

I. Gospel Worship in Biblical Perspective

Worship God!

“Why?”

Ephesians 1:3-14

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January 6, 2013 – Morning Sermon

We're in the beginning of this series on Worship God which is our theme for this year here at Briarwood. I will get into the whole text of Ephesians later but I just want to start in verse 3. Ephesians 1:3-14 is one sentence in the original language of 228 words but it's well ordered and well directed. It breaks down into three parts. It's called the doxology because the Greek word *doxa* meaning praise or blessing is mentioned three times in the opening verse.

Ephesians 1:3 says [3] *Blessed (doxa) be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed (doxa) us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (doxa) in the heavenly places...* Why has he done that? That's what we'll look at in this study. May God bless the reading of His Word.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

We are at the very beginning of a series of sermons called Worship God to accompany a ministry theme for the year, Worship God and the first sermon is going to be titled “Why?” I'm going to answer the question why but I want to give the reasons why in order to tell you that I don't want to give you the reasons why. Does that sufficiently confuse you? I want to give you the reasons why, Worship God, is so crucial and important but in doing so at the conclusion I'm going to tell you that I really did not want to give you the reasons why to worship God.

Why do we do a ministry theme every year at Briarwood? Let me explain it this way. Spring training is coming and all these athletes are all headed to Spring training. There they will do fielding, batting practice, sprints and they will do the basics. It doesn't matter how great or new they are, they will do the basics. In August football players will get two-a-days where they will run, tackle, pass, throw and sprints. They will do the basics. They will do the foundational things of the sport. In the fall basketball players will start their workouts. They will run the court, do lay-ups, passes, give and go, the weave, stop and shoot, spot shoot and they'll learn all those basics. Jack Nicklaus, arguably the greatest golfer that has ever lived, every January would go get his teacher up in Ohio and he would say to him “Mr. Grout, teach me how to play golf.” He would start with him by saying “Let me see you grip the club.”

All these athletes know that the key to effectiveness is always doing the foundational, fundamental, elementary things right with repetition and excellence. That's why the pastoral staff, elders and deacons at Briarwood pray about every year the essential, foundational, discipleship elements of the Christian life that all together with the pulpit preaching, congregational meetings, Sunday night services, special services, small groups etc. we can focus on. Last year it was on iShare, personal evangelism. We believe that the way God changes a people is by the Gospel coming into their life. So we desperately need personal evangelism to go and share the Gospel with people.

In support of that from the pulpit ministry there were three key series of sermons last year. At the outset of the year 2012, I did a series on personal evangelism. Then I went to a series after that with seven encounters with Jesus found in the Gospel of John. It was how Jesus did evangelism in seven different encounters. After that we finished up with what you share. What is it that you share? You share the Gospel. The Apostle Paul said “I delivered to you that which is of first importance, the Gospel. If an angel comes and preaches anything other than this Gospel let him be anathema.” He said the Gospel is the power of God so we have to make sure we get the Gospel right. It is essential unto salvation so we did a series called the Majesty, Message and Ministry of the Gospel.

The majesty of the Gospel is that the Father has sent the King and the King has accomplished great triumph over His enemies so that He could save His people from their sins. Jesus said “All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me and I will not lose one of them.” There is this glorious message of the Gospel where by God’s grace sin has been overcome by Jesus Christ and by faith and repentance we can have Christ. If we have Christ we have life and that brought us to the ministry of the Gospel which is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to Christ, the Message of the Gospel, who was sent by the Father, the majesty of the Gospel. So we went through this glorious series about the Gospel because the Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. Without the Gospel you have no foundation and the Gospel gives you the formation for every doctrine, responsibility, duty and privilege in the Christian life. It is our motivation because we obey Him because we love Him. We love Him because He first loved us and gave Himself for us. So there is this glorious message of the Gospel. This Gospel message is foundational.

Now we come to 2013. We move from this most foundational truth of the Bible, the Gospel of saving grace, the sending grace of the Father, the saving grace of the Son and the securing grace of the Holy Spirit through the cross of Christ, to now the most essential, privileged opportunity of the Christian life – worship God. Psalm 29:1-2 will be our key verses for this series. Psalm 29:1-2 says [1] *Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.* [2] *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; **worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*** It is not the splendor of His holiness which effects our worship but He is saying to worship the Lord *in* the splendor of holiness. The word holiness means righteously unique and that is the worship of the Lord by the people of God should be something holy other, completely unique, uncommonly glorious. ***Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness***, unique praise to God. There will be nothing like it or comparable in this world. Worship God.

