

Gospel Driven Worship: Individual and Corporate (Romans 12:1-2)

August 26, 2012

Dismiss kids to Transformation Station

As our kids are sliding out, let me encourage you to turn in your Bibles to Romans 12 (this is page 947 in the Bibles that we provide). It's going to be really important for you to follow along in the Bible today. Let me ask you a question: "When you visit a church, what are the top 3 things you are observing which influence whether you decide to return or not?" Most research suggests that, whether you realize it or not, you will make up your mind in the first ten minutes of arriving on whether you'll come back or not (this is good news for me). So what are those top 3 things that you look for:

1. First Impressions

- Was Springstep easy to find? How difficult was it to find parking? Did anyone greet me when I walked in the door? Were there signs showing how to navigate the building? Are the restrooms easy to find? Are they clean? Does the coffee taste good? (BTW - I hope all of this was a great experience for you; if not, we'd love for you to share with us).

2. Children's Ministry

- Do you have anything for kids? Is this information readily available when I first arrive? Are your children's workers friendly? Is the children's space inviting? Is it clean? Is it safe and secure? Do my kids enjoy it?

3. The Worship

- Let's be honest. This is the main reason why you've come.
- How's the worship leader? Is he experienced? Does he lead me into the presence of God? (Micah rocks!!!)
- How's the band? Do they have a band? What about drums and a guitar? Do they play the organ? The piano? (The band is amazing!!! I'm partial).
- How's the music? Is it too loud? Too soft? Do they play all of the latest and greatest praise and worship songs? Choruses? Hymns? (We provide a great variety of music.)

Transition: What do you think of when you think of worship? For many...

- Worship occurs at a specific place and time: "I'm going to church to worship." Worship is something I do on Sunday mornings.
- Worship is an experience which usually involves music: "Wasn't the worship awesome today? Yeah, it was amazing. It brought tears to my eyes. I so felt the presence of God."
- If this is how we can conceive of worship, then what *enhances* or *hinders* your worship of God? What made "the worship" great today?
 - The songs, the beats, the drum, the guitar, the worship leader, the cool background moving behind the lyrics on the screen, etc. EXTERNAL REALITIES!!!

Is it possible that the greatest thing hindering your worship today is not something external but something internal. As we turn to the Book of Romans this morning, Paul turns this view of worship upside-down on its head.

The point: All of life is worship and to be lived in response to the gospel.

Read Romans 12:1-2

This morning I want to share three truths from this text on *Gospel Driven Worship*.

I. Worship is a Response to the Gospel (12:1).

In 12:1 Paul defines and describes worship: "...which is your spiritual worship." What is worship? How does he define it? Worship is "presenting your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." This is worship. We're going to talk about what this means in a few minutes but let me ask a question. Irregardless of *what* worship is, *why* should you worship?

Why should you worship? Do you worship to *earn* God's favor and acceptance? Paul was acutely aware of the vanity in pharisaical worship. Paul was Jew, a Pharisee. Concerning righteousness under the law, Paul said he was blameless (Phil. 3:5-6). Do you remember what Jesus said of the Pharisees?

"You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Matt. 15:7-9).

The Pharisees did a great job of looking great on the outside. They prayed, taught, and sang...all in VAIN! Paul wasn't trying to turn the Romans into nice little Pharisees. In light of Paul's background, it is extremely significant that he begins this section on worship with: "I appeal to (urge, beseech) you therefore, brothers (and sisters) by the mercies of God".

