians 2:16-23

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. ²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Now what to do we see here?

In terms of change from Old Testament and New Testament we see that not just here, Galatians, Hebrews and lots of references in the New Testament, the Old Testament feast days, festivals, holy days and all of those things are set aside and the reason they are set aside is because Christ has come and He is the one who is the real thing, He is the real deal, those things existed in order to point to Christ, in order to foreshadow Christ to be a marker along the way, it says yes this is where we are headed but they are not the real thing so why would you go back and do that stuff if you have the real thing?

Why would you have all those trappings and all those exercises of that Old Testament ceremonial worship when you have Christ?

It would be kind of like if you had a young lady who likes to play with doll babies and she always loved doll babies and she played with doll babies and she got older and she got married and she had her own baby but instead of taking care of her real baby she would go take care of the doll baby and play with the doll baby. And we would say there is something that's terribly wrong with this, she has the real thing she does not need the doll baby anymore, okay.

That's one way to look at this, it is one way to understand what's happened here.

Another thing to notice in this text is that now is a new dimension to worship, the new dimension to worship has to do with our relationship to each other as the body of Christ.

We do not find this in the Old Testament, we don't find a whole lot of instruction about how the congregants coming to the temple were to relate to each other but in the New Testament we do because of

this new dynamic because we are now not just a people of God we are the body of Christ and we are connected to the Head together.

That's what he's talking about here in verse 19, holding fast to the Head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments growth with a growth that is from God. So now we have a responsibility not just to Christ to God but we have a responsibility to each other in this matter of worship.

That's important, very important us to remember, we will find out later this evening and tomorrow night a couple of reasons why that is so important.

So things have changed between the old covenant and the new covenant, Christ himself is the fulfilment of these things, and this is also evidenced by the ripping of the curtain in the temple when He was crucified, we are no longer to observe the shadows because now we have access to the real deal. The whole book of Hebrews is also kind of an extended application of this or an extended explanation of this and when we close tonight I'm going to read a chapter from Hebrews but we are called not to observe the copies of the heavenly things but the heavenly things themselves whereas the people of God in the time of Moses came to an earthly mountain we come to Mount Zion to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and so on.

So the church today is to live in the heavenly realities and no longer in the realm of the shadowy symbols.

As believers under the new covenant we are supposed to worship in the realm of spirit and truth not in the realm of the material and the representation as our Old Testament forebears did.

So then what should be our attitude in the face of this awesome privilege?

Are we now at liberty to do as we please to fashion our own style of worship? Whereas the people in the Old Testament times had to ensure they only worshipped as God commanded? Are we free from that?

No, actually the truth lies in the opposite direction – we above all you should abhor and shun innovations, human innovations that's what Colossians 2 says, these human regulations, these human inventions they have little value in the spiritual worship of God.

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks for if they did not escape who refused him who spoke on earth much more shall we not escape if we turn away from him who speaks from heaven, Hebrews 12:25. You see the New Testament ethic is not one of less responsibility it is one of more because now we have access direct access to God through the Holy Spirit we've actually become members part of the body of Christ.

If we dare to invent our own way of worship and God has told us from heaven what He requires then our sin will actually be greater than the sin of the Israelites.

Hebrews chapters 8 to 10 tells us in no uncertain terms that the Old Testament forms of worship are no longer in effect now that Christ has come and ushered in a new covenant, by making the new covenant with its forms of worship the old is made obsolete, it's what he says in Hebrews 8:13.

Now here is where it matters to us in terms of application.

Those people who appeal to the Old Testament example for authorisation to worship in certain ways or to have certain practices of worship they need to recognise that acceptable worship has changed, God himself however has not changed, okay, God has not changed, and worship true worship must still be in accord with who God is so the principles that were behind those Old Testament worship practices are still in place but the practices themselves have been replaced.

Now if somebody wants to bring along some Old Testament worship practice the burden of proof lies with them to explain where the line is between what they bring along and what they don't, okay, if somebody wants to bring along a worship practice such as incense from the Old Testament they need to explain to me why they are not bringing the goats and oxen.

Now I am not saying categorically that they cannot use incense I'm just saying the burden of proof lies with them to explain how they know the difference between what comes along to the New Testament and what doesn't.

Right we are going to leave that sit for a minute and we'll talk about one more development and that is in the book of Revelation we see some pictures of worship in heaven and some people do similar things with that and they go to the book of Revelation and say will see since we are going to be worshipping like this in heaven than that means we should be doing that here.

And I want to just say wait a minute not so fast.