In the next coming weeks I want to try to answer some questions – worship God why? Worship God how? Worship God where? Worship God who? Worship God when? I want to try and answer all of those questions from key texts of Scripture. In this study we’ll look at Worship God why but as I talk about it this I want to give you why we worship God and then I want to tell you why I wished I hadn’t given you why we worship God. Why would I say that? I’ll get to it before the end of this study. My goal this year is just as the Gospel is the foundation, formation and motivation of the Christian life, the **acceptable** worship of the Triune God of glory is the culmination, the occupation and the affirmation of the Christian life. I’m not going to ask if you’re *going* to worship because everybody worships. The question is who and how. You were born to worship. If you don’t worship the One true and living God in the way that He determines is

acceptable then you will do false worship to false gods. It may be through addictions, obsessions, power, possessions, sexual immorality, consumerism or oppressiveness but you will worship either the One true and living God or you will engage in false worship to elevate yourself over God. You will worship.

The Bible calls us to worship God in the splendor of holiness. I believe the Bible teaches us that the acceptable worship of the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) of glory is the culmination, the occupation and the affirmation of the Christian life. God is revealed in creation and the Word. If you want to sum up what it means to be a Christian, it is to worship God. It is not only the culmination of the Christian life but it is the occupation of the Christian life. *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV). It ought to occupy every thought, word, deed, decision, and movement of our life. It is governed by the worship of God. It is the affirmation of the Christian life. How do you know someone has been saved? The evidence is God's grace. What is the evidence of God's grace? They live to the praise of the glory of His grace. It marks out God's people. They are on this glorious journey of growth in grace where life is becoming worship and the praise of God is the crown jewel of why He made us, saved us and sustained us.

Now I'd like to frame Biblical worship. I have called this two by two and we're barely getting started on this in this study. First there are two worship words in your Bible. The first Greek word is *proskynein* and it has its Hebrew counterpart, *shachah*, but I won't be looking at that one. *Proskynein* means to prostrate oneself, to bow freely, completely, to bow before the Lord with veneration, respect and adoration. The second Greek word and key word that is used is *latreia* and is sometimes translated glory, praise, respect, reverence, veneration, adoration but most of the time is translated worship which by the way is a verb that came from a noun – worth ship.

I like to read historical things and in this case if you come up to a woman of standing, of aristocracy, they would say "Your ladyship" and then they would go to the man and say "Your worth ship" meaning this person is to be venerated because of their position. That is the common use but the Christian use of *latreia* in worship means to bow in veneration, give adoration and worth ship to God because of who He is and what He has done as He has revealed Himself through what He's done and what He has done points us to His glory and His majesty. We bring Him worth ship and I guess some southerner was involved in this and said that this would take too much to say "worth ship" so if we can make "all of you" into the word "ya'll" then we can make "worth ship" into "worship." So they contracted it and put it together to make one word. They took the noun and verbalized into a word – worship – that is to be used in its sacred sense of when God's people ascribe to the Lord glory that is due to His Name. They give Him honor because of who He is and what He's done. They worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. It is something unique and incomparably unmatched. Those are the two words for worship.

There are also two aspects or two dynamics of worship that is revealed in the Bible. There is general worship which means life worship. All of life is worship. The Bible says in Romans 12:1, *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* It is your *latreia*. Pastor, if I don't give to God acceptable worship, God centered *latreia*, then what have I done? I have done *idolatry* which is

idolatry. False worship is *idolatreia*. God, I don't want to give false worship. Then bring your life. It doesn't matter what part of your life, so, *whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

When you go to the closet tomorrow to pick out what you're going to wear, make it a worship statement. When you speak with that co-worker tomorrow, speak as unto the Lord for you're speaking to one who is made in the image of God. The marriage bed of intimacy is worship. Let the marriage bed be held in honor among all for it is sacred. We will not engage in the idolatry of sex but in the worship of God in the placement of Biblical sexuality to the glory of God and the sacredness of the marriage bed – one man, one woman, one life. When you work you do your work heartily, as unto the Lord you worship. When you take care of your employees they are not simply objects to sharpen the pencil for my personal profit. I care for my employees as an act of worship before the Lord. When I look at the earth that the Lord has made, especially to put man in it and over it, I will not worship the creation but I will steward the creation a worship statement to God. I have the Gospel. Why do I evangelize? I am worshipping the Lord. All of life is to be worship. It is to be a worship full life. Life is to be full of worship in thought, word and deed.

Then there is special worship. The special worship that God delights in giving much direction to in His Word is in the book of Leviticus, the book of Psalms, and text after text in the New Testament. The book of I Timothy outlines for the people at Ephesus what they do in worship – come for the reading of the Scriptures, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to one another. Hebrews 10:25 says [25] *Do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* This assembled, special worship is unique and incomparable to anything and everything. It's not about me. It's all about Him. When we've assembled to lift up praise to the Lord He is enthroned on the praises and inhabits the praises. God is to be glorified and lifted up at the moment. It's not there to attract people to the church but to tell the people the glory, splendor and attractiveness of the Lord God whom we worship. It is that assembled worship.

