

“ROOTED in Worship: Part I”

OT: Psalm 150

NT: Luke 10:38-42

**Read Luke 10:38-42**

*This text in Luke is not about Martha who was busy with a list of chores to be complete. This text is about Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus in adoration. Mary chose the good part, which will never be taken from her. Mary’s practice of worship in that moment had eternal significance. The ultimate message to be taken from this story in Luke is that worship is the one essential activity that must take precedence over every other activity in life.*

*Psalm 29:2 says, “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”*

*“Our supreme duty for time and eternity is to honor, adore, delight in, glorify, and enjoy God above all His creation, and He is worthy to be worshiped.”*

*Hebrews 12:28 says, “Let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe.”*

*“The term service means worship; therefore, this verse speaks of the attitude in which we should worship. Worship ought to be done excellently; in a way that honors God.”*

(notes from John MacArthur, “Worship: The Ultimate Priority”)

There is a story of boy who had a lot of questions. He was curious and earnest and unafraid to ask. Lucky mom.

One day the family was getting ready to go to worship and the boy asked, “What does it mean to worship God?” The answer: Worshiping God means that we respect, praise, and learn what God wants us to do.

“Why do we worship God?” The answer: Because God wants us to and because God is wonderful.

“Why is God so wonderful?” The answer: What is the biggest thing you can think of? Well, God is bigger. God is bigger than the things that scare us, and bigger than the things that make us sad. God is even bigger than the sun, moon, and the universe.

Now, who is the smartest person you can think of? Well, God is smarter. God knows everything and sees everything. God knows how many hairs are on your head and how many grains of sand are on the beach. God is so smart God created the entire world and everything in it, and then made it all work together.

Now, who or what is the strongest person or thing you can think of? Well, God is stronger. God never gets sick or tired and there is nothing God cannot do.

And what is the best thing you can think of? What is something that is so good? Well, God is the best; God is greater. God's greatness is immeasurable. The best example of this is God's love for us.

"Even when I am not so smart or good or loving?" Yes. God loves us when we do not always say the smartest things or make the smartest choices. God loves us when we do things that are not so good and when we forget to do good things for others. God loves us when we are weak, small, sick, and tired. And because God loves us all the time, that is what makes us want to worship God. We want to praise God for who God is and thank God for what God has done for us.

"Can we worship God anytime?" The Bible tells us that God's people worshiped in the morning, and they worshiped at night. They worshiped alone, and they worshiped with others. They worshiped in temples and tents, in palaces and prisons. They worshiped everywhere and all the time. (Deut. 6:4-7)

"Even when I am singing?" Yes. Singing helps us thank God for loving us and giving us good things. When we sing songs each week with our church family, we are worshiping.

"How about praying?" Yes. "And reading the bible?" Yes. "And what about when you ask me to sit and listen to the preacher talk?" Yes. "And when we get to see babies baptized and eat bread and drink juice?" Yes. "And when you ask me to put my coins and dollars from my allowance in the offering plate?" Yes. All these actions show that you love God, and that you want to obey God.

"Ok!" and the boy scampers off to play a few more minutes before going to worship.

(adapted from "Why Do We Worship? By Miranda Nerland)

Today is about one of the fundamentals of faith.

My dad used to tell every little league baseball or youth soccer team I played on that fundamentals were the most important thing. He said because of the first three letters "F.U.N.". Fundamentals were rooted in fun (joy- thank you Kathleen for last week). What I have learned is that being able to do the fundamentals of a task or of life will free you up to have fun or to be joyful. The fundamentals serve as a foundation or launching pad for everything else you might need or want to do with the task or life.

The key then is to commit to the fundamentals over and above doing anything else. We must keep our foundation strong. And when it comes to our faith, we have talked about receiving the Spirit, building relationships, love, and joy, and now today, worship.

To abide with Christ and be rooted, we must actively worship God. Coupled with the Spirit, Worship is the main source of life and inspiration for a Christian.

The Book of Common Worship states, "Worship is at the very heart of the church's life. All that the church is and does is rooted in its worship. The community of faith, gathered in response to God's call, is formed in its worship. Worship is the principal influence that shapes our faith and is the most visible way we express the faith. In worship, through Word and Sacrament, the church is sustained by the presence of Christ and empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit. Joined in worship to the One who is the source of its life, the church is equipped to serve God in the world."

Here is what I take away from that. Without worship, without actively participating in the worship of God, we will not be able to do anything else in faith or life effectively. It would be like me stepping into the batter's box to hit a 90 mile an hour fastball having never swung a bat before. And I can speak from experience. It is ineffective. Worship builds us up and prepares us for all the other elements of life.

How does worship do that? In Christian worship it is through a group of historical and theological norms rooted in the triune God that have proven to transcend cultures and keep people faithful to the gospel of Christ. These norms are:

**Biblical-** Along with the Spirit, the Bible is the authoritative source of our knowledge of God and the good news of God's love to us in Christ, who is the Redeemer of all creation and ultimate example of ushering in the kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian worship must include the reading and preaching of scripture.