It seems that at Christ's second coming He will change the elements and forms of worship once again, for example even though He has now commanded Communion for us as an observance for us under the new covenant when we are at the marriage supper of the Lamb the observance of Communion will no longer be necessary, it will be fulfilled. Just like when Christ came those sacrifices and some of those feast days and those kinds of things have been fulfilled, when we get to heaven those things we do now as a reminder for us of what is in heaven will no longer be necessary.

And so worship is going to change in some ways and I'm not sure I understand all the ways but worship is going to change when we get to heaven when the reality of face-to-face communication with Christ is present.

The same thing is true of Christian marriage, it says in heaven there will be no marriage or giving in marriage, why?

Because marriage is a picture designed by God for us to picture Christ and his Church and when we are there with Christ there is no need for marriage anymore because we will be experiencing the ultimate marriage, we won't be playing with the doll baby anymore we are going to have the real thing.

Now let me jump forward to application one little way here, some of you will appreciate this, some of you won't.

Case in point: Instrumental music in the gathered assembly of God's people.

Those who hold to the regulative principle of worship generally, generally not always, but generally do not see as proper the use of instruments in the gathered worship of God's people.

Those who do allow for the use of instruments in worship go to the Old Testament for their authorisation and they say because instruments were used in the temple then we can use instruments in our church services.

And once again I want to say to them okay what else are you going to bring along? And if you are not going to bring anything else along then explain to me why not.

I'm open to being convinced but the burden of proof lies with them because in the New Testament I can find nowhere that instruments are commanded to be used, okay.

Now there is a book that might give some light on that it is called "Old Light On New Worship" (Author John Price) [2] and it is a book I have with me if you want to see it I can show it to you and he does a good job of unpacking this, some people however use the worship in heaven and the instruments that are there as an authorisation for us to use instruments now and again I would say the same thing, well there will be some stuff happening in heaven that surely don't happen here and how do we know the difference unless God has explicitly told us?

The same thing is probably true, probably true I said, for a professional choir during worship because that is not commanded in the New Testament either, singing however is, and singing to ourselves the congregational kinds of singing where we sing to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs making melody in our hearts to the Lord that is commanded.

Now you could say will require a singing to you and it's a one-way singing that's an argument you could use okay, I'm not going to beat that dead horse but I'm just saying we need to think about these things in

light of where we get authorisation for these things, are these just our own kind of inventions or is this really honouring God?

No we are going to take a look we are going to take a little survey here in the minutes that we have left of some church history and then tomorrow night I'm going to get into this application stuff a little and I'm going to tell you, show you, try to show you, kind of we are actually going to go through the different elements of worship, the different parts of worship and we are going to look at some biblical principles for how we order those elements and so on and so forth, so if you come back for that.

I've got a book here it is called "Give Praise To God – A Vision For Reforming Worship" it is a collection of articles or chapters by different authors and it was written about 14 years ago it is a relatively recent book, it was written in response to some of the stuff happening in the world of worship in the church and one of the chapters is called "Worship Through The Ages" and it is a very concise summary of kind of what the church has done with this since the early church until now, the author is Nick Needham, and I'm just going to read a few things that he says and I'm going to kind of walk through this with you.

He says what was a Christian worship of service like in the post-apostolic period?

This would be right after the time of the apostles.

We are fortunate to have a good description of a normal Christian gathering for worship in the writings of second century theologian Justin Martyr, here is what Justin Martyr says: "On the day called Sunday there is a meeting of all believers who live in the town or in the country and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time will permit. When the reader has finished the president in a sermon urges and invites the people to base their lives on these noble things then we all stand up and offer prayers. When our prayer is concluded bread and wine and water are brought and the president offers up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability and the people are sent with Amen. Then follows the distribution of the things over which thanks have been offered and the partaking of them by all and the deacons take them to those who are absent and those who are prosperous and willing give what each thinks fit and what is collected is deposited with the president who succours the orphans, and widows and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want and those who are in bonds and strangers sojourning among us and in a word takes care of all who are in need.

We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it is the first day on which God put to flight darkness and chaos and made the world and on the same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead."

Interesting, fascinating.

Do you know why we meet on Sunday? Because that is the day God created the world, did you ever hear that argument before? I didn't either, a good one though.

All right, from Justin's account and there is an extended there is more of this I'm not going to read it for the sake of time, from Justin's account we learn that the main ingredients of Christian worship in the second century were 1] the reading and expounding of Scripture, 2] prayer, and 3] the celebration of the Lord's supper.