The fact is that these two dynamics of worship are not inseparable. When you've been out in life all this week and you've been assaulted by Satan who does not want you to make life worship, he wants you to make life all about you. He wants you to dress for yourself. He wants you to use relationships for yourself. He wants you to use employees and employers for yourself. He wants you to make all of life about yourself. He has assaulted you, tempted you, distracted you, detoured you and wants to make things difficult around you yet God to some degree has sustained you. God has given you victories in life where you've grown in grace and I can't wait for the Lord's Day to be refreshed and renewed from all of that, that has gone on in that entire week. Now let me gather with God's people, refreshed and renewed and then an amazing thing happens. I am stimulated and encouraged then in special worship to lay hold in the next week in praise to God. The two are inseparable. The more we seek to make life worship, the more we prize assembled gathered worship.

Then assembled gathered worship that is God centered and not me-centered where I come to worship God in the reading of His Word, the singing of His songs, the praise of His Name, the prayers of His people, the encouragement, the sacraments and then it's amazing what God does with that to send you into life worship. God centered

worship is the culmination, occupation and affirmation of the Gospel saturated Christian life.

Now I want to give you very quickly ten reasons why God centered worship is important and then I'll tell you at the end that I wished I hadn't given you these ten reasons. Is worship important? One is that worship is at the root of the fall of Satan and the introduction of sin and rebellion. Isaiah and Ezekiel tell us that Satan is a fallen angel who left his abode. He was made to worship and serve the One true and living God and he said "No, I will exalt myself to the holy mountain. I will be lifted up" and thus he was cast down.

Secondly, worship is foundational to the definition and motivation of sin. Romans 3:23 says [23] *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory (doxa) of God.* God made me to live to His glory, to worship Him. What is sin? Sin is saying I will not give glory to God. I will assassinate God's glory and I will exalt my own glory. I will not use food, drink, sex, power and money the way God gave them to be used for His glory but I will use them to exalt myself. Instead of the obsession of praise and worship to God, it becomes the obsession of the exaltation of self in life.

Thirdly, the first occasion of the manifestation of sin in Adam's race was at a worship service. Adam and Eve in the garden, instead of worshipping the presence of God, decided they wanted to be like God. They fell into sin and brought forth two sons, Cain and Abel. When do we see the difference between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness in the world? It's at a worship service. In that worship service, Cain's offering was about him and Abel's was unto the Lord. In the result of that came anger, murder, strife and destruction. The very manifestation of the fallenness of humanity took place in the context of worship.

Fourthly, is the sin of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-3. We will be looking closer at this text in about three to four weeks but it's there that the first time the two eldest sons of Aaron come into the worship service to lead the people of God and the fire of God consumes them because they didn't bring the fire of God to worship. They brought "strange" fire and then when Aaron speaks of the grief of his heart, Moses on behalf of God says to him, "God will be honored by those who draw near to Him. Who authorized you to bring this strange fire?" Whenever something is as sacred as worship, it not only has glorious consequences but it has dire warnings. Worship is not something to be manipulated for personal reasons. We are to bring to God not unauthorized fire but the fire of God to the praise of His Name.

Fifthly, is the very foundation and substance of God's Law. God's Law is designed to teach us how to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind and our neighbor as ourselves. God's Law is glorious yet the first four commandments is all about worship. Exodus 20:3-8 says [3] *You shall have no other gods before me.* [4] *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 don't worship Me by imagination but how I have revealed myself in the Word.)* [5] *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,* [6] *but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.* [7] *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.* [8] *Remember the*

Sabbath day, to keep it holy. The very substance of God's Law is there to direct us to the praise and worship of God which then directs us to a life of love to God and one another. Worship is at the core of it. When Cain did not worship it led to death and murder. When we worship it ought to lead to love and life by the grace of God in Christ.

Sixthly, think of the purpose and defilement of the Exodus. Moses led the people of Israel out of the bondage of slavery and they came out. Why were they to be led out of slavery? For freedom? No, freedom was the immediate act. The purpose of leading them out and to let His people go was to go to the Mountain of God to worship Him. Let them go three days to worship Me and then when they arrived, as Moses was receiving the directory of worship and the commandments of God, they went back to *idolatreia* and made for themselves the golden calf in blasphemy against God. Do you not see how this issue of worship is woven throughout Scripture?

Seventhly, is the vocation of eternity. Every time the Bible peels back heaven and we look into heaven, what are the angels, elders and those gathered around the throne doing? They are always worshipping God saying "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come." They tremble, praise and call out to one another "Praise His holy Name!" It is the vocation of eternity.

