

Sermon, September 11, 2016 – Pentecost 17

## HEALING WORSHIP

### Worshiping in Spirit and Truth

Selected Verses



Dear Friends in Christ

Today and in the next few Sundays we are going to mediate on the theme of Worship. The Lutheran Worship!

We are going to discover, re-discover or be refreshed in the knowledge, promises and benefits of worship. Why we worship, and most importantly why we worship in the way we worship. The Lutheran worship!

But as we begin this series, we start by saying that worship as a whole and properly done, is primarily healing, worship does bring God's healing on us. Worship

heals us! It does bring healing to our spirits and I'll be bold to say even our bodies. Therefore, we invite you, we encourage you, to join us every Sunday, to explore together the healing elements of worship and how it works.

Today we should start by reminding us what worship is, where does it begin and how it is done.

What's worship? The word worship comes from the old English word "worth-ship," "to the One who is worth it" worth our "reverent honor and homage paid." That's what happens in worship, we do reverently honor and glorify God.

Now, as it happens the need or desire to worship is born in every person. It is not something that is taught or developed. It is created within us to do, doesn't matter where you are from. Every culture worships something or someone. Some worship statues or idols, while others worship money, a lifestyle, or even self. But we all worship somebody or something.

Now, in the book of Psalms we have an invitation to worship, and the reasons why, from Psalm 95:6-7a, hear these words: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! <sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

When on Sunday Morning the people gather in Church, they certainly gather to Worship God, however there is the confusion, as to where worship begins. Some say it starts with self, that we must worship God, which we do, but so that God would have mercy on us, so that God would move us, so that God will hear us. In other words, worship starts with us. However true worship starts not on the effort of the human being but in God's heart, in fact we can say that worship is the very heart of God. We worship because of who he is and in response to what he has done in our lives. He is the Worth-ship, the one who deserves our reverent honoring and glorifying and our praises.

Worship starts with God and what he does. This morning I would like to invite you to mediate on a story from the Gospel of John. It is the story of a man who was born blind. The first few verses of chapter 9 explain the story ([John 9:1-7](#)): "As he

passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” <sup>6</sup> Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.”

So, here is a blind man... now, what can a blind man can do? I'm sure he can do lots, no doubt but what he can't do is heal himself, in fact he can't even recognize Jesus passing by. It is Jesus that comes to him. And not only he comes to him but Jesus does something to open the blind man's eyes. It is Jesus who gives light to this man who once lived in total darkness, from birth. It is Jesus who heals this man from his sickness, from that which made him a despised man of society. Notice what the disciples ask: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” A blind person in Jesus time was not well seen, was considered a sinner, a bad person. But Jesus says, not really but what happens next inspires worship, Jesus says: “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

What we see in this text happening with the blind man happens with all of us as well. We have no ability to see God for we too are blind, blind in sins, in the misery of our lives, blind even by the idols we worship in each of our lives. We all worship, right? So yes, we are blinded to God and what he does for us, we can't recognize it let alone worship God for who He is.

So he opens our eyes, so he comes and heals us from that disease called sin. And he comes to where we are, there in the darkness of our lives, in the despised condition we find ourselves.

Now, let's fast forward in our story, John tells us at the end of the chapter these words ([John 9:35-38](#)): “Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe”, and he worshipped him.”

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out.” Now, who is they? The religious authority back then who though that the worship of God was a human act, and that unless people performed certain rituals they could not please God. These were the one who kicked out the blind man who now was able to see, out of the church so to speak. But now see what happens when Jesus heard how he was treated, he looked for him to show himself to the now-seen-man. “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” The now-seen-man, believed in him, and here is what he did, he worship Jesus!

As you see worship starts with God, starts with his actions, in what he does for us through his Son Jesus Christ.

And that's what we Lutherans do, we worship the One who saves, and we worship him in gratitude, in praise of what he has done for us already.

Now, how do we worship? In the Lutheran Church as you know, we use a liturgy. Now a liturgy is an order of the service, the order, or orders because we use different ones, we follow them when we gather.

I would like to show you this diagram to illustrate our Worship Services or liturgy. We will talk more about that that in the next few Sundays, so if you would stick with me for a while, I would appreciate it.

But for now, the word liturgy literally means “the work of the people”. The response of God’s people to what God does for us. And each part of the Service as we have it every Sunday or when God’s people gather, is still God’s work and yes it does include our response. In other words every worship service is a two-way-street that begins with God, God works in our midst and for each of us and we respond. In the next few Sundays we shall mediate on each one of those actions.

But today we must realize that our response, that our worship, needs to be as Jesus says needs to be done.

Let’s turn to another Gospel reading, ([John 4:23](#)), there Jesus teaches us how are we to worship: “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”

So how are we to worship? In spirit and truth! Now, what does worshipping in spirit and truth mean and how is it done? In spirit and truth is the condition in which we worship and from the heart. That’s what God desires and that’s the kind of worship he accepts.

The method of worship, whatever it is, and as you know some like it loud and boisterous, or emotional, or as solemn as possible, nothing of that matters if is not done in the right condition. But if we place so much importance in the form, rather than the One we worship, we miss the point altogether, and rather than bringing healing worship will actually impose on us an unnecessary guilt which will keep us in our sickness. No wonder many times we hear people say “I just don’t get anything from worship.” What makes them say that? the condition in which they worship.

But we can’t worship in spirit and truth if we haven’t experienced God’s forgiveness and restoration, if we haven’t been healed of our blindness, or if the light of Jesus hasn’t lighten our dark corners? We can’t worship on our own, for we are not able to offer God something of value. Nothing in and of ourselves reconnects us to Him. And so it’s in grace that God reaches out and gathers us into Jesus Christ and into a community to allow us to offer acceptable worship to Him. It is his forgiveness that restores us in a relationship with God. And that forgiveness needs to be constant for we constantly sin.

Worshipping in spirit and truth proves vital to authentic worship. We find the truth in God’s Word. In His truth we trust. And every part of our worship liturgy is filled with scriptures saying that tell us over, and over of God’s love, his work for us, assuring us of his mighty hands, his wisdoms and what the eternity he offers us, all through His Son Jesus Christ.

To worship God in truth means worshipping God not as we think Him to be, not as we hope Him to be, not as we’d like Him to be, but as He is. When people see God as He is, worship happens, true worship happens, in spirit. Something we don’t have

words to worship God, to thank him for his grace and love, but with groaning and amen, we do pray him.

As Oswald Chambers once said, "When I worship, I would rather my heart be without words than my words be without heart." In other words, if our knowledge of God is superficial, our worship will be superficial. God is not moved or impressed with our worship until our hearts are moved and impressed by Him.

Genuine worship overflows from a mind renewed by the truth of God.

So here we are once again, and for some, perhaps the first or second time in long time. But we are glad you are here today, for together we are gathered by God through the power of His Spirit. We have received the forgiveness of our sins, and his word, and in a few minutes his body and Blood, what gifts he provides to you his dearly beloved children.

Now, think about it, when was the last time you genuinely worshipped God? Was it in thanksgiving for what he has done for you through His Son Jesus? Or was it because you wanted something from God? Today we are reassured that God has blessed us greatly through His Son, now we worship him, in spirit and in truth.

[Philippians 2:10-11](#): "So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."