- "Therefore" informs us that the following exhortations are closely connected to the preceding section, namely 1:16-11:36. What has Paul been doing in the previous 11 chapters.
- Rom. 1:15: Since he can't be there in person to preach the gospel, the next best thing he can do is to "preach the gospel" to them through a letter. He begins in Rom. 1:16.
- Read 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed..."
 - Why is God's wrath revealed? God's wrath is revealed because of sin, he hates sin and at the heart of sin is idolatry, failure to worship God. Read Rom. 1:21-25.
 - The question isn't, "Are you worshipping?" The question is: "Who or what are you worshipping?" You were created for worship and you always worship something or someone. God created Adam and Eve for worship and his desire is that they would've multiplied and filled the earth with worshippers. Yet, sin entered the world in Genesis 3 and this changed everything.
 - God will punish all sin. Skim Rom. 2:3-5. Everyone is a sinner. Skim Rom. 3:9-18, 23.
- Read 3:21-26: "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested..."
 - God is a gracious, merciful, and loving Redeemer.
 - Jesus Christ is our wrath absorbing/exhausting sacrifice.
 - Skim 5:6-8; 10:9-13; 11:33-36

Do you see the grace, mercy and love of God? Paul says, "I appeal to you by the mercies of God." He's saying, "I appeal to you in view of the gospel, in light of all that God has done for you in Christ." You see: the gospel is about worship. The gospel is the story of God redeeming fallen worshippers and restoring true worship. There was true worship in the garden before sin entered in Genesis 3 and there will once again be true worship in the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21.

Why should you worship?

- You don't worship God to earn God's acceptance, but because you've already been accepted.
- You don't worship grudgingly or resentfully, you worship with great joy. As John Piper says, worship is "The white-hot enjoyment of God's glory."
- Paul knew that if the gospel gripped your heart, it would also transform your life. The gospel then is the *grounds* for worship. So while "the Jews looked to the Jerusalem temple and its cult as the center of worship, the Christian looks back to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ" (Douglas Moo, 754).

II. The Gospel Demands Complete Devotion (12:1).

What is worship?

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable/pleasing to God”

- Worship in the OT centered around the Temple and the offering of **sacrifices**. Christians no longer offer literal sacrifices because Christ, the lamb of God, has once-for-all been sacrificed for the sins of the world. Jesus brought an end to the OT sacrificial system. Douglas Moo notes though that “the centrality of sacrifice in ancient religion made it a natural and inevitable vehicle for the early Christians to express their own religious convictions” (Moo, 750). He continues, “It is not only what we can give that God demands; he demands the giver” (Moo, 750). Paul transitions from “What God has given to us” to “what we are to give to God.”
- **Present your Bodies:** “Genuine commitment to God embraces every area of life, and includes the body in all of its particularity and concreteness” (Thomas Schreiner, 644).

“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it’ (Luke 9:23-24).

- There is nothing that we could give back to God to repay him for all that he has done for us. The only thing we can offer him is our entire life; complete devotion. This is acceptable and pleasing to him. Paul notes that this sacrifice is to be living. This is not a one-time sacrifice but a continual offering of our lives to God in complete devotion until we die.
- How does the body become a sacrifice?

“Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it hath become a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthily, and it hath become an offering; let thine hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt offering” (John Chrysostom).

- Are you offering your entire life to God in complete devotion? What have you said is “off limits” to God? In the following chapters Paul addresses: spiritual gifts, loving others, serving, giving, showing hospitality, blessing your enemies, obeying government, paying taxes, adultery, murder, stealing, coveting, sexual immorality, sensuality, drunkenness, etc.

What is worship?

- Your entire life is worship. You are always worshipping. Paul’s desire is that we would worship rightly.
- Worship has to do “with the fundamental question of how we can be in a right relationship with God and please him in all that we do” (David Peterson).
- “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).
- “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).
- “Fundamentally, then, worship in the New Testament means believing the gospel and responding with one’s whole life and being to the person and work of God’s Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Peterson, 286).

What is **not** worship?

- Worship is not confined to a space or time, but involves all places and all times.
- Worship is much larger than the songs we sing on Sunday morning.

III. Complete Devotion is the Result of Gospel Transformation (12:2).

How do I become a completely devoted follower of Christ? How do I produce a lifestyle of worship?

What begins to become clear in 12:2 is we can only present our bodies as living sacrifices if we do not conform to the world but are transformed by the renewing of our minds. The greatest hindrance to my worship is not something external (e.g. Music) but rather internal. The greatest hindrance is within my own heart, sin.

