

The Joy of Fearing God

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[0 : 00] When I was a child, many years ago, prior to the Internet, can you imagine that? There was no Internet back then and no technology that we have today, no video games or how they're presented today.

The kids of the neighborhood, we would go outside, actually, and play games together. And one of the games we used to play was called, What Time Is It, Mr. Fox?

Anybody play that game? Mark Hakeens. Oh, Carol, of course. There's different versions, people would call it. What time is it? Mr. Wolf, whatever.

There was a predator involved. And the way the game was played was somebody was chosen to be Mr. Fox or Mrs. Fox, whatever.

And that person would go off a distance, whatever they decided. There's no set distance. And his back would be to the other people.

[1 : 03] And the other kids would line up in a line. And then they would call out, What time is it, Mr. Fox? And Mr. Fox would give them a time between 1 and 12.

And it said, 4 o'clock. Well, the kids would take four steps forward. And they would repeat that process. What time is it, Mr. Fox?

6 o'clock, six steps forward. And each time, the kids are trying to get closer and closer. Well, there comes a point when Mr. Fox changes what he says.

And they say, What time is it, Mr. Fox? And he says, Dinner time! And he turns around and runs after everybody and tries to catch somebody. And whoever he catches has to be Mr. Fox.

And that would be far too violent for the kids today. But too traumatic. But we survived, maybe, depending on what you think of me.

[2 : 01] But at any rate, time was an important factor in that game. And response to time was an important factor in that game as well.

So, the topic we're considering this morning, both the matter of time and response to the time, are very important as well. And with the screen, the verse on the screen, you'll see what I'm talking about.

We see that the importance of that mentioned in John 4.23. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. So, the proper response that flows from this joy of fearing God is to worship God.

And to worship God now. Now is the time. Not to run from Mr. Fox. But now is the time to worship God for who He is.

[3 : 05] And all those that really do have a genuine fear of God or reverential awe of God, indeed, they will worship Him. And they will worship Him now.

So, that's what we're talking about this morning. We're talking about worship. The word worship carries the idea of recognizing worth and worthiness of someone and affirming that worthiness with the appropriate response or treatment that is due the worthy individual.

Jerry Bridges provides a definition from Stephen Charnock's book where he writes, Worship is nothing else but a rendering to God the honor that is due Him.

He provides another quote from A.W. Tozer. And Tozer writes that God wants to cultivate within us the adoration and admiration of which He is worthy.

He wants us to be astonished at the inconceivable elevation and magnitude and splendor of Almighty God.

[4 : 18] Interesting as they put all these definitions together, the words that they use in trying to communicate the worthiness, something of the character of God and the worthiness of God to

receive worship.

Another one, John Piper, who is known for his building up of words, gives attention to both the inner essence of worship and the outward expression of it.

And he writes, The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things.

And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.

And then one more, from John MacArthur, true worship is any expression of obedience, praise, honor, adoration, and gratitude offered to the true God by a regenerate soul who knows the truth about God and loves Him.

[5 : 45] And just wonderful expressions and explanations, introduction to this whole matter of worship. Of course, as we move through this lesson, I'm hoping, and in my prayer, that I would be able to share truth from God's word about God and the wonders that He has done, that the Spirit of God uses in our hearts and brings us to that renewed awareness and freshness within our hearts and souls that move us even to the morning service to new expressions of adoration for God and who He is and what He has done.

For He is the one that's truly to be worshipped, and He is to be worshipped exclusively. Secondly, Exodus 23 says, You shall have no other gods before Me.

Only God is worthy to be worshipped. He, again, is to be valued, treasured, prized, enjoyed above all created things, whether in heaven or on earth.

And He is the only one that's worthy of praise and honor and adoration and gratitude and obedience and worship. So why is that the case?

Let me share a few thoughts on that. And really, it's these thoughts that already have been shared in the past and that I want to share now that really lay the foundation for our worship and the degree of exaltation and worship that we give to God if a person doesn't really apprehend and perceive and really seize these truths about the very nature of God and the works that He has done, then He will not really be able to enjoy the fear of God and worshiping God.

[7 : 50] He is to be worshipped because, again, of who He is and what He has done. And really, He has provided, graciously provided us and preserved for us the truth that we need to know Him and the wonders that He has done in His Word.

