

In

Unison

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord.
2 Chronicles 5:13

Beginning: A Purity of Worship

this time are, indeed, true Christian *koinonia* fellowship, and not just chatting about the weather or yesterday's football game, or indulging idle gossip. We can then agree that these are certainly important, Biblically-commanded moments for the body.

But fellowship is not more important than worship. It does not take priority.

Ready for Action

In our society, we honor those who 'keep themselves busy,' people with 'many irons in the fire'—the ones with daybook pages filled for every time slot—and we generally do not honor those who do the opposite. So we honor the idea of 'busyness.'

Unfortunately we have transferred this concept to the church, so that we honor the person who teaches Sunday School, sits on two committees, and coaches the church softball team—all at the same time. We hold the one in high regard who shows up on a Sunday morning ready to discuss this important matter with so-and-so, put out this fire over here, have coffee with the visitors, and huddle in a quick pow-wow with the members of one of his committees—all before the Call to Worship.

Is this person ready to worship?

Ready for the Throne

In contrast, what do we think of the person who has been preparing to meet God since rising that morning? The person who shows up intent on worship may not think to say "Good morning" to everyone he meets; the person who steps through the door with a heart and soul bursting with praise for the Lord may not want to stop and discuss the weather. This person has a tight focus on the throne, on the altar upon which he is eager to lay his sacrifice. For this person the other people are secondary—not unimportant, just secondary—to God; the object of his adoration is his heavenly Father, not his pew mate.

Do you recognize yourself in either of these illustrations? You may be an usher, a deacon, the Pastor, or just an anonymous parishioner sitting in the last pew, but no matter your responsibilities, are you ready to worship? If you have not done it before, I encourage you—no, I *dare* you—to begin preparing for Sunday morning worship on Saturday night. I challenge you to show up Sunday morning with a song already in your heart, and with eyes only for the God of heaven, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

True


worship has more to do with intent than action. It has more to do with the condition of the heart, than the speed of the feet.

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place? He
who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an
idol or swear by what is false.
Psalm 24:3-4

The common argument against the practice of entering worship in quiet reverence is that, in the body of Christ, our supportive, edifying fellowship—much of which often takes place during the fifteen to twenty minutes prior to the worship hour—is of equal importance.

Let us assume, for the moment, that the interactions taking place during

“Do you quietly bow your head in reverence when you step into the average gospel church? I am not surprised if your answer is no. There is grief in my spirit when I go into the average church, for we have become a generation rapidly losing all sense of divine sacredness in our worship. Many whom we have raised in our churches no longer think in terms of reverence—which seems to indicate they doubt that God’s Presence is there.” (A.W. Tozer)

 *s models of committed, authentic worship, we always have before us the inspiring examples of the saints—both ancient and modern.*

We read and hear of what seem to us to be lives of extraordinary holiness—of the foreign missionary giving his or her life so that lost souls might be saved; of prayer warriors who regularly spend hours at a time on their knees, lifting up the needs of others to the Lord; of people in possession of a breathtaking holiness and focus upon the things of God.

Not I, Lord!

Our common response, with intimate knowledge of our own weakness, is to claim that we are incapable of such intense righteousness. We claim that we cannot pray for five hours at a stretch—when often the problem is that we then do not pray at all!

The cloistered monk has given every moment of His life to the things of God. He has intentionally removed from his life distractions with which the rest of us must contend. But what to the monk has become a way of life, surely we can apply to just one hour per week of worship.

Brother Lawrence, a 17th Century monk, explained how he practiced focusing his thoughts and heart upon the Lord:

“Having found in many books different methods of going to GOD, and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me, than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly GOD’s.

“This made me resolve to give the all for the All: so after having given myself wholly to GOD, to make all the satisfaction I could for my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He; and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world. Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld Him in my heart as my FATHER, as my GOD: I worshipped Him the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in His holy Presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind had wandered involuntarily. I made this my business, as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of GOD.”

“God wants worshippers before workers; indeed, the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the art of worship.” (Tozer)

Scripture

"Do not come any closer," God said.

"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Exodus 3:5

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy;" Exodus 20:8

"Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD." Leviticus 26:2

"There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God." 1 Samuel 2:2

All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Neh. 8:1-3,5-6

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Isaiah 6:1-5

"But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him." Habakkuk 2:18-20

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever; the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." Rev. 4:9-11

Hymns and Choruses

Holy, Holy, Holy (*Heber*)

Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love and purity

How Great Thou Art (*Hine*)

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hands have made

In This Quiet Moment (*Mayfield*)

In this quiet moment, Jesus speak to me
Fill my heart with Thy love divine,
Your power let me see

The Lord is in His Holy Temple (*Habakkuk*)

The Lord is in His holy temple,
Let all the earth keep silence before Him

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart (*Croly*)

Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King?
All, all Thine own—soul, heart and strength and mind

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