

We Glorify christ...

by David Platt

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility in worship, recognizing that God is the absolute center of our worship and that we are not trying to entertain or impress people.

Duration: 1:01:31

Scripture: Isaiah 1:10, 1 Corinthians 14:24, Revelation 19:1

Topics: "Glorifying God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the mission and vision of their faith community, which is to glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations. They emphasize the importance of worshiping God according to His Word and not getting distracted by external elements. The speaker highlights five non-negotiable aspects of worship: the supremacy of God, the centrality of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the engagement of the body, and the diversity of believers. They emphasize that worship should reflect the unity and diversity of heaven, as described in Revelation 7:9. The speaker also mentions the impact of worship on unbelievers, stating that it can lead them to recognize their sin and worship God.

Transcript

Good morning. Good morning. A little earlier than normal, I want to invite you, if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, to open them with me to Revelation chapter 19, and pull out those notes from the worship guide that you received when you came in this morning.

We are jumping this morning right in to week two of this membership process, just so you know, and we started this last Sunday, just so you know, there are approximately 550 people walking through this membership process this month with the church at Brook Hills, and that is an exciting thing, and at the same time, a bit of an overwhelming thing, so if you are one of those folks who's walking through this process, let me encourage you just to say a couple of different things. If you're walking through that process, you should get a letter in the mail early this week, and if you gave an email address when you signed up for this membership process, you should get an email as well, but you'll get contact from those who are leading the logistics in this whole picture, and make sure you've got all the details. I want to remind you of a couple things you need to do.

If you're walking through this month becoming a member of the church at Brook Hills, you need to first of all sign up as soon as possible for one of the gatherings on February 22nd. You notice on the front of the worship guide, there's information about that. It talks about a lunch and a coffee house.

There's actually a third gathering we've offered and added to that schedule because of the number of people who have signed up, and so we will have a luncheon that day from 1245 to 2, a dinner that day from 430 to 545, and a coffee house that day from 745 to 9, so there's one marathon in January, and this will be the marathon in February, but on that day, let me encourage you, if you're going through this membership process, sign up for one of those through the contact information that's listed there as soon as possible, especially if you have a preference for what time you would like to be a part of one of those, especially if you have children, and coffee house from 745 to 9 doesn't sound like the best context to bring a preschooler to, then let me encourage you to sign up for one of those other times as soon as possible, and second, remind you that there's homework that goes with each week of this membership process, and let me encourage you to do that and complete that and submit that as soon as possible each week. That will help not create a major backlog and push at the very end of this series for those who are handling all the details with that, so if you could, complete that. They really kind of are tied to what we're studying in the Word every single Sunday, so complete that as soon as possible and go ahead and send that in if you're going through the membership process, but I also encourage, last week, every member of this faith family, I think it would be incredibly valuable for each of us to walk through those exercises, so to speak.

I promise, they will be nothing but beneficial, and I've talked with small groups, those who have been walking through even this last week, that homework, and talking about the benefits of that, let me encourage you to take advantage of that. Over the next three weeks, this week and the next two Sundays, we're going to dive into that one summary statement that if you've been here at Brook Hills for very long, you've heard and seen over and over and over again that really sums up who we are as a faith family. That statement is, we glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations, and this one sentence really sums up our vision, our mission, our goal, who we are as a faith family.

We glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations, and what we're going to do each week is unpack a phrase from that sentence, so we're going to unpack what it means to glorify Christ, and how that is especially reflected in what happens when we gather together in worship. You see at the top of those notes, our driving passion, one driving passion in our worship as a faith family here. We want the glory of God in Christ.

This is the driving passion when we gather together as a people, we want the glory of God in Christ. Philippians chapter 3, verse 10, Paul says, I want to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so somehow to attain the resurrection of the dead. He says he wants Christ more than anything else.

He wants Christ. This is the picture for us as a faith family. We don't want to be big.

We don't want to be successful. We don't want to be slick. We want Christ.

We want Jesus, period. We want to know Him. We talked about last week, we want to grow into His likeness.

If you even go back a couple of chapters in that text in Philippians, you come to Philippians chapter 1, verse 21, which I think is a statement that sums up, that sums up Paul's passion. If you were to ask, what's the passion of the Apostle Paul? What is he most passionate about? Some people would say, well, he's most passionate about leading people to Christ, introducing people to Christ. Other people would say, well, no, his passion is church planting.

He loved church planting. Maybe his passion was building churches. We've got all these letters that he's written in the New Testament that he wrote to churches.

And I think Paul had desires in each of those areas. He wanted to lead people to Christ. He wanted to plant churches.

He wanted to build churches. But I think when it comes down to it, his passion is best expressed in Philippians chapter 1, verse 21, where he says, to live is Christ. He's my life.

He's my everything. And what we're saying as a faith family is exactly that. We want the glory of God in Christ.