Indeed compared to the many churches today the Lord's supper held a remarkably high place in early Christian worship, the local church celebrated it every Sunday and it formed a large part of the service. Singing which for many modern Christians is such a central part of worship was not so important in the early church in fact Justin does not mention it at all however we know from other accounts that singing and chanting were a widespread practice in the worship of the early Christians.

In the second century the most common form of singing and chanting was responsive, this means that if one person, a Scripture reader or a clergyman, would sing or chant a passage usually from a psalm in the congregation would then make a response either a single word which is alleluia or a chorus.

There was also solo singing and full congregational singing although the latter did not really become popular until the fourth century.

What the early Christians chanted and sang in public worship were the Psalms of the Old Testament and some of the poetic parts of the New Testament.

It was probably not until the fourth century that the singing of non-canonical hymns, that means songs that did not come from the Bible directly, it wasn't until the fourth century that such things began to become common.

No musical instruments accompanied the chanting and singing, Christians did not use instruments in their worship in the second century or indeed for many centuries afterward.

The early church looked on musical instruments as being a part of Jewish or pagan worship but not a part of the apostolic tradition of Christian worship.

Another note is that the church then introduced church pews, those things you are sitting on right now, the church did not introduce those until the 14th century, the 14th century you understand the 1300 that's when pews were introduced, by the way that was the same time the musical instruments were introduced I don't know what that tells us.

The Eastern Church never introduced pews into Eastern Church buildings, people who were tired during early church worship could sit around the edges of the building, it is said that the weak go to the wall, but everyone had to stand to pray. The early Christians considered standing the only proper posture for public spoken prayer.

Early Christian art also shows us that when praying Christians spread out their arms with upturned palms and kept their eyes open looking upward to heaven.

Fancy that!

Alright that's early church worship.

Let's move ahead, the use of liturgy, that is fixed written prayers and exhortations to be read out by the bishop and congregation is found from a very early date in Christian worship, the oldest known example of church liturgy is in the writings of Hippolytus who died in 236. Hippolytus' church order contains the communion liturgy from the Christian church in Rome and they had an offering, an offertory, they had dialogue and prayer that were recited by the bishop and the congregation.

Christian worship revolved around Sunday, that's also a theme that is continued to the present day.

Another worship custom that was integral to church life in early centuries was the agape feast, love feast, like our Brethren brothers practice, that was a part of the early church worship, it happened after the Sunday after the early service of the word and the sacrament and then we go to the love feast.

But moving ahead to the fourth century.

It says fourth century worship witnessed a powerful trend toward a greater use of ritual and ceremony, we find the clearest example of this in the church at Jerusalem during the leadership of Cyril, bishop from 350 A.D. It is in Cyril's Jerusalem that we first hear of the clergy wearing special vestments and we also hear of the use of incense, the carrying of lights, lamps, candles et cetera and other ceremonies.

Along with the growth of ritual and ceremony in fourth century worship went the expansion of the cult of saints and relics so people started praying to saints at about this time.

At first it was believed that we would ask the saints to pray for us but this really became over time just us praying to them.

All right, it was also during the fourth century that believers began to adorn churches with pictures of Christ and the saints. So that is where icons started to develop, Christian icons were particularly used in Rome on and around the tombs of believers.

Even with all of this some fourth century church fathers were violently opposed to these new worship practices, Epiphanius of Salamis [3] actually saw a picture of Christ woven into a curtain in a church in Palestine he was so angry that he tore it down and complained to the Bishop of Jerusalem.

So there was worship wars a long time before 1900s.

But other great church fathers like Ambrose and Augustine defended the adorning of church buildings with the religious icons it became extremely popular. And we know how it went from there.

Now what happened from the 400s into the early Middle Ages in the middle Middle Ages is a grave situation, the church began to lose its definitions of being church.

One of the things that happened is they had an obvious loss of education in the church life and now most clergy limited themselves to carrying out the liturgical and sacramental functions that they didn't do hardly any preaching and they started reading especially in the late Middle Ages they read all of these readings in Latin and the common people couldn't even understand it.

So it was like people would come to church all they could understand is what they saw, they could not understand the words of the songs because those were in Latin, they couldn't understand the words of the readings because those were in Latin, it became a something for the elite to do and everybody else to just sit and observe, it actually became such that they would do two kinds of mass, the low mass and a high mass, and the one kind of mass they would do every week but only the priest could partake of that they were afraid that somebody would drop a little bit of the wine or a crumb would fall off the bread or waiver in the body and blood of Christ would be soiled and they could not have that so they would only let the priest do the mass but once a year they would let the common people have mass because that was a part of their salvation you see they had to be doing that to be saved, okay.