Sin and the role of the mind:

- Read Rom. 1:21-25 and highlight the role of the mind (futile in thinking; believed a lie).
 - Illustration: Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-8). “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate...” (3:6).
- At the root of your battle with sin is a battle for control in your mind. Believers are transformed by the “renewing of the mind.”
 - Read Ephesians 4:20-24 (use 4:25ff as an example): put off and put on
 - Read Romans 8:5-8, 12-13: setting your mind on the things of the Spirit (the Word of God).
 - ILLS: your mind is like a computer hard drive. When you come to faith in Christ, you will not longer pay the penalty for your past, present, or future sin but your hard drive is not wiped clean. The process of sanctification is re-programming your hard drive (your mind) and this doesn't take place over night. It's a process.
 - God's Word becomes powerful and effective in your life when you read it, meditate on it, and BELIEVE IT
 - Ills. Jesus Tempted in the Desert (Matthew 4). Three times he responds with “It is written.”
 - “I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).
 - Your actions won't change until your thinking about them in relation to God change.
 - “But Paul's vision, to which he calls us, is of Christians whose minds are so thoroughly renewed that we know from within, almost instinctively, what we are to do to please God in any given situation” (758).
- The gospel is not only the *grounds* for worship, it is all the *means*.
 - The downward spiral of thinking in Rom. 1:18-32 is “reversed in those who are redeemed from sin. Their minds are ...renewed to understand the truth” (Schreiner, 647).

The result and byproduct of worship:

- The result and purpose of renewal is the discernment of God's will. “Approving the will of God means to understand and agree with what God wants of us with a view to putting it into practice” (757).

If all of life is worship, what implication does this have for how we view what happens on Sunday mornings?

1. Private worship does not excuse you from public worship.

- See Rom. 12:3-8: The following verses [Rom. 12:3-8] suggest immediately that the exercise of gifts and ministries in the congregation is an expression of our service to God:
- “You need a pastor and a church and not just a podcast and speakers” (Matt Chandler). TV, radio, and internet are no substitute for the local church.
- The gospel teaches us that transformation doesn't happen alone but in community. We need each other. The example of the early church is striking. They gathered for corporate

worship on the Lord's day even though that was a work day for them. This meant they were either gathering really early or really late for worship (See also Heb. 10:25).

2. **Public worship does not excuse us from private worship.**
 - “If you will not worship God seven days a week you do not worship Him on one day a week” (A. W. Tozer).
 - God wants your Monday through Saturday as much as he wants your Sunday.
3. **Corporate worship is a picture of heavenly worship.**
 - This is why para-church organizations are not sufficient. They focus on one specific realm in the body of Christ (specific age group, etc.).
4. **Corporate worship helps to foster individual worship.**
 - What we do on Sundays is to help people be transformed by the renewal of their minds. For this to happen they need gospel-based teaching, reading, singing, praying, etc.
5. **How do we make the gospel central in our corporate worship?**
 - Read the Gospel
 - “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture” (1 Tim. 4:13). Reference 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12.
 - The life and growth of our church depends on the power of God’s Word.
 - Preach the Gospel
 - “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2).
 - Preaching is just as much worship as is singing.
 - Pray the Gospel
 - “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matt. 21:13, quoting Isaiah).
 - ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication
 - Prayer acknowledges our corporate dependence on God.
 - Sing the Gospel
 - “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19, NIV; see also Col. 3:16).
 - Worship is much more than music. Use Gospel-centered songs.
 - See the Gospel (in the ordinances)
 - “The ordinances are the dramatic presentations of the Gospel. They are the moving pictures that represent the spiritual realities of the Gospel, written and directed by Jesus himself” (Mark Dever, 85).
 - Lord’s Supper
 - “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).
 - Baptism
 - Matt. 28:18-20: “Make disciples, baptizing...”
 - Acts 2:38: “What shall we do? Repent and be baptized.”
 - Baptism is the going public of your private faith in Christ.

My goal this morning is not to condemn those who have fallen short but to awaken you to the beauty and glory of God found in the gospel.