We want our lives to be so identified with Christ that God gets great glory through us individually and as a faith family. And so in light of that passion, desire for the glory of God in Christ, what I want us to do is dive in together this morning into five biblical non-negotiables in our worship. Now the key is, even using this term worship, there is obviously in Scripture a sense, a nature in which worship is personal and worship is something we do as a community.

And when you look in the New Testament especially, you see really more of an emphasis on personal worship, that we don't have to go to a certain place at a certain time in order to worship. Worship is our life. We live to worship.

We breathe to worship. Every thought or every word or every action or every attitude is intended to be worshiped before God. And so this is key to remember, keep in the back of our minds, at the same time when we look in the book of Acts, we look in books like 1st and 2nd Corinthians, we look at Hebrews chapter 10, we see that it's important for the people of God to come together for the purpose of worship.

And so that's what we're going to talk about this morning. We're going to talk about why do we gather together in a room like this on Sunday morning? What's the purpose of our gathering together? What are we looking to accomplish, so to speak, when we gather together? This is not just religious routine. What's the reality that's being expressed when a group comes together in a room like this? We're going to dive into biblical non-negotiables.

Now that's important because we don't have the freedom to just worship however we want. God prescribes how we worship. God tells us in His Word some things that are non-negotiable in His worship that if we don't pay attention to, no matter how great our music is, no matter how great we feel about our worship service, if we've not given attention to these biblical non-negotiables, then we are doing that which is detestable in God's eyes.

And so we need to see what He says about worship. At the same time, we need to realize that there are a lot of things that we think of when we think of worship that are not prescribed in Scripture at all. Scripture never talks about sound systems and cushion seats and screens so you don't have to look at the preacher like directly, you just watch him on TV, even if you're sitting like right here, people watching on TV many times.

All these kind of things that when we picture worship, we often get a picture of this room right here and the reality is the majority of things in this room have nothing to do with Scripture. Now it doesn't mean all of those things are bad in and of themselves, but it does mean that if we focus on these things and we lose sight of what God has said is important, then we miss the point of worship. So we need to dive in to

Scripture and see what God says about how He is to be worshiped.

About a year and a half ago, we walked through a six-week study called Awaken and the choir did a CD that accompanied that and we spent time looking at these non-negotiables and my challenge this morning is to take five non-negotiable sermons and bring them into one. And so you pray for me and you pray for the sake of our lunch time this afternoon that we get through this right here. So I want to dive into these five non-negotiables, humility, honesty, community, clarity, and diversity.

And instead of our normal pattern of really camping out in one text, we're going to take a broad survey of Scripture and look at a few different key texts that inform our biblical understanding of worship. And we'll start here in Revelation chapter 19. Non-negotiable number one.

If we want the glory of God in Christ, then our first non-negotiable in worship is humility. And by humility, what we mean is that God is the absolute center of our worship. A.W. Tozer is a pastor who said in 1954, this is 50 plus years ago, he was asked about contemporary trends in the church and asked specifically what he thought would awaken the church from its complacency.

And I want you to listen to what he said. Fifty plus years ago, he said, in my opinion, the great single need of the moment is that lighthearted, superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God, high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple. The holy art of worship seems to have passed away like the Shekinah glory from the tabernacle.

As a result, he said, we are left to our own devices and forced to make up for the lack of spontaneous worship by bringing in countless cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people. This is a prophetic word in many ways. Fifty years later, we live in a day where there is mounting pressure every single Sunday to try to figure out what will we do to entertain the crowds? What will we do to hold the church's attention? And there are all kinds of activities being brought into what's going on on Sundays to try to keep the attention of people.

And I want to submit to you this morning that it is not necessary for us to bring in cheap and tawdry activities because the greatness of God is sufficient to hold our attention in worship. It's more than sufficient. We don't need to create things.

We need to focus on the Creator. This is the picture of humility. I want you to see a picture of heavenly worship in Revelation chapter 19.

I want you to just imagine the awe that surrounds this scene. Revelation chapter 19 verse 1. After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting, Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are His judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of His servants. And again they shouted, Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne.

And they cried, Amen, Hallelujah, when a voice came from the throne saying, Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, both small and great. Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, Hallelujah, for our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory, for the wedding of the Lamb has come and His bride

has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. And the angel said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

And he added, These are the true words of God. At this I fell at His feet to worship Him. But He said to me, Do not do it.

I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Every verse, every word, every image in this heavenly, eternal picture of worship is focused on the greatness of God. God is at the center of eternal worship. And He is the absolute center of the church's worship today.

This is a question, I'm convinced it's one of the most important questions we need to ask in the church today. Is God really at the center of our worship? I mean really. In practice, when we gather together in a room like this, is God really at the center of what is going on? And Scripture necessitates that He must be for a variety of reasons.

First, you've got some notes, because God desires our worship. He desires our worship. This is obviously just a couple of chapters away from the end of the Bible, and it's a picture where God is bringing all of eternity to.