All Scripture is given by God. It's breathed out by God. And we can give thanks that He's provided that truth for us. Now, I certainly can't go through a whole presentation of the doctrine of God in this time that we have.

But again, I do want to add something to what Jeremy and I have shared in the last four weeks or so on the character of God and expand on it a little bit more in regard to this whole matter of worship.

So why is He to be worshipped exclusively? Because, first of all, He's the only God. Jesus made this declaration to the Father in His prayer to the Father in John 17.3.

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. And then back to Isaiah 46.8.

[9 : 06] Here again, we see Isaiah doing that ministry of His so faithfully, bringing back to the minds of the people what they needed to hear and understand in order to move through their captivity.

He says, remember this and stand firm. See how those two things go together. Our ability to stand firm as we move through our days is directly related to what's in our minds, what we're meditating on.

So Isaiah is helping the people. Remember this and stand firm. Recall it to mind. There is an activity that we actually have to do. We can give thanks that we have the Spirit of God within us that is going to do that, but we too are involved in this whole exercise of what is my meditation going to be?

There might be negative things that come to my mind initially, but what am I going to do with those? Am I going to continue to entertain those thoughts and therefore spiral downward to discouragement or despair?

Or am I going to recall to mind what is true? So remember this and stand firm. Recall it to mind, you transgressors.

[10:21] Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me. So God has graciously declared this much-needed truth to the people.

Because remember, they were in a land where their God was not worshipped as the one true only God. We would have to say that about the land in which we live today.

Less and less do you hear of the exaltation of God in the lives of people, whether it's individually, even corporately in churches throughout the country or certainly within our political system and our culture overall.

So we need this truth. We need to recall it to mind. And as the only God, He is the only one again that's worthy to be worshipped. But He also is the creator of heaven and earth and everything in it. Of course, we see this recorded in Genesis 1 and 2, the specific record of how in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And that would be a good study really for you to do on your own.

[11:34] Look up those passages in the scriptures where the writer emphasizes or focuses on or calls to the minds of the readers the fact that God is the creator of heaven and earth.

What was going on at that time in their lives that they needed this truth? It would be helpful for us to draw from something like that so that we can recognize, okay, well, I go through situations like that, so how does the truth that God is the creator of heaven and earth move me through that situation in such a way that I'm not overcome by the circumstances, the false teaching or whatever is out there?

But I'm making that my meditation. So we need that truth to be established in our minds so that, again, we can respond appropriately to God, the creator of all things, and fear him and worship him because he is worthy of that worship as creator of heaven and earth and all things in them.

Isaiah 44, 24 says, Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb, I am the Lord who made all things, who alone stretched out the heaven, who spread out the earth by myself. Needed no help from the gods that they were exposed to there in their land of captivity, the stars that were worshipped, so on and so forth. Now, God created it.

[13:05] He spread out everything there by himself. Colossians 1, 15 through 17, the people Paul was writing to needed this reminder as well because that's what was being called into question.

The deity of Jesus Christ himself. He wrote, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. In him all things hold together on and on and on. He's going to help these people understand.

Listen, what you've been presented and what you're seeing from those who are not followers and worshippers of Jesus Christ, they are not true worshippers of God.

Let me communicate to you and help you understand the reality of Jesus Christ. Don't be sucked in by the false teachings that you're hearing.

[14:09] God is to be worshipped because he's the creator of all things in heaven and earth. Go outside, look at the stars at night and be reminded. God is so much bigger than what I'm facing today.

Certainly he is well able to help me in my struggles, my problems. If he was able to do that all by himself, certainly he can help me in my challenges.

Well, he's to be worshipped because only he in all his attributes is the perfect infinite fullness of all that is good and holy.

Moses believed this and worshipped God and he declared his worth in his song before the people and this is what he spoke in song, saying to them, Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak.

Let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, like showers upon the herb.

[15:19] You see, the refreshment, he's understanding something about the reality of the truth of God and who God is. Listen, I'm going to declare to you something that's going to bring such refreshment to your soul that you're going to relish in it.

And so he continues on, verse 3, For I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God. The rocks, beginning to introduce and remind them of the truths about God.

