David Teaches on Worship
Scripture Text: 1 Chronicles 16:8-36

Introduction

Worship is a fact of life. Everyone does it whether they realize it or not. Anyone who says that he or she does not worship is deceived. We worship something or someone by the very nature of who we are. God designed us to give worship to someone else. The question is, “Who or what are you worshipping?” Ask yourself what you value most. Is it your spouse? Is it your work? Is it money or financial security? Whatever you value most is what you worship. Since God created us for Him, He desires for us to worship Him. He is the one being in all of the universe that is of infinite worth and worthy of our worship. Worshipping God will be central in heaven where the angelic creatures will sing “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (Revelation 4:8). As it is in heaven, worship must be central in the life of the Church on earth. Worship begins on earth and continues into heaven. It should be the main activity, both private and corporate, in each believer’s life. But maybe the question is how do we go about doing this thing called worship? What does God expect from our worship?

Last week we looked at Jesus’ instruction for worship. We learned that where we worship is not important. We are the church, meaning we are the people of God, and wherever we are, we ought to worship God. We also learned that God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. It is important for us to know what is true about God and for us to be led by the Spirit in order to worship Him rightly. We also learned that it is important to know ourselves truthfully, to be honest to God about ourselves and to confess our sin to Him in order to worship Him rightly. Today, we look at another passage that teaches us how to worship. In this passage, King David provided instruction on how to worship God that came at a significant moment in Israel’s history. The Israelites were bringing the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God’s presence on earth, into the city of Jerusalem. David’s concern for the Ark shows a commitment to worshipping God and a faithful regard for God’s covenant with Israel.

A Worshipful Moment

Starting in chapter thirteen of First Chronicles, we read that David called for a gathering and celebration to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. Israel had neglected the Ark in the days of King Saul. The people agreed to do this, so David assembled all of Israel to bring the Ark from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem. They carried it on a new cart and two men, Uzzah and Ahio, drove the cart to Jerusalem. David and all Israel celebrated before God with all their might, with song, lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. It was a celebration, however, something terrible happened along the way. The oxen pulling the cart stumbled and Uzzah placed his hand on the Ark. God was so angered by this that He struck Uzzah down and killed him. David was angry because God had killed Uzzah, but he was also afraid of God. David then reconsidered bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, and instead, left it in the care of a man named Obed-edom. The Ark remained in Obed-edom’s house for three months, and God blessed his household.
Fast forward three months, David heard that God had blessed Obed-edom. He had time to reflect on what happened when he first attempted to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. He probably understood that God’s anger in killing Uzzah was for not properly handling the sacred Ark of God. David had now prepared a place for the Ark and had said that no one may carry it except for the Levites. The Israelites gathered once more and the Levites carried the Ark of God on their shoulders with poles, as Moses had commanded them to do according to God’s Word. Again, there was a great celebration as the singers played loudly on their musical instruments and raised sounds of joy. As they were playing, David danced before the Lord with all his might. The whole assembly celebrated with loud music and shouting and they offered burnt and peace offerings before God. David then blessed the people in the name of the Lord, fed them, and then gave them a song of praise in which he taught the people how to worship God.

Worship is Giving Thanks to God

This song is a comprehensive description of worship through prayer and song. It is a song of praise, but it is also a song of thanksgiving. The first thing we can note about it is David’s appeal for us to give God thanks. This is appropriate for us now as we are preparing for the Thanksgiving holiday. This is appropriate for anytime, though. David begins and ends this song with thanksgiving. Look at the following verses.

1 Chronicles 16:8 Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!

1 Chronicles 16:34 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Thanksgiving ought to be the attitude each person has, for we each have received much to be thankful. This is certainly the attitude that God’s people ought to have as God has lavished His steadfast love upon us through Jesus Christ. If God never gave us anything else, if there was no more blessing to receive, God would still deserve our genuine thanks. One reason we do not give thanks more often, or a reason we do not have a genuine attitude of thanksgiving, is because we think we are entitled to certain things. The truth is God does not owe us anything. Whatever we have is a gift He has given us. When you worship, are you thanking God for all that you have? You should!

Worship is Seeking God

Another aspect of worship we see in this passage is seeking God. It might go without saying that when we worship God, we need to seek Him. To seek God’s presence may have been significant to the Israelites at this moment as the Ark represented the presence of God and it had been neglected for years. They had not sought God in the past as they should have. It is easy to seek God when life is not going well. We will often seek Him when we are in the valley, but do we seek Him when things are going well? Do we seek God when we are on the mountain? This passage reminds us to seek God always, in the good times and in the bad times. Look at the following verse.