Here's the deal. Keep going in your notes there. God orchestrates history, all of history, around this one purpose.

He orchestrates history to display His glory. All of history is headed to this picture in Revelation chapter 19. And we're going to talk more in the last week of this series about this.

But God is passionate about displaying His glory all throughout Scripture. Psalm 46:10 sums it up. Be still and know that I am God.

I will be exalted among the nations, He says. I will be exalted in all the earth. God says it.

It's going to happen. Guaranteed, ladies and gentlemen, He is going to be exalted by all peoples. This is what He desires, and He's orchestrating history to bring about.

We need to realize when we gather together in this room that we worship a self-exalting God. God desires to exalt Himself. He desires His own glory.

Now we hear that, and people might think, well, isn't that selfish of God? Is that self-centered of God? Is God self-centered? It's a good question, and the answer is yes. He is radically self-centered. He lives to exalt Himself.

And if that offends you in some way, then I would ask you the question, who else would you rather Him exalt? Because at the moment He exalts someone else, then He is no longer the great God of the universe. God is God-centered. He desires His glory, and He orchestrates all of history to revolve around His glory.

And it's intentional. Now what about us? What do we come into that? Well, we're definitely not the center of worship, so what role do we play? This is where it gets really good. God orchestrates history to display His glory, and God ordains the church, the church you and I come in, ordains the church to enjoy His glory.

He orchestrates history to display His glory, and ordains the church to enjoy His glory. We don't have time to dive into the context of Revelation chapter 19 here, but in 17 and 18 in Revelation, what you've got is a picture of Babylon. She's described, Babylon is described in verse 2 as the great prostitute, as the adulterer.

And this is an image we see throughout Scripture. Babylon is oftentimes representing, referring to the picture of worldly pleasure, and worldly lust, and worldly desires, and worldly fame, and worldly power. And the kind of worldly pleasure, and worldly fame, and worldly power that ignores God, and defies God, and pulls people away from God.

And so the picture is, in chapter 19 verse 1, it starts off, after this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude shouting. And the picture is this, you've got the church in Revelation chapter 19, with the backdrop of the world, and all of its pleasures, and all of its boasts, and all of its desires. There's the church coming out from the middle of Babylon, and crying out, salvation belongs to our God, glory and power belong to Him, true and just are His judgments.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, over and over and over again. And the picture is a people who are uniting together in Revelation chapter 19, with the backdrop of all the things this world has to offer, and saying, none of that compares to the greatness of our God. You've got to help us to get a hold of this, as the church of Rachel's, and we gather together in this room, and we sing, how great thou art.

What we are saying is, everything that this world offers us for pleasure, and for fame, and for power, and for success, we want none of it, because we want the greatness of our God. And none of that compares to who He is. We enjoy Him.

He is the satisfaction of our souls, and we do not need the things this world has to offer us. This is what happens in worship. It's humbly coming before the one who desires our worship, second, God deserves our worship.

Look at this vision of God, all throughout this chapter. Salvation belongs to Him. He is our Savior.

Verse 5 elaborates, you who fear Him, both small and great, He is the Savior of the small and the great. There is no one too small, no one too unworthy, there is no one too dirty to be saved by this God. Glorious, glory belongs to our God.

Four different times in this passage you see, hallelujah, praise Yahweh, praise the Lord mentioned over, and over, and over again. Power belongs to Him. He is omnipotent.

Then you see, verse 2, true and just are His judgments. God is true. He does not turn a deaf ear to evil, and sin, and injustice in the world.

He is just. And you see that picture, verse 3, hallelujah, the smoke from her, and the judgment of Babylon is what this is a reference to, goes up forever and ever. God is eternal.

His judgment is eternal. God helped every single person in this room to see this this morning. The justice and the judgment of God are final, and eternal, and irreversible.

Please, I urge you, based on the authority of God's work, do not toy with the justice of God. Do not toy with sin like it won't matter in the end. The judgment of God is coming, and it is irreversible.

It's a humbling picture, Revelation chapter 19. Hallelujah, over and over again. Verse 6, our Lord God Almighty reigns.

He is sovereign over all things. You see this description. He is Savior.

He is glorious. He is omnipotent. He is true.

He is just. He is worthy of praise. He is sovereign, king over all.

Why would we not want to put this God at the center of our worship? Ladies and gentlemen, can I remind you, people today are not starved for the greatness of our music. They are not starved for entertaining speeches and slick performances. People today are starved for the greatness of our God.

And if they don't see His greatness in our worship, then where will they see it? In TV, movies, the internet. God help us to keep your greatness at the center of what we do when we gather together. This is the beauty, because when it is, not only does God desire and deserve our worship, but God draws us to Himself in worship.

We really don't have time to turn to this, but we're going to anyway. First Corinthians chapter 14. Turn to the left.

You've got to see this. You've got to see this. First Corinthians chapter 14, verse 24.