So when we got to the time of the Reformation by the time we got to the time of the Reformation instruments were being used wholesale.

The first recorded use of an instrument was 757 A.D., but from 757 A.D. to 1312-13 A.D. instruments were only used to set the tone like a pitch pipe for the singing or for special occasions and special concerts, they were not used for the congregational singing until 12 or 1300 A.D. but by the time of the Reformation organs and elaborate instrumental and choral music was common place.

Some historical sources do speak of an organ controversy in the 13th century which resulted in the Catholic Church declaring against the use of organs but Thomas Aquinas, the greatest Western theologian of the 13th century, seems to have straightened that out for them and allow the use of organs and after that it was not a controversy anymore.

Alright then we come to the Reformation and this is a kind of curious kind of time and it is more related to our worship because that is where we came from, right.

Now the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s, early 1500s, was just as much if not more a Reformation of worship as it was a Reformation of theology.

The things that concern Martin Luther for example when he wrote his 95 theses were largely matters of worship, that is what concerned him and the Lutheran reform movement changed worship immediately but Luther took a normative view of worship.

Here is how Luther described it he said: We will continue to use anything and everything in the Catholic worship liturgy as long as it isn't something that God has prohibited.

And so Luther continued to use the organ, Luther continued to use the choirs, Luther even used the mass he just explained differently and the Catholics did an Lutheran worship even today is not, in the high Lutheran churches, is not that much different from Catholic worship it is because of Luther's approach to the whole matter he said we are just going to continue to do what the church is done lest God prohibits it somewhere in his word.

Now Luther was one of the early Reformation leaders but soon after him came a man by the name of Ulrich Zwingli and Zwingli took another approach a different approach he took the regulative approach and he says we are not going to do anything that the Catholic Church does, we're going to start over and we are only going to do what God has commanded us to do! And he took out all the icons, he took out the organ, he dismantled the choirs he made it so that they could be a member of the choir anymore okay, he did away with all of that and he instituted something very close to what we found in the early church with

the exception that they still had pews and the preacher was up here preaching from behind the pulpit which was foreign to the early church.

But in the Zwinglian tradition it was mostly about the preaching of the word, the reading of the word and there wasn't even any singing.

Now that is not a proper use of the regulative principle I think that was an overreaction to Catholic high church music, okay, but that actually that idea persisted with the Swiss brethren and the Swiss brethren also had that same kind of view of worship.

Now interestingly enough Ulrich Zwingli was probably the most prolific musician of the Reformation era, he and his family played musical instruments, were very proficient and skilled in it but they did not do it at church they did it at home, John Calvin was the same way, John Calvin was a great musician he has written some hymns they didn't use instruments in the church, they used instruments in their homes and elsewhere.

By the time Calvin came along sometime later, well let me just back up Zwingli and Luther work kind of at each other with this worship thing they did not see eye to eye over this they actually do dis-fellowshipped each other over this, okay.

But by the time John Calvin came along I think the Reformation had kind of settled out a little bit and things were progressing and Calvin instituted vigorous congregational singing into the services and we have today a song book called the Geneva Psalter which was produced by John Calvin and his minister of music and we have in our hymnals, the ones you have here in your pews quite a number of hymns from the Geneva Psalter, beautiful music, powerful music, and we owe a debt of gratitude to John Calvin for our church music.

Mennonites and Anabaptists have had varying practices of worship.

The earliest Anabaptists probably met mostly in caves and barns and homes and other out of the way places so they did not have many of the trappings of buildings and all the other stuff that we have, it wasn't till much later that they started to use those, the Amish still persist in meeting in homes mostly even some other Old Order groups do, and many of the Anabaptists groups would not have allowed that the preacher to stand up he would be seated for the sermon, this was a continuation of early church worship.

It is interesting that Anabaptists and others in the Reformation era did not sing four-part harmony that was considered to be worldly and Catholic and extra biblical they sang in unison, always.

As a matter-of-fact Menno Simons gives a scathing just a scathing denunciation of four-part singing, polyphony they called it. It was multipart music, multipart singing that was worldly and it was Catholic and we should have nothing whatsoever to do with it.

So modern four-part singing actually didn't really develop in the Mennonite and Anabaptist churches till the late 1800s and it is largely due to the influence of a man with the last name of Funk [4] who happens to have lived in the Shenandoah Valley Virginia and there is a little town named after him today called Singers Glenn which is just a few miles from our house and he is the one we can blame, if we want to blame, we can blame him for our beautiful four-part harmony today.

Just so you know that is a relatively recent invention okay.

