

“COME, LET US WORSHIP II.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

September 25, 2016, 10:30AM

Text for the Sermon: Isaiah 6:1-7

Prayer:

Introduction:

This morning is the second of three sermons on worship and why we worship and do what we do in our worship.

Isaiah 6 is one of the great texts in Scripture on worship and how we worship. The flow of the text sets a pattern that we use in our worship and I want to unpack that with you this morning.

Announcements:

Our text begins with an announcement, King Uzziah has died. Our worship begins with announcements that impact everyone, with news that matters to all who are present.

Our worship is connected to this real world, we are worshiping in the midst of real people with real concerns and needs, and we are worshiping in the midst of a church doing real ministry.

We are one connected body of many members and many gifts, growing together in love for God and each other.

Some pastors have a love/hate relationship with announcements, and view them as a necessary evil. I have not felt that way here. I have always felt that this is a spiritual family and there are some things that are important for the whole family to know and to either pray for or respond to.

The prayer concerns and announcements remind us that we are part of a family, that we are part of something bigger than just ourselves. There is ministry to be done, needs to be met, prayers to be offered, opportunities for spiritual growth and service. We weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. We also hear about what God is doing in our midst or through us out into the community and world. We are here to connect with God and each other, to be the body of Christ in worship and fellowship.

Call to Worship:

If the voice of God Himself, were to wake us up on a Sunday morning and call us to worship, how would we respond? I realize you are here this morning without that direct voice, but if you had that direct voice how would your being here be different?

The call to worship is that voice, a call to a divine/human encounter, a call to set aside all the distractions of the past week and of the morning and of what's ahead next week, to set aside worries and fears and trials and troubles. The call to worship is a call to direct our hearts and minds to the main thing, to make God the central priority of our time together, to give God His rightful place in our worship and in our life.

The call to worship is a reminder that the first and great commandment is to love and worship God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, a reminder to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The call to worship is a call to declare to the principalities and powers in heavenly places and to all authorities on earth our true allegiance.

The call to worship is a call to focus on God, not on the hymn tunes or the prayers or the preacher, those are just the pipes and wires God uses to meet us and bring His message to us and for us to connect with Him. It's all about Him.

The call to worship reminds us that we are created and redeemed for a much greater purpose than occupies much of our attention throughout the week. We are created by God and saved by Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit to love and trust, to follow, enjoy and glorify the holy God.

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

The whole earth is a display of His power and sovereignty, of His glory and majesty, of His wisdom and knowledge, of this truth and justice, of His mercy and grace. It's all cause for worship.

The call to worship doesn't end when the worship service ends. We live our entire lives in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.

You have all seen those commercials or trailers advertising a coming movie or TV show, short summaries to whet our appetite for the full length feature.

Our time in worship is a bit like a trailer, a concentrated time of worship that anticipates when we leave here and go out into the world of our daily lives which are lived before God as worship.

To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are living under the gaze of God. There is nowhere we can escape His penetrating gaze.

Christians who compartmentalize their life into religious and the nonreligious sections don't get it. All of life is religious and all of life is worship.

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

God's Greeting:

As we are called to worship, the first thing that happens is God responds, God acts, God comes to us. We always use a Scriptural greeting that conveys God's promise to be with us. The greeting says God identifies with us as His people whom He wishes to be with and bless. God calls us to worship and then God greets us.

Notice that moment in the text that announced God's presence, the foundations of the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. God is with us, He is here.

There are many greetings in Scripture, especially at the beginning of the letters.

II Peter 1:2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

When we say grace and peace be multiplied to you what are we saying? Its way more than you think. We have heard those words so often they don't even sink in anymore. These words are not just a casual greeting like we give to each other, "Hi, good to see you, how are you?"

First of all, it says that grace and peace are something you can have and you can experience. They are gifts from God, signs of His favor to those who love Him and belong to Him.

Also they are gifts that vary in our lives and can increase. In fact, we should seek an increase, that they be multiplied to us each time we gather to worship. God's grace and peace are infinite, there is always more that we need and can have. None of us have all we need; may they be multiplied to you every time we gather for worship.

But you do need to be in a posture of wanting to receive God's gifts and that posture is humility.