Turn there. And as you're turning there, one of the buzzwords in our day, and really over the last couple of decades, has been seeker-sensitive. Seeker-sensitive worship.

We have seeker-sensitive worship. Worship that, the desire here has been evangelistic, in this sense, good. There's been a concerted effort to say, how can we organize our worship to revolve around non-Christians, to attract non-Christians to the church? So we need to change our music, change our this or that, in order to bring as many non-Christians to the church as possible, in order to attract as many people as possible to the church.

And here's the deal. I'm for, I'm all for, attracting as many people as possible. who don't know Christ, to the church, more importantly, to Christ, no question.

But here's the conclusion we've come to. We're just not that good. I'm not that good of a communicator, and our music or our stuff that we do is not good enough to draw the masses into this particular place.

But the good news is, He is good enough. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Look at verse 24.

Get this picture. If an unbeliever, or someone who does not understand, comes in while everybody is prophesying, in other words, proclaiming the word of God, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner, and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, God is really among you.

Isn't that a great picture? Yes. May that be the case. May people see, when they gather, when they see a gathering of the church at Brook Hills, when they see a people who are so enthralled with the greatness of God, that they will.

God is good. His greatness evokes this kind of response. We need not dilute worship in order to attract people in.

We need to exalt God, and people walk away, praise God, saying, what a great sermon, what a great music. May people walk away from these kind of gatherings saying, what a great God. God is among that people.

That's what we long for, we're praying for. 1 Corinthians chapter 14, God, make it a reality. God, humble us.

God, help us to realize the gravity of what we do when we gather together to worship you in all of your grandeur and splendor and glory. The flow, byproduct from humility is honesty. Honesty, that next non-negotiable, God requires that we worship him in spirit and in truth.

This is John chapter 4, we're not going to have time to turn there. In fact, turn with me to Isaiah chapter 1, and while you're turning there, I'll give you an overview of John chapter 4. These are the exact words, God requires we worship him in spirit and truth, that Jesus uses in a conversation that he has with the Samaritan woman at the well. Many of you are familiar with that story.

This is a woman who's been through a lot in her life, and who has a lot that she tries to cover up before Christ. And Christ brings it out in the open. Some of her sin, her struggles, her struggles with men, she's had numerous husbands.

The man she's living with at that point is not her husband. She's trying her best to cover up for that, and what she does is she starts getting into a conversation with Jesus about how you worship and where you worship most particularly. She is a Samaritan, said that, well, the place we should worship is Mount Gerizim.

The Jews said the place where you should worship is Jerusalem. And so she's doing exactly what we do. When confronted with the greatness of God for her, right in front of her, she's trying to get sidetracked with religious conversations to cover up for some of the realities that are being exposed in her heart.

When we stand before the God of Revelation chapter 19, we immediately want to hide the things in our lives that are not pure and holy. And we are tempted to avoid honesty in worship, and to begin to play games that revolve around externals. What Jesus does in John chapter 14 is He begins to expose how we misdefine worship according to external circumstances.

We misdefine worship according to external circumstances. Kind of like we talked about earlier, we often define worship as, well, that's what happens in this building with this style of music and this order of service and this number of people. And it's clear in the debates that have gone on over the last couple of decades in our church culture in worship have revolved around, what kind of style of music do you have? What kind of style of music does your church have? What type of million dollar building do you gather in? What about all of these external things? And Jesus is talking about with this woman how we have a tendency to do that, but it's not just Jesus in the New Testament.

Even when God prescribed specific forms of worship in the Old Testament, His people got caught up in defining their worship according to those external circumstances. Look at Isaiah chapter 1 verse 10. This was in a day when the people of God were told to take sacrifices to the temple to worship in specific prescribed ways.

And they were doing those things, but listen to what God said. Verse 10. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom.

Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. This is God speaking to His people. Some of the most stunning verses from God to His people.

He says, the multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me, says the Lord? I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals. I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings.

Your incense is detestable to me. New moon, Sabbaths, and convocations, I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, my soul hates.

They've become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you.

Even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean.

Hear those words. This is God talking about people participating in worship. And He's saying, stop bringing your meaningless offerings.

My soul hates them. They're a burden to me, detestable to me. So here's the reality we see in Isaiah.

It's what Jesus is referencing in John chapter 4. We can give ourselves to certain forms of worship, even good forms of worship. But if we define worship only by what is happening externally, then we are doing that which is detestable to God. Isaiah chapter 1 reminds us something that we cannot forget as a church.

God is more pleased with our purity than with our professionalism. Ladies and gentlemen, it does not matter how smooth things go, how flashy things are, how nice songs sound. It does not matter even if they give us chills down our back or make us feel good.