The eighth one is that it was the focus of Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Satan said "Worship me. I'll give you the kingdoms of this world. Worship me." How does Jesus end the temptation in the wilderness? He says "It is written, you shall worship the Lord God alone. Do not tempt the Lord. You shall worship the Lord God alone."

Ninthly is that the only thing that the Bible reveals God "seeks" from His people is worship. Jesus went to a harlot by the well and she says "Where do we worship, the temple or in Jerusalem?" Jesus says "Woman the hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and truth for the Father seeks true worshippers."

Finally, is the purpose of creation, redemption and providence. Why did God make you? It is to praise Him. Why did God save you? It is to praise Him. Why did God give you the breath that you're breathing right now, the heartbeat that you have right now? It is to worship Him in life and in assembly.

I'd like to conclude by looking at our text in Ephesians 1. Ephesians 1:3-14 says *[3] Blessed (praise, doxa, doxology) be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (why?) who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (how?) [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, (why?) that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Why did He do that?) In love [5] he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (God's own free will authorized your salvation), [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved (in Christ). [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. [11] In him we have obtained (a gift) an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, [12] so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*

(Do you see how this is falling together?) [13] *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, (why?) to the praise of his glory.*

The Father has authored your salvation. Jesus has accomplished your salvation. The Spirit has applied your salvation. The Spirit has brought you to the Savior who has brought you to the Father. Why? It is to the praise of His glorious grace. The Gospel's immediate purpose was to save you from its sins. Its ultimate purpose was that you would be set free now to worship God and give Him glory, praise and honor. That's why the Gospel did its work. It was for the praise of His glorious grace in life and in gathered assembly and that, that praise would be His.

Here is the takeaway. It is worship God! Why? These ten reasons which are not exhaustive are just a specimen of the importance of worship. NO, worship God and here's why. It is *important* because **IT** is important. I can preach and offer you motivation after motivation. Because of your Christian stewardship which is motivational and your iShare opportunities we have identified 785 surrenders to Christ in processing and discipleship from last year. Evangelism is becoming a part of our life, praise the Lord! I can point to the blessings of everything in the Christian life, the expectations of it and the same thing is true of worship. When you say I'm going to erase this default program of its all about me, everyday of your life and you want to make it all about the praise of God so that I can attack sin which will bless my marriage and family. When life is worship there are unbelievable blessings to it. When gathered worship takes place there are all kinds of blessings that come through preaching, prayer and singing but I am asking you for true God centered worship and that we not embrace worship because of its contingent benefits but we embrace worship because *it* is important.

God is to be worshipped in the splendor of holiness. He made me to praise Him. He saved me to praise Him. He got me up out of a sick bed over these last two weeks for one reason and one supreme reason. There will be multiple consequences to it but one supreme reason is "Harry I'm keeping you here to worship Me." When you go to that study you go there not simply to come up with a sermon to keep a job but you go to that study to worship Me and you preach it to worship Me. You love your wife to worship Me. You raise your children not for your name sake but to worship Me. When that becomes the end of your life you will not only love to gather for worship but then life takes on multiple dynamics but you don't do it for the dynamics, you do it for God's sake worship. Is it beneficial? Absolutely.

When Joni Eareckson Tada was facing the life of a quadriplegic, Christ became dear to her. She began to wonder what can I do for Him? She records the moment when she had the privilege to speak with J. I. Packer and in great humility she said to him, "Look at this body, it's wasted. What can I do for Him?" Dr. Packer said "Worship Him." In days of prosperity and blessing worship Him. In days of adversity worship Him. She made her quadriplegic life a statement of the glorious grace of God and now look at what has happened. Worship Him. Job said "Though He slay me, yet I will praise Him."

Life is worship so I invite you to a purposed journey this year with me – life worship, gathered worship. I invite you to the Gospel pursuit of God glorifying, Christ exalting, Bible shaped, Holy Spirit empowered worship. Worship God, not worship,

worship, not worship your favorite elements of worship but worship God for God's sake. Praise His Name forevermore! Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You that Your Word is so glorious, clear and Your Spirit is so patient to erase that unregenerate mind where we fall short of the glory of God by grasping life for self and the glorious work of grace where this journey of making life worship and joy of the Lord and gathered worship the refreshment and renewal that we might be sent this week to the praise of Your glorious grace. Friend, if you have not yet come to this saving Savior who will take you from the despair of worship of your life to make life worship of God, come to Him and surrender to Him. He came to save you from your sins to set you free to the praise of His glorious grace. Say "Jesus I surrender to You." Jesus, Your people, we surrender life and our assembly together to worship our Triune God. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.