

“Worship Is a Lifestyle” - John 4:1-24 – Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

Did you hear it in the end of the scripture reading this morning? *But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth.* (John 4.23-24) For some people, it seems like worshiping God is an occasional thing. Some we see at weddings and funerals, others at Christmas and Easter, and many of us an hour a week on a weekly or occasional schedule. This week again I am thankful to Jim and Jennifer Cowart in their book, *Living the Five* for the understanding that *Worship is a Lifestyle*. Over the years, I have told people that worship is a rehearsal for heaven. But the Cowarts believe that worship is living out the Great Commandment – *“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.* (Matthew 22.37-39) We are to love God and others. For them worshiping God is loving God and loving those who God loves – not only others but also ourselves! So, as we look at how we worship God, let’s think of the ways we express our love to God.

One of the ways we express our love is by acknowledging the times we have not done that and confessing it. In ancient Israel, the way that was done was by offering a sacrifice at God’s altar. There was a huge fire and animals would be slaughtered and burned on the altar with the notion that the smoke would rise to heaven and offer a pleasing aroma to God. That is not done in churches today, though we might have a campfire if we are on a retreat or even a BBQ at a church picnic. But stop and think, there are often candles light on the altar at church and at Roman Catholic and some Episcopal worship services you might even smell incense being burned as a throwback to the ancient sacrificial fires. And though we do not have the smoke and smell today, we still can come and offer God our love in an act of confession.

When we become aware that we have done something wrong or we have not done something we should have done, we can offer an act of love to God expressing that we are truly sorry for these actions or inactions. I remind you that my theology is that Jesus and we are in the **Forgiving Business**. He forgave people often when he healed them and called Peter and the other disciples to forgive others not just seven times but seventy seven times (or more times than you can keep count!) And in the Lord’s Prayer that he taught us and we just prayed didn’t we say, *“forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”*? You do not need to wait until next weekend to pray that prayer or to seek God’s forgiveness. If you understand that **Worship Is a Lifestyle**, then you should seek and offer forgiveness daily, maybe even seventy seven times a day!

In the first letter of John it says: *We love because God first loved us.* (1 John 4:19) Loving is not our idea, it is God’s and more than a good idea, it is a commandment. And it is not to be done occasionally or just one hour on Sunday morning, but day in and day out. Worshiping God, loving God is a lifestyle. Everyday do we bring glory and honor to God by what we say and what we do? How do you show God love? We can offer praises and thanksgiving for all the blessings we have received. We can bless other people. Do you ever do that? Of course you do. When somebody sneezes what do we say? “God bless you!” Do you know why we say that? During the dark ages when people were dying from plagues across Europe if someone sneezed they might be coming down with the plague and dying and people would pray God’s blessing

upon them that they might either be well or be blessed if they should die. Friends, we do not need to wait for people to be on their death beds or to sneeze to bless them. As you go out this week bless people, and be blessed.

In the text for today from the Gospel of John we are called by Jesus to worship God in “spirit and truth”. Some seem not to do that, as worship is for some half-hearted, reluctant, or even non-existent. But we are called to really get into it - to feel the Spirit, the vitality of worship. I was at a workshop on worship where the presenter talked about how as pastors we are not to kill the church. His emphasis for us was to preach good sermons and to make sure the worship music was really moving people’s hearts and souls. Today you can help me gauge whether, or not, we are fully worshipping God. Do you feel God’s presence here? Is God in the house? Do you feel the movement of God’s Holy Spirit among us? But it is not just here for a few fleeting minutes, more importantly, can you feel the Spirit moving with you, sustaining you and even moving you, nudging you, pushing you or pulling you throughout the week?

We are to worship God not only in spirit but in truth. What is truth? That is the question Pontius Pilate asks Jesus at his trial before he is crucified (John 18.38a) four chapters earlier in that gospel, Jesus had shared with his disciples what we might call the “Gospel Truth.” Do you know this verse? *Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14.6) This was an affirmation to the disciples after Jesus had told them he was going to heaven to prepare a place for them and would return to bring them home with him. Today, let us worship God who lovingly created us and sent Jesus to save us and lead us home. Today go and continue to worship God. Share God’s love and God’s blessing, especially with people who seem to need it the most. God loves you. Pass it on. Alleluia and Amen.

In Spirit and Truth Worship God

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 10/3/23

In spirit and truth worship God.
Come worship god in prayer.
Make worshiping God your lifestyle,
Anytime and anywhere.

Sing praises to God in your heart,
Or with your outside voice.
Share God's love with people you meet,
That they all might thus rejoice.

God loves us. Yes, God loves us all.
We have been blessed to know.
To share this good news with the world,
In Jesus’ name we go.

Worship God each and every day,
Knowing that God loves us.
To others we can show God's love,
All in the name of Jesus.