If there is bitterness in our hearts, if there is gossiping among one another, if we're looking at pornography on the internet, or if we're turning a deaf ear to the needs of the poor in the world, then our worship is detestable before our God. This is subtly dangerous because we can actually go week to week to week to week thinking we're having great worship services and yet be hiding some core things in our hearts for being disobedient to God. And if that's the case, then God is not pleased in our worship.

He's not honored or glorified in our worship. God is more pleased with purity than our performance. God is more pleased with our attitude than our appearance.

And God is more pleased with our substance than our style. The adversary will try to get our minds and our thoughts fixed on externals, what we like, what we prefer, what feels good to us. And before we know it, our eyes are off the greatness of God.

Don't miss it. We mystify in worship according to external circumstances. What Jesus does in John 4 is he redefines worship according to internal circumstances.

Two elements that Jesus talks about in John chapter 4 when he says God's worshippers must worship him in spirit and in truth. Two elements. First of all, the reality of his presence.

Jesus came in the book of John, two chapters before that conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4. In John chapter 2, he identified himself as the true temple of God. And what he was doing was he was diverting attention away from needing to go to this certain place in order to worship, because worship is not dependent on being in a certain place. Worship is dependent on responding to a certain person, Christ.

He was where the glory of God dwelled in the flesh, and this is what is necessary for worship. We need the presence of Christ, and it's a good thing, because if we needed all this stuff and our brothers and sisters around the world who don't have all this stuff would be struggling in their worship, but the reality is it's the place where they have the least stuff where they see the presence of Christ in the most real and the greatest and most powerful ways. We've seen that all over the world as we've traveled.

We know this. All we need for worship is the reality of his presence and, second element, the response of our hearts. God is spirit, and our worship must be in spirit at the core.

Worship is an inner experience of our spirits, our hearts. It's Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18 and 19. We sing and we make melody with our hearts.

Ephesians 5, 18 and 19 doesn't say sing and make melody with your mouth. It's not what we do with our mouth that makes what we do worship. It's not what we do with our music that makes what we do worship.

It's what happens in our hearts that makes what's going on worship. It's the inner, authentic, honest turning of our hearts toward God that makes worship worship, reality of his presence, response of our hearts. Do we realize that it is possible to come into this room, sing our songs, listen to a sermon, and leave and our hearts be distant from God? We've got to avoid that.

Every one of us in this room, when we gather together, we've got to lay our hearts bare before God and our sin and our struggles, and we don't need to fear doing that. This woman in John 4 learned she did not need to fear doing that because Jesus desires to cover over our sin. We don't need to hide and pretend like we don't have sin in our lives when we gather together in a room like this.

We can't fool God. He knows our thoughts. He knows our innermost being, and the beauty of it is we come before a holy God, and we are not afraid to have our sin exposed because Christ has died on a cross to cover over that sin.

He desires to cover over our sin, and not just our sin, but he desires to comfort us in sorrow. This is why we never say when we gather together for worship as the church of Rachel's, we never say, leave your cares and your burdens and your concerns outside, and let's come aside and worship. Absolutely not.

Bring them all in. All your cares and your burdens and concerns, bring them all in because the God who is worshiped in this room is big enough to handle every single one of them. We don't need to fear.

We certainly don't need to put on a pretentious face and say, well, everything is perfect in my life. Absolutely not. We have a God who says, I am glorified in giving comfort in your honest, authentic sorrow and the struggles that you are walking through.

So here we are. We are a people this morning in this room gathered together in the presence of the holy God of Revelation chapter 19 with the grace and mercy of Christ expressed in John chapter 4. So let's pause for a minute and let's express to God that we want our hearts to be turned to center completely on Him. Let's be honest before Him, confessing our sin, more importantly confessing our need for Him and our desire.

We want to see your glory. We are a people who are prone to wander, prone to strain. We want to see your glory.

We want to experience the fullness of your majestic presence. I want to invite you to bow your heads with me and I want us to pray that God would make us a people who are humble before Him and honest before Him. God, we see in your word a dangerous tendency that we know all too well in our own hearts that we are tempted to look at externals and miss internal realities.

So Father, we pray that in each of our hearts represented around this room, you would give us an awe of what it means to be gathered before you at this moment and you would give us an honesty before you with the sins that we have, the struggles that we have, the sorrow that we carry and we pray that you would turn us as a people to see your majestic presence and to long for the fullness of your glory to be displayed in our worship in a way that brings great honor to your name. That text, Psalms chapter 19, has a picture of that third non-negotiable. It's clarity.

Worship is a rhythm of revelation and response. What you see, and you might turn to Psalm chapter 19 there, what you see in that text is a picture of God revealing Himself in creation for six verses. The psalmist David talks about how creation shouts the glory of God and then you see His response.

The words of my mouth, the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. In the middle, what you see is a picture of God's revelation in His word. So here's the picture that we understand when we come to worship.

God reveals Himself clearly in two primary ways, in the world and in His word. God reveals Himself clearly in the world and with His word, but most importantly of those two in His word. What happens is in Psalm chapter 19 verse 7, David begins to describe the word of the Lord, and he describes its attributes over and over and over again, and he couples each of those attributes with its effects.

