

Weekend of Sunday, October 14, 2018
21st Sunday after Pentecost/Lectionary 28/Proper 23/Year B
Primary Text: Mark 10:17-31
Sermon Title: “The Seven Faith Practices - Worship”

Theme

Jesus has been teaching his disciples about what is most valued in God’s eyes. Now, a conversation with a rich man brings his message home to the disciples in a way that is surprising but unforgettable.

Text

¹⁷As [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’ ” ²⁰He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” ²¹Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” ²²When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

²⁸Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” ²⁹Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Sermon

This not picking the readings for this sermon series on the Seven Faith Practices has finally caught up with me. The readings for the day offer very little for me to work with that has to do with *worship* specifically, and that is the Faith Practice we are discussing today.

Had I selected a text, I would have chosen Luke 4, in which Luke wrote:

Luke 4:14-17a Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, *as was his custom*. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

I would have selected that text because of the four words I have emphasized in the illustration. And here is why, we recognize Jesus as the Christ, God's Messiah, and the Son of God, and yet ... it was his custom to worship wherever he went. Jesus, the Son of God, made worship a priority in his life. What do you think that says to us?

"Is worship attendance really that important?" I get this question from time to time. Usually by a wife who loves her husband, but is frustrated with his level of participation at church. And sometimes from husbands who try to justify not attending church by telling me that they can worship God anywhere; on the golf course, in a deer stand, or a duck blind. Yes, I tell them, we should worship God with every moment of our lives.

The Apostle Paul wrote this:

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And so yes, who we are and how we act when we are cut off in traffic, or when someone cuts in line in front of us is important. But corporate worship, the gathering of the saints in one place at one time in a congregation that is committed to each other like family, is critically important.

- It is here that we get to kneel before the altar of God and confess our shortcomings.
- It is here that we get to share the Peace of the Lord, which is not simply a way to break up the service and move around, but a way to look our brothers and sisters in the eye and say, "If God can forgive us, then we can forgive each other. You belong here. We belong together."
- It is here that we get to hear the Word of God proclaimed and applied to our lives.
- It is here that we get to share grace made manifest in the bread and wine that has become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, a sensual reminder of the love of God through the cross of Christ.
- It is here that after we are forgiven and fed, that we are sent out into the world to be agents of God's grace.
- And it is from here that we go out and do God's work with our hands through the many outreach ministries we provide to the community as a church.

That is a brief seven bullet points that only happen in corporate worship. Yes, we can worship God on a beach, or golf course, or wherever we are, but we cannot do all those things I just mentioned out there.

The word "worship" first appears in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. And then it appears another 268 times, depending on the translation one uses.

Worship was so important that after the Exodus, Moses was commanded to make the Tabernacle, a mobile tent-like house of worship that the Israelites took with them as they wandered for the forty years.

Later, in the days of King Solomon, the Jerusalem Temple was built and throughout the Old Testament and the New it became the center of worship and sacrifice for God's people.

In the intertestamental period, the synagogue became an important convenience so that Jews could worship and learn the Law between pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

And as you heard from the Gospel of Luke, it was Jesus' custom to worship, and if it is important to him, and he is the Son of God, then it ought to be important to us.

Today we are discussing the Faith Practice of Worship, and I would like to invite Bob Fleet, the leader of our Worship Table to come up and tell you about the many vocations that are required to make worship happen here at your church.

Bob Fleet's presentation

I have been a member here at Zion for nearly 20 years, attending the 8:30 service mostly. I became involved in the Worship Table when I was asked to complete the term that had been left vacate. Of all of the seven ministry teams, I believe the Worship Ministry is “number 1”, it’s the reason for the season, and it’s why you are here today. All the other ministries branch off of Worship.

THE PURPOSE OF THE WORSHIP TABLE IS TO OVERSEE, PROVIDE FOR AND ENCOURAGE THE CONGREGATION IN ITS MINISTRY OF WORSHIP.

So what is the Worship Table? There are sixteen different areas of the Worship Table. Many of these areas you know about and see every time you come to worship, but some you don’t know too much about until now.

The ones that you don’t see too much of are the HISTORICAL & MEMORIAL/HONORIARIUM. Last year we celebrated a significant anniversary here at Zion and all the information, pictures and documents are part of the Historical, while the Memorial is there for the families and friends who donate money to the church after the death of a loved one. This money is used for different things in the church, such as the bell we placed last year. The Honorarium is for things people who give to honor something such as a wedding anniversary like the Chalice and Paten given by Bob and Sharon Zapko in honor of their 50th anniversary.

The NURSERY COORDINATOR for Sunday's 11:00 service.

The VERGER is the one who opens and closes the building every weekend.

And PEW ORDERLINESS, is the folks who organize the contents of the pews each week.

What you see occasionally throughout the year is our CHURCH DECORATING, the beautiful flowers and trees and statues placed for Easter, Pentecost and Christmas.

And then when you come to church you are GREETED and welcomed by someone, you then are met by our USHERS who offer you a bulletin, help you find a seat if needed.

Then the service begins and you hear the wonderful MUSIC and the fantastic CHOIR or singers or musicians and the POWER POINT OPERATOR who handles the screen so you can follow along with the service.

The CRUCIFER and ACOLYTES lead the beginning and ending of our services followed by THE COMMUNION SERVERS and ASSISTING MINISTER.

And during the service we hear from our LECTOR who reads the Lord's word to us, and the INTERCESSOR who offers prayers on our behalf.

BUT the reason we are here is to receive the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that is prepared for us by the ALTAR GUILD. They set the table for us every weekend, and also during funerals, and then on Holy Thursday they strip the altar, which when you see it, brings tears to your eyes.

There are anywhere from 15 to 20 people at each and every service that are needed to complete our worship service.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS - WHAT IS WORSHIP

- Worship is the re-enforcement of our knowledge of having eternal life with Jesus Christ.

- True worship takes place in your heart. We Christians worship seven days a week but it's our time together here and at this table that Jesus reaches out to us in a more personal way.
- In John 4:20-24, Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman at the well. The woman said to Jesus

John 4:20-24 “Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

- We need you Zion, we need you to reach out to others, we need you to stand up and help us worship together – help your church to help each other. YOU BELONG HERE – WE BELONG TOGETHER.

Conclusion

Thanks Robert. Did you know that the word "liturgy," comes from the Greek word (λειτουργία, *leitourgia*), literally means "the work of the people"?

I love that! And as you just heard, it takes many people to make our worship as beautiful and worshipful as it is, and it has been my honor these last six years to be the presider at Zion.

Presider, that is an interesting word too. Because of my training, I have the responsibility for overseeing that everything we do at worship is our best and appropriate worship of God. God deserves it. And our appropriate worship is our opportunity to thank and praise God for God's never-ending love, grace, and mercy. And I would be willing to bet, that all those people that we see and hear participating in the leadership of worship, feel that they are blessed because they get to work for you in support and leadership of worship.

The Rev. Duane A. Jesse, Senior Pastor
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And as Robert invited, you can work with us. Just see Robert or me or anyone on Council and we will get you to the right person.

You see, "You belong here. We belong together."

Say it with me, "You belong here. We belong together."

Liturgy – the work of the people. I love that!