

Worship

What is being built around here?

I smile to myself as I take an occasional early morning run and see what the pile of stones and old bricks at Gate Hampton is going to build in to next... which shed or caravan is going to be lovingly transformed into an expensive house.

As we look around at the church here, as we look at ourselves, it is quite easy to have an Identity crisis. Can we be built into anything? Does the church have any future? Can these dry bones live?

The Good news is God believes in the church. Never forget that.

Jesus is praying for us, In John 17 he says to his disciples: v20,21

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also

be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

But we are far from that picture. Do we really show the relationship between Jesus and God the Father?

We Need a **renewal** – not in ourselves, but **in God**. We Need to understand the *church* as God intended it to be. Renewal must begin locally, not in the Diocese, or in King Charles, nor any other denomination, here, in us, through the Holy Spirit.

So as a ministry team we have put together a sermon series to help us think about the church and what we exists for. It’s a time for us to reflect and discern together what this means for us.

And today we begin with our primary calling Worship.

Our Primary task – from which all others will flow, is **worship**. Worship of Jesus, together, and worship in our whole lives, with all creation.

Worship is our response to God's incredible love for us, to all he has done for us on the cross, and our fulfilment of our created purpose.

Let's delve a little deeper into what worship really is

Worship is our whole self, given to God

OT uses two words

1 *Hisha hawah* = bowing down,

2nd word *Abodah* = service

Bowing down has a sense of placing yourself lower than the other, Placing ourselves in the hands of God, trusting him and putting him first.

Service has the sense that our life is not our own, but belongs to another, to God. Which requires us to lay down ourselves and to take up the life God leads us in. As Romans' 12 states, to be a living sacrifice.

Worship is Not just words of our lips, but a whole life venture - integrated into all of life.

A beautiful example of this was Queen Elizabeth, who when called, laid down her life to serve the nation and ultimately her King, our heavenly Father. It was a costly call, coupled with the pain of that cost, but as we have seen over the years, one she did in love for her God.

Worship is about giving our whole selves, our decisions, actions and affections to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What we profess on a Sunday should match with our actions and affections throughout the week. So often in the Bible, God is maddened where his people do not show consistency from words to life:

Proverbs 14: 31: *If you oppress poor people, you insult the God who made them; but kindness shown to the poor is an act of worship*

Worship includes how we treat each other, how we care for one-another. Kindness, justice and generosity towards the oppressed is worship!

Worship is bowing down before God, and taking up his call to love God and neighbour.

Worship is about our whole selves given to God, choosing him above our own wants and needs, and choosing our neighbour over ourselves.

Worship is our whole self, given to God

Worship is an act of love

Hosea 6:6 (GNB),

⁶I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me.

This type of sacrifice is the ritualistic type, the religious type. God doesn't want our ritualistic rhythms, that we go through weekly to be made right before him and then ignore him for the rest of the week.

Knowing in the bible is not a head knowledge it's an intimating knowledge, one of deep love and affection and union. 'I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me.'

He wants us to know him deeply, to have our hearts, our affections, our love orientated towards him every day!

William Temple wrote a great definition:

"Worship is the submission of all our nature to God.

It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth, the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love,

the surrender of will to his purpose
– and all of this gathered up in adoration,
the most self-less emotion of which our nature is
capable and therefore the chief remedy for that
self-centred-ness which is our original sin and
source of all actual sin”

Worship is having God as our first love, at the
centre of all we do. Consulting him when we make
decisions, asking him to help us forgive, to help us
have love for our neighbour, choosing to take a
moment to listen to our lonely friend, and
practically doing something to challenge the unjust
systems in society. Worship is having our
affections and actions turned towards God on a
daily basis, not because we have to but because we
recognise his incredible love for us and give our
affections back.

Worship is an act of love

Worship is an act of love enabled by Holy Spirit.

John 1.23-34 Jesus said
“It’s who you are and the way you live that count
before God. Your worship must engage your spirit
in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the
father is out looking for: those who are simply and
honestly *themselves* before him in their worship.
God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who
worship him must do it out of their very being,
their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.”

It's tricky to love someone with all you have all the
time. Sometimes Luke will say to me... ‘are you
ever going to organise a date evening then?’ We
are human and we get it wrong. But we have been
given the Holy Spirit who works with our spirit,
drawing our affections towards God, shining a light
into all those dark parts of ourselves to help us turn
towards God and love him with our whole selves.
When we are struggling all, we need do is ask the

Holy Spirit for help. God has given of himself through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we are learning to give ourselves back to God through the help of the Holy Spirit.

And what's beautiful about this passage is that God wants us, all of us, in our sadness, joy, disappointment and hope. He wants us to be ourselves before him so he can know us and we know him.

Now I wonder, if there is a little voice at the back of your mind saying. Hang on. Doesn't this all make God a little self-centred and narcissistic if that is how and why he has made us for worship. This is where we get into problems when we demand to see God through our own image. God is by definition life giving. He knows that to worship him in Spirit, to be joined into Him, through the

gift of the Holy Spirit, is to be fully alive and the greatest experience we can know on earth. There is no relationship so satisfying as when we are found in Jesus!

- **Worship is our whole self, given to God**
- **Worship is an act of love**
- **Worship is an act of love enabled by Holy Spirit.**

When we think of worship, we often think about our Sunday services, the music, the liturgy, the choir... which are all good by the way! But Sundays are a culmination of our life of worship, the place we gather together to declare our love for Jesus.

If worship really is about love, and our whole selves given to God, what does that mean for people who want to gather to worship in a different style? What does that mean for people who don't gather on a Sunday, but a different day?

What does that mean when our worship style isn't releasing the younger generation to express their love? And to be honest vice versa... How much do we cling to traditions and how much do we allow freedom of expression and worship to enable us to worship in Spirit and Truth, with our whole lives?

Do you invite God to lead you in worship?

Is offering your life in worship a priority for you?

Is it a whole- life worship you offer up, with all you and we are?

And if it was, how would we feel about people gathering to worship in different ways?

Ben Phillips

Suggested Readings for Sermon Series 'The Church – What are we about?'

NB The readings in italics are quotations which might be helpful to whoever is preaching.

Worship – Proverbs 14: 31 (Good News Bible), Hosea 6:6 (GNB), John 4: 23-24 (or vs 19-24 with some intro to explain the context).

- *Isaiah 29:13. Also 'The Message' version of the John reading is helpful.*

Prayer – Acts 3: 1-10, Matthew 6: 5-15.

- *James 1: 5-6 (ask in faith), Romans 8: 36 – spirit praying for us, Luke 11: 1-13 (Lord's prayer and ask and receive)*

Fellowship – Acts 4:31 -35 (The Message), Matt 18: 15-35,

- *Hebrews 10: 19-25, 1 John1: 6-7, Ephesians 4:25- 5:2 (no false talk, imitators of Jesus) 1*

Corinth 12:12-26 (body), (Generosity) 2 Cor. 8: 1-14, 1 John 1 :5-7

Discipleship - Romans 12: 1-8, Luke 10: 1-3, 17

- *John 8: 31-38, John 14: 8-17, John 17: 18, 20-21*

Mission – Matthew 28: 8-10, 16-20; Acts 1: 1-8

- *Acts 10, Acts 8*

Global – (Persecution) Matt. 24: 7-13, Revelation 7:9-12

- *Acts 10, Acts 8, Acts 13, 2 Corinthians.*