The word of the Lord is perfect, verse 7, reviving the soul, statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. Back and forth.

Here's what the word is, and here's what the word does. And God reveals Himself clearly in it. The word is perfect, trustworthy, right, good, pure, valuable, more precious than gold, than much pure gold, more precious than money is the word of God, more precious than food is the word of God.

And look at what it does. It makes us wise. People say today, people say, well, the word is outdated.

We need to find other things to fill our worship with apart from the word because it just doesn't apply to us as well in the 21st century. Realize the guy who's writing this psalm is familiar with what it means to have

his life threatened at every turn. He knows what it's like to have struggles in marriage, to have children rebel against him.

He knows what it's like to betray and to be betrayed. He knows what it's like to go through struggles and depression and loneliness and fear. The word is good.

And the word applies to all people of all time and is satisfying for all people of all time. And so what worship is, is God's revelation in His word primarily and our response to that. Now here's the danger.

If the word is not present in our worship, whether in how we preach and how we sing and what we pray, if the word is absent in our worship, then our response will be manufactured. If the word's not present, if God's revelation in His word is not present, then what are we responding to in worship? Good music? Good voices? Good speakers? Ultimately at that point we're responding to ourselves and the result is pleasing to self. And we may have tears in our eyes and chills down our backs, but if the word has not been central then worship has not occurred.

If God has not revealed Himself clearly, then what are we responding to? We're responding to whatever cheap and tawdry activities, to use Tozer's language, that we create. When the word is absent in our worship, our response is manufactured and the result is pleasing to self. However, when the word is apparent in our worship, when it's clear, our response is authentic.

It's genuine, authentic response to genuine, authentic revelation from God. And the beauty of it is, ladies and gentlemen, when He is revealed, we don't have to manufacture a thing because His revelation elicits glorious response from His people. When the word is apparent in our worship, our response is authentic and the result is pleasing to God.

And so we say in our singing, in our preaching, in our praying, in whatever we do, we want the word to be central in our worship because any response is response to His revelation. Fourth non-negotiable is community. We are not just individual worshipers in this room, we are a community of faith.

Go to the left in the Old Testament there and you'll come to Nehemiah chapter 12. While you're turning there, I want to set the stage for this passage of Scripture. What had happened is at the beginning of Nehemiah, we see the walls of Jerusalem, walls around Jerusalem had been burned, broken and burned down.

So the people of God were struggling. And so the story of Nehemiah is a story of them coming together, the people of God coming together and rebuilding these walls. And when they finished rebuilding the walls, what they did in Nehemiah chapter 12 verses 27 through 47, it's an incredible picture.

What they did is they climbed up on the walls and they marched around two processions going one to each side. They marched around the walls singing and dancing and making music to God. Then they end up together at the temple where they worship God.

Now we have to be careful whenever we look at Old Testament pictures of worship to make sure to factor in New Testament picture worship because Jesus turned a lot of these things upside down. We've talked about it already. We don't have to go to a certain place because Christ came as the representation of the fullness of the glory of God.

And now we are temples of the Holy Spirit. So there are differences, but I think we've got a lot of things to learn from a passage like Nehemiah chapter 12. Verse 43 really sums it up.

On that day, Nehemiah says, they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

Here's what I think among the many things that Nehemiah chapter 12 can teach us today, especially as a church that gathers together in this contemporary culture, there are two problems we need to make sure to avoid in contemporary worship. One is the individualistic attitude. Nehemiah chapter 12, it's amazing how many people are involved in this picture.

The whole community of faith is coming together. It's singers and non-singers. It's people who play this instrument and that instrument and this instrument.

It's men and women and children. It's everybody together. It's a picture of a community, not just a bunch of individuals, but a community gathered together for worship.

Sometimes you'll hear a worship leader in our contemporary church culture say something along the lines of, just focus on just you and God right now. Just kind of put a box around yourself and pretend like it's just you and God. And there's a place for that.

It's called the prayer closet. When we gather together, we don't need to put a box around ourselves and pretend like the person next to us is not there. Person next to us is there for a reason.

We've gathered together for a reason. We're not just individuals. When we gather together in this room, we're not just a bunch of individuals.

We're faith family. We're a community of faith. And this goes right in the face of the anonymity that many times people want when they come into a gathering like this.

They want to kind of be on their own. Don't let anybody talk to me. I don't want to really have to interact with everybody around me.

The reality is we're a people together when we gather for worship. Individualistic attitude. And second thing we need to avoid, probably what we need to avoid is a spectator approach.

This is so hard. It's a constant battle, especially in a room like this designed to center around what happens on a stage. There is a tendency to begin to look at what happens in this room.

Like we are all people who have tickets to a show and let's see what the pastor is going to do this morning. Or let's see what the musicians are going to do this morning. That's why it's important that we sing together and we pray together and sometimes gather around one another like we do and we celebrate communion together.