I Peter 5:5 Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Grace and peace also come as we increase in our knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. So we come each week to worship, to hear God’s Word preached, to hear the truth proclaimed and as we do grace and peace are multiplied to us. May they be yours in abundance.

Call to confession and prayer of confession:

This next element of worship is touchy to talk about. How do we talk about our sin in church? After all we got cleaned up and dressed up to be here. We have our smiles on, even if underneath we are hurting or struggling. We are all trying hard to be on our best behavior. We don’t want to be sinning in church and we don’t want people thinking of us as sinners.

But there is no way around it. We are all sinners and all of us sin. In fact, one of the defining marks of a Christian is a person who humbly and freely acknowledges he is a sinner. The Gospel of Jesus Christ says to us, “You are a great, desperate sinner; now come as the sinner you are, to the God who loves you and who forgives you when you confess and repent.”

When we come to our time of cooperate confession of sin we are acknowledging the truth about ourselves and agreeing with God that we have sinned and we need His forgiveness.

Isaiah realized he was in the presence of the holy God and His holy angels and he felt profoundly unworthy. Like Peter was moved to say to Jesus, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

We are in the presence of the holy God and as R.C. Sproul says our sin is an act of cosmic treason against the pure God, an act of supreme ingratitude toward the One who saved us and to whom we owe everything (*The Holiness of God*).

We are not in a posture to receive God’s Word and His blessings until we renounce our sin and our idolatry and our love of the world.

Psalm 66:18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

Why do we make public confession of sin? Why not just do this at home? Does this practice have a basis in Scripture? There are several corporate prayers of confession in Scripture, times when God’s people are together to humble themselves before God.

Solomon offered a prayer at the dedication of the temple and God responded, “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from

their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (II Chronicles 7:14).

Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah all include public confessions of sin in corporate worship. We can't be a true community of believers before God and each other if we can't confess our sin and receive God's forgiveness and grace, and each other's.

Our prayer of confession grounds us in the reality that we are not better than anyone else and it is only by grace that we are forgiven. Confession makes our worship more authentic, honest, real and joyful as we remember God doesn't treat us as we deserve.

"We all need it. The flippant Christian needs to be reminded each week. The sluggard needs to be exhorted each week. The weary one needs to be comforted each week. The doubting soul needs to be assured each week. The unrepentant heart needs to be confronted each week" (Jason Helopoulos). And the repentant need to hear God's grace.

And that leads us to the assurance of pardon.

Assurance of Pardon:

Isaiah humbly and honestly confessed his sin, called it what it was and then received God's assurance. The Gospel has acted out in his presence.

Isaiah 6:6-7 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

We need this weekly reminder of our dependence on the Gospel of Jesus and His assurance of pardoning grace.

Weekly confession of our great and many sins would bring us to despair if we didn't hear about God's faithfulness to His covenant promise and that He delights to forgive those who trust Jesus for their forgiveness.

What Gospel joy is ours when we hear week after week:

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

I John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess, if we call sin what God calls it, if we are honest, and humble ourselves and come clean, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Conclusion.

The announcements tells us we are connected to those we worship with. The call to worship gives why we are here its focus. The greeting tells us God is here with us. The time of confession reminds us God is holy and sin is serious. The assurance of pardon restores our joy and enables us to receive God's Word and blessings.

Every aspect of our order of worship reflects the character and nature of God. Every element is saturated in Scripture, and says something about God, about who He is and what He is like.

He is God, He is high and lifted up, He is holy, full of majesty, splendor and glory. He rules and reigns sovereign and supreme over all creation. He has made the atonement of our sins possible. He is Lord and Savior, worthy to be worshipped and bowed down to, worthy to be honored and praised and thanked and loved.

It should be evident to us by now that worship is really important to God. He has filled the Bible with worship, with every aspect of worship, with stories of people worshipping and people forgetting to worship.

We praise what we really like and what we love. It is only right that we praise God who has loved us with such a great love.

God seeks worshippers. He sent His Son to redeem people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation to worship Him.

So it is important that we think about worship, talk about it in our homes and among friends, that we study worship and how God wants us to worship. Let us not take it for granted. May God be glorified and we be edified.

Come, let us bow down and worship the one true holy and living God.