The rock, His work is perfect for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He. And then in Psalm 89, verses 5 and following, Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord.

And here we go. Your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord?

A God greatly to be feared in the counsel of the holy ones and awesome above all who are around Him. O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty as you are.

[16:36] O Lord, with your faithfulness all around you, you have a mighty arm. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. Steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

so we worship Him because only in Him are all the attributes that are infinite and perfect and all that is good and holy.

Let that be our meditation on God and about God as we move through our day. It needs to be worshipped fourthly, because only He can righteously satisfy the longings in the human heart in the way that brings everlasting satisfaction, happiness, peace, and joy.

Only He can provide all that the soul of man longs for. Psalm 1611, you make known to me the path of life.

In your presence, there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. You know, you hear the soul of David here.

[17:52] You know, he's just trying to express what indeed he has found to be true of God in his own soul. Psalm 107.9, where he satisfies the longing soul, the hungry soul he fills with good things, and indeed, that's what is true of the soul of every individual.

They long for that satisfaction, that peace, that rest as we move through our days, which we were created to enjoy, but really to be enjoyed in God, not apart from God.

And so, the only way that it can once again be restored and enjoyed is being connected with God again, and knowing the truth of God. In John 4, 13-14, Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well, Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal light. What a wonderful message that he brought to this woman.

You are familiar with the story and her life and how difficult and challenging it was and the mess that she had made of her life trying to satisfy her soul in things that really weren't meant to bring satisfaction to the soul above God.

[19:34] Her thirst just was not satisfied in the result. But thankfully, Jesus came to her and she met Jesus and she heard Jesus and she believed in Jesus and what happened?

Her thirst was satisfied. Her soul was finally satisfied with what she had been looking for and the result was that she worshipped Jesus.

You see, the change that took place within her heart, the realization of the truth of this individual standing before her, the Son of God, believing in Him and experiencing this satisfaction of soul. She couldn't keep it within herself. What was inside, this new satisfaction, had to find expression outwardly. And so she ran away into the town and told others, listen, I've got something to tell you of this individual who told me all things about myself.

well, she declared His worth to the people of the city and many others came to Him as well and believed and found satisfaction of their souls and said, listen, we don't believe anymore just because you told us this.

[20:54] We believe because we heard Him and the message that He brought. They became worshippers expressing their adoration, declaring His worth to one another, worshipping God.

Well, let's move on. Worship Him because of what He has done. All throughout the Scriptures we read of His messengers reminding the people of the great works that God has done.

With His truth about God, they're reminded again of His worthiness to be worshipped and honored and praised and obeyed in whatever circumstances they were encountering.

The various works He had done reveal something about Him and His character and His purpose and the remembrance of the wondrous works really moves the people to meditate upon Him to have a right understanding of who He is and then express that in praise and thanksgiving to God.

That would be another good study for you to do. Look up those passages and see why they're encouraged to remember the works of God. What were they experiencing that time in their life, their

circumstances that the writers are calling upon them?

[22 : 13] Now wait a minute. Remember the works of God. Remember what God has done. I mean, they're doing that in order to affect how they're living in their present circumstances. And the writers believing that, listen, if you remember the works that God has done, you'll be able to move through these situations that you're in right now and not be controlled by them in such a way that you would be disheartened.

Psalms 105, 1 through 6, David says, Oh, give thanks to the Lord. Call upon His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him. Sing praises to Him.

Tell of all His wondrous works. Glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord in His strength. Seek His presence continually.

Remember the wondrous works that He has done, His miracles, His judgments that He uttered. Oh, offspring of Abraham, wouldn't we be the offspring of Abraham? His servant, children of Jacob, His chosen ones.

That message is to us. Remember the works that God has done. Call them to mind. Meditate on them. Sing about them. Share them with one another.

[23 : 29] And David went up to Goliath. He remembered the works of God. The works that God had done on His behalf. He declared it to King Saul. Listen, I don't need this cumbersome armor.

He went forward and defeated that great foe, Goliath. 1 Samuel 17, 37. Then David said, The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistines.

So he was able to move forward in confidence against this great giant of a problem that was facing him because he was recalling the wonders that God had done for him in the past and had confidence not in himself.