These things remind us that there's not a spectator in this room. The closest thing to a spectator would be 1 Corinthians chapter 14 would be somebody in this room who does not know Christ, who is watching a people who glorify Christ. But there's a people in this room glorifying Christ, not a preacher, not singers, a people glorifying Christ.

We're all active in this thing. So how do we guard against those problems? Well, we remember the point of community worship. When we gather together in this room, something happens that is unique.

It's different from what happens in personal worship. There's something unique that happens here. What is that? First of all, we encourage each other.

It's all over Nehemiah chapter 12 and it's in the New Testament. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 17 says, we sing and speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The New Testament commands us, Ephesians 5 verse 17, to sing to one another.

People think, well, I thought we were supposed to sing to God and ultimately, yes, we're to sing to the glory of God. But the New Testament commands us to actually sing to each other. It can be a little awkward, especially if you don't have the most talented voice, but we're supposed to look at each other and sing encouragement to one another.

That's the picture the New Testament gives us. You go to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 16, it talks about affirming each other in worship by crying out amen when we sing or in the proclamation of the word, crying out amen. I get a variety of emails or a little input from the info tab in the Worship Guide saying, I just wanted to jump up and shout out amen at this right here in the service or this right here in the sermon.

And here's the deal. Do it. Like, it's biblical.

Just do it. Like, well, I don't know what others say. Well, just follow God.

That's good. So worship, worship. Yell out amen.

It's okay. It's okay to do that. It's okay to affirm.

I'm not, like, looking for kudos in preaching. That's not what I'm going for. I'm looking for a people who realize we're participants in this thing, and we encourage, we affirm one another.

Amen to that? Is that good? Okay. So we encourage each other. We express our unity.

We express our unity. Here's the beauty. Nehemiah chapter 12 is this unified worship, but the unity goes back to Nehemiah chapter 8 when they gathered, it says in Nehemiah, as one man around the word of God.

So here's the picture. These people had unity around the word of God, and it's expressed, key word, that unity is expressed in their worship. What we have done in this individualistic attitude, spectator approach, is we, in contemporary worship, we switch these around, and we actually begin to look to worship, and especially forms of worship, music, as what unifies us.

I like gathering together with that church because their style of worship. And I'm unified with that, and we begin to unify around styles of worship, and the problem that erupts is we begin to have debates and even divisions and splits in the church because styles of worship are not accommodating everybody. But at this point, we've got to realize we're looking to worship to do what worship was never intended to do.

What unifies us in this room? Christ. We've been redeemed and saved and bought by the blood of Christ and brought into a family with him as sons and daughters and brothers and sisters. He unifies us, and we're looking to music to do what only Christ can do.

Our music doesn't unify us. Our music expresses the unity we already have in Christ. We express our unity in worship.

Third, we establish continuity with the church throughout history. Nehemiah chapter 12, verse 36, verse 45, verse 46, it's really interesting. Nehemiah talks about how what they did here in Nehemiah was linked to what they had done in the days of King David when they worshiped.

And what Nehemiah does is he shows us a picture of how worship in Nehemiah chapter 12 was tied with worship that was going on hundreds of years before that. And there's a great picture here. When we talk about contemporary worship, we need to remember that we have a responsibility.

First of all, we're in a long line of worshipers. We haven't come on the scene to reinvent worship in the 21st century. We're in a long line of worship.

And as a result, we need to honor our spiritual parents and spiritual grandparents and great-grandparents and beyond and how they worshiped, and maybe even more importantly, we need to make sure that we are worshiping in a way that passes down reverence for the greatness of God to the generations that come after us. In our efforts to bring in as many people and these tendencies to dilute or dumb down worship, we need to be very careful that we are not teaching generations that come after us that God is not worthy of absolute reverence and awe when we gather together. We need to make sure we're not teaching generations that come after the church at Brook Hills that worship is a spectator event where you come in and you listen to this or watch that.

We need to teach generations that come after us that we encounter the glory of God in worship and we're in awe of who He is. Finally, we engage together in spiritual battle. I wish I could camp out on this, on like all this, but this is not just songs in Nehemiah chapter 12.

This is a people declaring the victory of God in Nehemiah chapter 12. What He has done among them. It's the same picture in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 when Jehoshaphat sends out the people of God into battle and who's on the front lines? You remember? The choir is on the front lines singing the greatness of God, warriors singing the greatness of God.

The choir is doing that. It's New Testament. It's Paul and Silas in prison and what are they doing? They're singing.

Isn't that a great picture? The deep, low point, sitting in a prison, chained in this filthy, dirty prison. What if I were to tell you today, when you're at the lowest point, most depressing point, most discouraging point in your life, just sing some hymns. You'd be like, oh you preachers, simplistic ideas, you have no idea what it means to be in the low.