Scripture quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.
1 Chronicles 16:11  
Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Many of David’s psalms were prayers reaching out to God, seeking Him, and calling out for Him. Oftentimes, people will try to do things in their own strength. When something happens, they may think they can handle it, or they can take care of it themselves. God is pleading with His people to seek Him and His strength. He wants us to rely upon Him. This includes seeking Him in the bad times and the good times. Are we guilty of doing things without seeking God? It might go without saying, when we worship God, we need to be seeking Him, but do we really seek God? How often do we gather together for worship and just go through the motions. How often are we guilty of gathering together for worship and seeking the wrong things? We may seek to receive something from God rather than to give something to God. We may seek to receive appreciation for something when we ought to be praising and appreciating God. What happens to me sometimes is that I focus on the wrong things, thinking I have to do this or that, and fail to truly seek Him who should be the object of my praise. One of the greatest promises God has given to His people is related to them humbling themselves, praying and seeking Him (2 Chronicles 7:14). Are you truly seeking God?

Worship is Remembering God’s Faithfulness

Another part of worshipping God is remembering His faithfulness. This includes remembering what God has done in the past. Look at the next few verses.

1 Chronicles 16:12–13  
Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered,  
O offspring of Israel his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

This would have been significant for the Israelites who had been literally led by God out of bondage in Egypt and led all the way to the Promised Land. God had intervened many times throughout their history to lead them and to save them from destruction. Do you remember what God has done for you? Do you remember when God has intervened in your life? Are you aware of when God blessed you beyond measure? Perhaps those times are hard to remember. It was for the Israelites, who had a history of grumbling before God when they should have remembered His faithfulness. This song calls for us to remember what God has done for us. The greatest thing God has done for us is to forgive us our sins and to adopt us into His family. If you have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you have a wondrous work of God to remember.

In addition to remembering what God has done, we should remember God’s faithful promises to us. A large portion of this worship song is a call to remember God’s covenant with His people. God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He had kept that covenant by bringing His people into the promised land.

1 Chronicles 16:14–18  
He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.  
Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand

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generations, 16 the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, 17 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, 18 saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan, as your portion for an inheritance.”

God had promised that He would make the Israelites a great nation. He had promised to save them and bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. God had also promised to bring a Savior from the Israelite people. God fulfilled all of His promises and He will continue to fulfill His promises to us. God has told us that He will be with us always, and He will. He has promised us that He will be a refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble, and He will. He has promised to be faithful to forgive our sins when we confess them, and He will. He has also promised to prepare a home for us and to bring us with Him in the future, and He will. Therefore, worship God by remembering His faithfulness — His work in the past and His promises for the future.

Worship is Telling the World of God’s Salvation and Glory

Worship does not stop when we leave this building. In fact, worship should not begin or end here. We ought to continue worshipping when we gather together, and we ought to continue worshipping when we leave this place. But, what should our worship look like when we leave here? How should we worship when we are not gathered together? One way this passage tells us to worship is by telling others about God. Worship includes declaring to the nations just how great our God is. Look at the following verses.

1 Chronicles 16:23–27 23 Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. 24 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! 25 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. 27 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.

When we gather together for worship, we sing songs of praise to God. When we gather for worship, we tell us God's salvation and glory from His written Word. When we gather together for worship, we praise our great Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Notice that the telling of God's salvation, and declaring His glory and marvelous works is to be among the nations. Our worship ought not to be confined to ourselves. God's grace in our lives should compel us to declare all of God’s goodness to the whole world, or at least to the corner of the world we inhabit. God wants us to shout His praise from the mountaintops. He wants us to declare His Word and promises to everyone. All of the “gods” of other people are worthless idols, but our God is the Almighty One who made the heavens and the earth, and He has made His presence known through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Ark of the Covenant is no longer the symbol of God’s presence on earth. It was a shadow of a much greater presence of God, which is now through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The world needs to hear about their Savior. Will they know about Him through our worship? Let us worship God by telling the world of the one true God.

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Conclusion

In closing, this passage reveals several things about worship. We see that worship involves giving thanks to God. Worship involves seeking God, and not ourselves or our own desires. Worship involves remembering God’s faithfulness, both His past deeds in our lives and His promises for our future. Worship also involves telling the whole world of God’s salvation and glory. Worship is not about where we are. It about to whom we belong! Worship is not about what we receive. It is about what we give to Him! Worship is not about us at all — it is about Jesus Christ! When we leave this place, we should not say that was a good band, or that was good music, or he was a good preacher, or that was a good message. When we leave this place, we ought to say, “Jesus is a Great Savior!” Jesus is the one we come to worship and Jesus is the one we leave worshipping. So let us praise our great God and Savior. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!