

The Elements of Worship

by Subin John Mathew

The sermon emphasizes the importance of worship in the Christian life, highlighting its elements and the need for a balanced approach to worship.

Scripture: 1 John

Topics: "Worship And Adoration", "Prayer And Obedience"

Description

Subin John Mathew delves into the significance of worship as the highest activity for glorifying God, emphasizing the various expressions of worship and the importance of accepting God's authority over our lives. Worship involves absolute surrender, positioning our hearts for obedience, and fostering a conscious relationship with God through prayer. The elements of worship, including adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercessory prayer, and supplication, play vital roles in a believer's journey of repentance, renewal, and gratitude towards God.

Transcript

Introduction:

Worship is the highest activity of a person whose sole and ultimate aim is God's glory. Worship can be expressed in several ways. The word worship is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "weorthscipe" which means 'worthship' and then 'worship'. It means 'to ascribe worth'. Worship is the place where we accept His authority over our lives. It is the time when we humble ourselves before Him. Worship from the heart positions us for obedience, as it is absolute surrender. In worship, prayer is a generic form for all moments of human conscious relationship to as 'in the life of prayer'. Thus, worship denotes human relationship that consists of mental and verbal fellowship with God. The church gives a primacy to worship for it is through worship that the life and witness of the Church are maintained, and the community united and built up. The traditional divisions of prayers are into adoration or praise, thanksgiving, confession and petition or supplication that's relevant in spirituality as it's the relationship with God. This essay is a study over the elements of worship that gives the worshipper a fuller experience in the worship service.

Definitions of Worship

According to Daniel James, Worship is an indefeasibly corporate activity, the offering of the whole Church as the Body of Christ; and prayer. Worship is the indispensable perquisite of effective Christian witness and prayer is a means of 'grace' through which the Church's strength is renewed. It is primarily a corporate

act, individual prayer being supplementary to the commerce with God of the People of God.

Private prayer and Corporate Prayer:-

As we go through the Bible we see it's the prayers that have been said by the faith community or even by individuals which has become worship. Prayer is simply communication with God. Prayer can be silent; it can be said aloud so that others can agree. It can even be sung to God. Private prayer is personal prayer which can be practiced at any place by an individual, while corporate worship is God's appointed way by which believers in a particular place should honour Him. As we look into the scripture we see the highest form of corporate worship initiated was the Lord's Supper by Jesus. When it comes to prayer the acrostic "ACTS" makes it simpler to recollect. These are the four elements: A = Adoration, C = Confession, T = Thanksgiving, S = Supplication.

The elements of Worship are as follows.

Adoration

Adoration (Latin) is love given with deep affection. The term is derived from Latin, meaning to give homage or worship to someone or something. The content of adoration is self-giving love made possible by God having first so loved us (1 John). Like love among humans, our adoration of God expresses itself in gesture, word and silence. Adoration is affirmation of our love to God The Father, Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The trinity is glorified. In the language of Martin Buber, Worship occurs when God becomes a 'Thou' and is no longer an object of speculation or cognitive inquiry alone. In other words adoration is a prayer that consists of worshiping God as He is in Himself, where the qualities of God is to celebrate as it was revealed and experienced by humankind. Isaiah Ch 6 appears to include an intense visual experience of God, and many of those who have been best known for their constant adoration of God. It's the humble recognition of God as God; the giving unto the Lord of the glory due to His name. F. Heiler says "Adoration is the contemplative surrender to a supreme good." There is no petition in the prayer of adoration. It expresses the proper attitude of the creature in the presence of the Creator, the glad submission of the heart. This 'sacrifice of Praise' (Hebrews 13:15) is not meaning to flatter God but to enact our responsive self-surrender to Him. It leads the adoration in giving worship objectivity: God, and not our feelings important or centered.

Example 1. "Let us make a joyful noise to him with song of praise. For the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods." (Ps 95:2b, 3)

Example 2. 'My God, how wonderful Thou art.' A great hymn by Faber.

Confession

Christian life is a journey of repentance and renewal. For this very reason confession is an important element in a full act of worship, and its place as a Prayer of Approach, is early in the service followed by the opening act of praise. A personal definition would be realizing how unholy one is before the Holy One. In simple words confession is acknowledgement of sin. There are mainly three chief forms of confession viz., general, personal and sacramental confession.

General confession is a confession through liturgies used from Bible (eg. Ps. 51) through which a believing community acknowledges of its unrighteousness before God and the need of their forgiveness. Though it varies greatly, it includes an expression of sorrow and now under the influence of reformation

the tendency is to modify the tone and the length. This kind of general confession is what most of the worships capture.

Personal Confession is a private prayer made after self-examination.

Sacramental confession or confession before priest is a practice followed by Orthodox and Roman Catholics, which is optional in the Anglican and Protestants.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving plays a very important role in our worship. When we praise God, we worship Him for who He is, and praise Him for what He has done. Similarly, Thanking God is also vital in our relationship with God. When we thank God, it affirms our position and strengthens our stand in Him, and helps us to hold on to our blessing. Thanksgiving is an invitation for all the believers to offer thanks to God for their personal experience of His goodness. The thanksgiving prayer becomes an important element in the worship as it involves the relation of what a believer knows about God through his/her experience in the daily living.

Thanksgiving keeps us in a position of humility as we acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from Him. As we thank Him we are not taking His blessings for granted, but show our heart of gratitude towards Him. This will bring healing and wholeness to us in return.

Often lost within the package of prayer offered within worship is thanksgiving. It gets confused with adoration or simply ignored as prayers focus on intercession. It is only right and proper that we should thank God for all that He has done. For the beauty of this world which He created, for the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the promise of the Holy Spirit, His continuing creativity in the world today and for the Church - His body here on earth. Thanksgiving has been the chief theme in many a Psalms (9,103,106,107,116) and the songs in St. Luke Gospel, and almost every epistle of Paul. The ascending sequence is 'We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.' Thanksgiving for redemption should always be the climax and focal point of thanksgiving.

Intercessory

Intercessory prayer is prayer for others. An intercessor is one who takes the place of another or pleads another's case. One study Bible defines intercession as "holy, believing, persevering prayer whereby someone pleads with God on behalf of another or others who desperately need God's intervention." Intercession is when believers come into agreement with God's plan while standing in the gap through prayer. This releases God's purposes on the earth. Combining intimate worship and prophetic prayer with scripture is biblical and foundational in order to see revival come. As believers we have the authority to call things that are not into being as though they are. In Romans 4:17 we emphasize hearing God's heart and praying together as one in the Spirit.

The intercessory prayer may take several forms. It may be the traditional 'long' prayer or 'bidding' form of prayer. The traditional long prayer would consist of petitions for the Church, peace in the world, the officials who lead the nation, government, sick, and so on. The 'bidding' prayer may be a concluding prayer which petitions, asking God to fulfill our needs as thou knowest and lovest humankind.

Supplication:-

Supplication is essentially prayer of our own needs. The prayer of supplication, therefore, along with the Confession of Sins, supplies the subjective element which indeed is the complement of the objective in properly balanced worship.

Supplication may follow either confession and absolution or thanksgiving. It is also a prayer of submission of our self.

Conclusion

All these elements are very essential for a complete act of worship. The order however may vary as we may start by Adoration, then confession which was Isaiah's experience in his wonderful vision. Confession may lead to thanksgiving for God's mercy and forgiveness or to prayer for grace to conquer our sins. The intercessory and supplication is followed after thanksgiving. A worship becomes more meaningful and relevant to the congregation when all the elements are equally balanced with due importance. Let our worships be a journey that continue to lead us through the way of salvation.

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