**

*Nazarene Essentials* Sermon #2
Chapters: “Our Nazarene Characteristics: Meaningful Worship and Theological Coherence”

**Worship Depends on What You Believe**

 What we believe about life dictates how we live. What we believe about God dictates why we worship.

 To truly worship God means that I must accept who I am and understand who God is. The definition of worship is: *The human response to the presence of the divine.* For worship to happen in our lives, it must start with the declaration that God is powerful and just. It begins with acknowledging Him for who He is and for what He has done. We confess that He is the Rock of our Salvation, that He is great, and that He does great things. We declare that He is just, and that He is the author and perfector of our faith. We praise Him for His wondrous works and declare together the words of Psalm 34. Please join me in declaring this together.

Psalm 34:1-3
*1 I will praise the Lord at all times.*

*I will constantly speak his praises.*

*2 I will boast only in the Lord;*

*let all who are helpless take heart.*

*3 Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness;*

*let us exalt his name together.*

 For our worship be meaningful it must begin with a firm understanding of what we believe. We worship God today, because we are not God, and we need His divine presence, power and wisdom in our lives.

**I. Meaningful Worship**

*Scripture:
John 4:19-24*
*19 “Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet.
20 So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”
21 Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem.
22 You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews.
23 But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.
24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

A. Is worship an experience, or is it our very life? Is worship something we do, or is it the reason we were created? Is worship a place that we go, or is it all that we are? Worshiping God is more often used as a noun today than a verb. For example, we will say, “We attended worship this morning.” Or, “I have to hurry so I can make it to worship on time.” Although worship can certainly be a noun, Biblically it is seen more as a verb. Psalm 139:7 states, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” Once I accept Christ, worship isn’t a place I go, worship becomes who I am. Worship becomes my life, my breath, and my purpose.

 It is important for us to remember that worship is something we never quit doing. More specifically, we never get to take a day off from our worship of Christ, and we never get to retire. We worship in “spirit and in truth” because the Spirit is living in us revealing truth to us every moment of our lives. As Nazarenes, we affirm what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman. We realize that we don’t have to go to a place to worship God; we worship God everywhere we go because we live by the Spirit. We understand that when we give great effort in our vocations; we are doing so for the glory of God. We believe that when we watch television we are worshipping. We believe when we are speaking with our neighbor we are worshipping. We *know* that we can never be separated from Christ and that every second of our lives is worship! This is true individual worship.

B. Let’s also understand the importance of corporate worship as it relates to the move of God in our lives. When we praise Christ together, He draws us to Himself. As we gather together, we become emboldened and encouraged that there are others who believe like we do. We find strength in knowing that others on the earth worship in the same manner, and with the same passion that we do. If you ask any growing Christian whether or not they feel that corporate worship is important to their life in Christ, they will answer with a resounding yes. There is something powerful that happens when believers together proclaim the goodness of God. There is something wonderfully special that exists in prayers and praise together.

C. We have to guard our hearts and minds each week to ensure that when we gather together we do not become distracted. How many of us here this morning have become distracted on a Sunday morning when we should be focusing on the presence of Christ in our midst? Perhaps our focus was on the person that didn’t greet us, and we wondered all morning if they were upset or not. Maybe we were focused on the song that we sang that had too many verses. Possibly it was the lunch we were looking forward to, or the many things we have to do after service is over, or the whispers of the people behind us. Little things can distract us in big ways if we come into service not focused on the right things.

D. May God forever draw our hearts and minds into His presence and enable us to never trade this eternal moment for the temporal. The blessing of gathering together is that when we focus our attention on Jesus Christ, and make it our intention to worship Him, our worship together holds great meaning in our lives because God meets us in our praise to Him. Meaningful worship in corporate services allows God time to have His own way. The early church gathered together and broke bread and had glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46). Meaningful worship makes room for God to move and expects His presence among us. Our worship time together each Sunday is not out of obligation or routine. We don’t gather together today because we always have.

 Rather, we gather together today, to see the move of God in each of us and to bring Him glory as we surrender together to His power and purpose. Our worship is true and authentic because it is rooted in what we believe. In fact, if we are not unified in our confession of faith, the Spirit cannot move. Our ability to worship is dependent on what we believe, for it is our beliefs that place our hearts and minds in the right framework to allow the Spirit of God to move in us. As such, there are some central truths that we must recognize in our beliefs.

**II. Theological Coherence**Scripture:1 John 4:15-16
*15 All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God.*

*16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.*A. Our church sings its song in harmony with the larger Christian Church. It speaks of who we are theologically, and it gives us our theological coherence. We acknowledge God, and confess His Lordship, and in the process He lives in us through His Spirit. The fundamental principle around which all theology builds is found in the love of God. Every act, every word, every move of His Spirit is because God loves us. Our church affirms these central beliefs around the truth of God’s love and in the process take our place in 2,000 years of church history. In our small group studies, we will discuss these in greater detail.

* We affirm faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
* We affirm Christ as the second person of the Trinity.
* We hold the creeds and traditions of the church.
* We believe in justification through faith alone for salvation.
* We give a high place to the authority of Scripture.
* We believe in the priesthood of all believers.
* We affirm the sermon as a central feature of corporate worship.
* We believe the gifts of the Spirit are distributed among all believers.
* We believe in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through forgiveness of sins and transformation of character into Christ likeness.
* We believe humans have free will in order to choose to have a relationship with God.
* We believe God exercises grace and mercy.
* We believe God’s prevenient grace goes before a person.
* We believe God is seeking us, redeeming us, saving us, and sanctifying us.
* We believe God can bring victory in our Christian walk.
* We believe that grace can break the power of sin in a person’s life and can transform the individual from a sinner to a child of God who obeys the Lord with a heart of love.
* We believe holiness and sanctification are real possibilities in this life.
* We believe in the witness of the Spirit and that He gives assurance to us that the blood of Jesus continues to cover our sins of the past and give us daily victory.

B. You see, what we believe has a profound impact on how we worship. There is something within each of these tenants of our faith that resonates truth. The Spirit within us is leading us to all truth and directing our hearts to the presence of God, and enabling us to live holy, different, and set apart lives. When we gather in the name of the Lord, we are declaring these truths as one voice. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus said that when we gather in His name He is with us.

**Conclusion**

 He is here today! He is with us when we call on Him throughout every day. What we believe is important because it forms the foundation for our worship in the name of Jesus. His presence is here. You can touch Him, and in the process never be the same. Perhaps today you need a fresh outpouring of His victory in your life. Maybe you need to be reminded that His Spirit has never left you. It could be that you realized this morning that you need to worship Him individually and not just when we are gathered together. Or, maybe you simply want to pray and tell Him how thankful you are for His work in your life and in the life of our church. Whatever the reason, He is here right within your reach. Let’s pray!