

“What is worship?”

Worship is the proper response to the fullness of God. It is proper because worship is the right response to the revelation of God and His works. He reveals Himself as just and merciful, the sovereign Lord over all creation and history. He is also revealed as one God in three persons, with each person equal in majesty, glory, power, and honor. This makes Christian worship particularly Christocentric. Christ, the Son of God, offered the perfect worship to the Father on our behalf. We only come to the Father through Christ. We come by the power of the Spirit of Christ to the Father.

Worship is individual and corporate. Individual acts of worship are shown in the example of Isaiah. In the presence of the holy and just God, Isaiah takes personal responsibility for his sin: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” 6:5). Corporate acts of worship are shown in the Levitical system and the apostles’ gathering. For example, Moses summons all of Israel and reminds them that God’s grace was exhibited by their freedom from Egyptian slavery (Deut. 5:2-3, 6).

Worship is our response because God always takes the initiative. God graciously revealed himself to us before we knew him. God graciously draws us to himself by the power of the Spirit. He calls us to worship. He cleanses us. He feeds us by His Word and at the table. He sends us out. We respond to his initiative. He calls us and His people respond. He feeds His people, and His people receive it. He commissions His people, and they go to the nations. This makes worship a dialogue between God and His people.

I imagine many consider worship irrelevant or unimportant. But is worship only valid when it does something to you? Is it only relevant when it is artistically satisfying or emotionally stirring?

I have a former professor who often said, “Truth is not measured by time.” By this he means that the changing preferences of mankind are not the best judge of how to approach the eternal, unchanging God. This means that the failure is not a lack of relevance but a lack of our understanding the God who draws us into His presence to worship. When our chief end is to glorify and to enjoy Him forever, then worship is the proper, joyful response of the people of God.

Judson Marvel

Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Sierra Vista, AZ