The normal Sunday morning worship in Zwinglian Zürich was essentially a preaching service consisting of Bible readings, prayers and a sermon. Zwingli was unique among the reformers in not regarding the Lord's supper as integral to Sunday worship, he was happy that it should be celebrated four times a year, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and a local Zürich Festival on September 11.

The infrequency of the Zwinglian supper may be related to Zwingli's low view of what actually happened in the supper since for most of his career he saw it as little more than an act of pious commemoration.

Again in this Zwingli was virtually alone among the reformers.

Here is another thing to note, I need to back up a bit, the Lutheran service was in German not in Latin so Luther says we've got to get the service in the language of the people, Luther's new communion liturgy

replaced the immediate mediaeval Catholic liturgy of mass and Luther exalted preaching to a central position in worship, on other matters such as altars, candles, priestly robes and so on Luther did not really care whether they were kept or abolished.

Lutherans more than any other Protestant church Lutherans were marked out by their love of church music and hymn singing and again we owe a debt of gratitude to Martin Luther and the Lutheran Church for many of the hymns we sing today.

In one important area Calvin differed hugely from Zwingli he was positively committed to congregational singing rather than merely reciting Scripture as the worshippers of Zürich did. In 1539 when he was in Strasbourg Calvin published a French song book that contained 17 Psalms, the singing of the 10 Commandments was a normal part of Sunday worship in Calvin's Strasbourg congregation and worshippers always sang the Apostles Creed during the Lord's supper.

Calvin's 1542 Genevan liturgy contained 39 Psalms and musical versions of the 10 Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed however especially in his second period in Geneva from 1541 to 1564 Calvin gave pride of place to the Psalms in public worship.

Since Calvin agreed with Zwingli and the early church fathers in strongly opposing the use of musical instruments in worship reformed Geneva sang the songs without any instrumental accompaniments, this became the pattern in all the reformed churches in contrast to the Lutheran churches which retained the use of the organ.

Now more recently in worship in the broader Christian world we have seen a wholesale kind of change, it is actually said and I have a quote here from the Presbyterian, there was a time when Baptists, Congregational, Presbyterians, Low Church Episcopal, Methodist, Independent Bible Church and even Anabaptists, meaning Mennonite, Brethren, Grace Brethren, when these folks' worship services looked very much alike and were largely based on the same set of biblical convictions regarding the form and substance of Christian public worship.

Though these distinct church traditions have carried on various debates within themselves on the specifics of corporate worship over the last half millennia of 500 years what strikes one in our current environment is the sheer commonality of principle and practice despite what they would have once considered and still do significant differences between them but these differences paled in comparison to the bewildering spectrum of diversities in corporate worship, philosophy and practice today.

What he is basically saying is there was a long time in history, 400+ years were all the low churches meaning the churches that don't have a high liturgy like the Catholics and the Episcopalians (Church of England) all the low churches, the Baptist, the Congregational, the Methodists, the Anabaptists, the Bible Church all the services looked pretty much alike, they were all rooted in the same sensibilities and philosophies and there were some differences between them but they were very minor but now there is all kinds of worship and people go shopping for worship – I like the singing at this church better but I like the youth pastor over there and we have something else we like over here and so we go church hopping and people are going to find worship that they like and there's all these choices and it seems to me that there is something wrong.

Let me read in closing Hebrews chapter 10.

Hebrews 10:1-25

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"⁸ When he

said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law),⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”¹⁷ then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

And I will stop there but I hope you have caught all of the descriptions of worship and the change from Old Testament to New Testament.

Brothers and sisters indeed we have a great privilege, a great privilege to worship a great God – together.

Don’t ever take that for granted.

Let’s pray

Father we thank you again for your instructions to us in your word, we thank you that you are a jealous God and a God who has instructed us how you wish to be worshipped and I pray that you would work in us, in our hearts, give us hearts of faith instead of a heart of stone and may we seek you and worship you in spirit and in truth and help us, encourage us, strengthen us to love each other and serve each other and build each other up in the faith as a part of our spiritual worship, go with us to this end we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Transcriber’s Notes:

[1] *W. Robert Godfrey is a minister in the United Reformed Church and the third President of Westminster Seminary California, where he is also Professor of Church History.*

[2] *John Price, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Rochester, New York*

[3] *Epiphanius of Salamis (310 –403AD) was bishop of Salamis, Cyprus, at the end of the 4th century. He is considered a saint and a Church Father by both the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches. He gained a reputation as a strong defender of orthodoxy.*

[4] *Joseph Funk (1778-1862) was a pioneer American music teacher, publisher, and an early American composer. He invented a shape note system in 1851 for the Harmonia Sacra.*

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