**Dialogic or “Liturgical” (requiring participation)**- God not only speaks, God listens. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God challenges us, comforts us, and awakens us. In turn, we respond to God’s speaking and action with praise, confession, and dedication. Worship seeks to promote a healthy relationship with God, and a healthy relationship with God maintains a balance of attentive listening and honest speech.

**Covenantal**- The practice of worship renews, affirms, and seals God’s gracious and new covenant with us in Christ. Worship rehearses and proclaims God’s promises to us and allows for us to recommit ourselves.

**Trinitarian**- In worship, we are drawn into relationship with God (the Father) through God (the Son) and by God (the Holy Spirit). God is the One who graciously invites our worship and then hears our response. God is the One who perfects and mediates our praise and petitions. God is the One who helps us comprehend what we hear and prompts us to respond. Lest we forget, worship is about God (not us or the act of worship itself). Focusing on God in three persons and giving credit where credit is due helps us from the temptation of worshipping the time, order, place, and action of worship itself.

**Communal**- Worship is a first person-plural activity. Worship draws us into communal life with others. It is not enough for us to praise, pray, proclaim, and make promises alone, we must praise, pray, proclaim, listen, and make promises together.

**Hospitable**- In worship we move beyond self and pray for the world and offer hospitality to our “neighbor”. Christian worship serves to stoke the gratitude of our hearts which will lead us to serving the needs of our broken world.

**“in but not of”**- Christian worship reflects the culture (language, styles of dress, rhythms and harmonies of music, and visual symbols) out of which it is taking place. At the same time, worship must not be enslaved to culture. Our worship of God must remain willing to challenge any dimension of local culture that is at odds with the gospel of Christ.

**Excellent and Generous**- Worship is not stingy. It is not a simple blip on the radar screen of our lives. Worship is an abundant outpouring of our love and praise to the God who created us and redeems us. Worship calls for our best, most generous, and most excellent offering. Worship is about what God deserves and God deserves our best, no matter what that takes. When we practice music, prepare words to speak, set aside gifts of money and time to offer, and ensure that we are rested and ready to give God our undivided attention, we are practicing the kind of excellent and generous worship God is worthy of.

The Church, and the church, big “C” and little “c”, are hurting right now. I would say we have been hurting for a while but the only time we can do anything with is right now. What I mean here today with that statement looks back to our story of Mary and Martha. There are so many different things in our lives that have our attention and all those things are bidding for our time, energy, emotion, and commitment. As a result, it seems like these things drive a wedge between us and our drive and availability to worship.

You all are saying, “Hey, I am here aren’t I?” Yes, you are and that is a great thing. Come back next week and the week after that. Make worship the top priority in your schedule each week and make sure it happens. Do not let anything stop you or derail you from praising and honoring God repeatedly.

With all these other things, the Church and the church, has struggled more and more. We have given less and less time and less and less resources to the worship of God and when we give less and less time and resources to the praise and adoration of God, the rest of the tapestry of ministry begins to unravel. I think our lives do to. I am not just saying this as we move into our 5<sup>th</sup> month of a pandemic that keeps us physically apart. The competition for time and availability has been a pattern for a while. Well, lets have the buck stop here today. Why not? There is no time like the present and no present like time. We must worship. We need to worship. We need to be in the presence of God, made whole by the grace of Jesus Christ, and empowered by God’s Spirit, more than we need anything else.

I am going to talk more about how we do that next week by looking at how we worship God in a church setting and as an outpouring or response how we worship God in our daily lives. That is going to help expand our understanding of worship to allow worship to be a source of influence for our daily life in addition to this time and place. The complete act of worshiping God includes both.

I will close with this. To worship God more than we are is going to require renewed commitment and sacrifice. Like the boy who asked all the questions, we must be hungry to know God more. We must not be satisfied with what we think we have heard or what we are sure we know. God is alive and the Spirit is active. God is always speaking. Are we listening? Are we responding? That is worship. Like Mary who sat at Jesus’ feet, we must be willing to sacrifice our chores that help us get ahead, and we must be willing to deny the temptation to justify for God that if we aren’t there this week because of family or a trip, God understands. God does understand and I do not think God keeps score, but that does not mean God is not hungry for your praise and adoration and we are not in need of the transformative power worship invites.

Just for clarity, being in church for worship does not make someone a Christian any more than a person standing in a garage makes them a car. We must participate. We must engage. We must give back. We must sing. We must listen and speak. We must pray. We must embody the love of God. We must open our hearts and our minds for the Spirit and Truth of God that characterizes true worship. When we do. When we commit to worshipping God and show up, we at the very least put ourselves in a position to be brushed by the Spirit, and the more we are brushed by the Spirit, the better.

Let all God's people say... Amen.