Well, here's what happens. When they sing hymns, earthquake erupts and the chains fall off. That's good.

That'll make you sing right there. The jailer and his whole family come to Christ and the next morning they are gladly escorted out of prison. Sing.

Do that. It works. Satan hates a church that sings in worship and glorifies Christ when they gather together.

We're engaged in spiritual battle. You see that if we give in to this individualistic attitude and spectator approach, we undercut every single one of those purposes. We don't encourage one another.

We isolate ourselves from one another. We disconnect from one another. We don't express our unity.

We delight in disunity if we're just spectators and individuals in this room. We don't establish continuity with the church throughout history. We miss the whole point and disconnect ourselves from the church throughout history.

And we certainly don't engage together in spiritual battle. I can't help but think that maybe one of the reasons for the weakness of the church and the culture that we live in today is due in part to the spectator approach and the individualistic attitude with which we have approached worship because we have missed out on what it means to be mighty in battle together in worship. So we're going to celebrate as a community of faith this morning.

Someone who is united together with this faith family and then what we're going to do is we're going to sing. We're going to sing to one another. We're going to sing a song that is directed to one another.

And so what I want to invite you to do is at some point in the song turn to the people next to you and make eye contact and it'll be weird, it'll be awkward, but it'll be the church. It'll be good. Verses 9 and 10.

Last non-negotiable is diversity. Diversity. Worship reflects the unity and diversity of heaven.

Ladies and gentlemen, all of creation is headed to this picture. Revelation 7, 9. After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count. From every nation, tribe, people, and language.

Standing before the throne and in front of the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands and they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne. And to the lamb.

Here are the invocations of Revelation chapter 7 for what happens when we gather together for worship. First, we need to get in on a global perspective of worship. Christ has paid the price for every tribe, people, and nation to sing His praises.

That undercuts all ethnocentric or racial pride that would mark any one of His sons or daughters. There's no room for such division. Whether white, black, Asian, Hispanic, or any nationality, any people group, together we come in worship.

Second, we need to get over the different styles of worship that divide the body of Christ. It's not that we'll all have the same style. People worship differently in Africa than they do in Asia, and people worship differently in parts of Birmingham than other parts of Birmingham.

It's not that we all will have the same style, but it's that we need to appreciate the diversity of style. If we limit that diversity, what are we saying to our brothers and sisters around the world who don't worship like we do? In debates or division over style of worship, we may run the risk of negating the very diversity Christ died on a cross to bring us. So get over the different styles that divide the body of Christ.

We need to get involved in the joy of continual worldwide worship. It is an amazing thought that what we do today as a local body of believers is a part of a global chorus of praise that is resounding to His glory,

and has been before we even got up this morning with believers gathering together in worship around this planet. That is an awesome thought.

This is bigger than a room in Birmingham, Alabama. We are a part of a universal body of Christ, this local body a part of a universal body of Christ. Get involved in the joy of continual worldwide worship, yet be cognizant of the fact that there are many in the world who still do not know of His greatness.

And so we need to get lost in the love God has for every nation, tribe, and people. Ladies and gentlemen, approximately 6,000 people groups still don't know the gospel. They haven't heard it.

Over 2,000 languages still don't even have the Bible. God help us in the American church not to have debates over what hymns or choruses or words we are going to sing when 2,000 languages still need the Bible. Get lost in the love God has for all peoples, and as a result we need to get on with the global mission to which God has called us.

This is the bottom line. Worship is the fuel of our mission. Worship drives us.

When we gather together in this room, we are a people who are captivated by the glory of God, and that glory compels us. We go from captivated in worship to compelled to witness. That glory compels us to penetrate Birmingham this week, proclaiming the glory of Christ.

Worship fuels our mission, and not just Birmingham, if we're convinced He's worthy of global worldwide worship, then we are sacrificing to say, how can I get to the nations with this gospel? Point blank, Almighty God does not mean for His worship to be confined to multimillion-dollar buildings filled with rich Americans. He intends for His glory to be made known among all the peoples of the earth, and He promises to bless the church that believes that. Worship is a fuel of our mission, and don't miss it, worship is the goal of our mission.

There is coming a day when we won't have a mission anymore, when we will finally stop talking about making disciples, because on that day there won't be more disciples to be made. We will be gathered around the throne with people from all of these nations and tribes and languages, and we will be singing His praises and enjoying His glory for all of eternity. That's the goal.

It's what we're living for. It's what we die for. We want the glory of God in Christ.

It is the desire, the driving desire of our lives, because we are gripped with the vision of Revelation chapter 7. We are gripped with the day when we will gather around and sing His praises, and we are living for that day. We are waiting for that day, and we are working by the strength God supplies. We are working for that day so that He gets maximum glory in a worldwide church.

So I invite you, I invite you to stand with me and to picture that day, to see that day, to wait for that day, and to say, God, we will work for that day when Your glory is made known.

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