He still had to go out and face that lion or that giant, but his confidence ultimately was in God. Of course, we who are the redeemed of God by faith in Jesus Christ can also fix our minds on the great work that God had done through His Son, Jesus Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross, so it was there on that cross that God put on full display His love for us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We contemplate the great work that God had done on our behalf, the work that we were incapable of doing. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God.

[25 : 18] Thereby be justified by faith through Jesus Christ and have peace with God, satisfaction of the soul that we needed. We could have our sins forgiven.

We could be made fit for living in the presence of God. All that we needed accomplished through the great works of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, indeed.

Well, how is this worship to be offered? Well, we need to get this right as well. There are many who offer worship to God and their worship is unacceptable.

Lots of false worship that we can see in the Scriptures. He's not to be worshipped through or alongside any false gods. In Zephaniah 1, 4-6, when's the last time you read something from Zephaniah?

Yeah. And here it is. I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will cut off from this place a remnant of Baal in the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, those who bow down on the roofs of the hosts of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear to Milcom.

[26 : 34] It wasn't supposed to be this combination. I want to make sure all the bases are covered here. I'll just keep on worshipping the Lord, but let me just add this as a precaution.

A safety valve. Just in case something comes up that God over here can't accomplish, this one over here might be able to accomplish it. No, that wasn't the way it's supposed to be.

Those who have turned back from following the Lord, who do not seek the Lord or inquire of Him, remember Exodus 23, you shall have no other gods before me.

Matthew 6, 24, no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and man or money or anything else. We need to ask ourselves, is there anything in your life that you ascribe greater worth to than God?

[27 : 36] Indeed, if there is, it will show up in how committed you are in your expression of love and obedience to God. Especially when you hold in higher regard that which is not to be worshipped.

You're concerned that that which you love with a greater love than God might be taken away or prevented. You being prevented from obtaining it.

I'll love and worship God as long as I can have this. If I don't have this, then all of life begins to fall apart. Hold God in the highest regard.

Love Him above all things. Worship Him as the true God. but also we're not to worship with vain, insincere, hypocritical hearts.

This again was true of the Pharisees and the scribes. They wanted to establish their own way of righteousness, their own way of finding acceptance with God, their own way of living life.

[28 : 40] And they criticized Jesus' disciples for breaking their traditions in Matthew 15.8. Jesus said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. What they thought was acceptable, worship wasn't, because their hearts weren't really in it.

Their hearts were far from the Lord. Their focus truly was on themselves, their own ways, their love, their devotion and honor was for themselves and not Christ.

We'll live life this way. That's not the way it's to happen. Over against this false worship, Jesus identifies really what is true worship.

And this is what we want to get right. And really, it brings us full circle to the verse that was on the screen prior to class. John 4.23, But the hour is coming and is now here.

[29 : 45] The hour was there then, it's here now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

So we worship Him in truth. Our worship must be based on truth. And again, God has provided the truth that we need to know just how magnificent He is and how worthy He is of worship, the wonders that He has done.

all Scripture, again, is given by God, is breathed out by God. And in those Scriptures that are breathed out, we can find what is true about Himself.

And then by the work of His Holy Spirit through God's Word, we're made alive and we can see and believe the truth that God has revealed to us and for us.

Truth about Himself, again, and with new hearts, we can worship God in spirit. We have a new recognition of God's majesty and His worthiness to be praised.

[30 : 54] Again, we've been exposed to the truth initially through the gospel presentation. The Spirit of God has used us and awakened us to the truth so that we have come to Him in true faith and repentance and believed.

There's a newness that has taken place within our hearts. A new love for God that wasn't there before. A new longing for His exaltation, His honor, and His glory through my life.

Just like the woman at the well. After meeting Jesus, hearing Him, believing Him, her life was not the same. She went forward with a new inner joy in her heart that was manifested outwardly to the people.

And they saw something very different with her. Something wonders has been done in the life of this person. She was worshiping in spirit and in truth.

Psalms 63, 1-3, O God, You are my God. Earnestly I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. My flesh faints for You. As in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

[32 : 08] So I've looked upon You in the sanctuary, beholding Your power and glory. Because Your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You. I mean, He's trying to express the inner change that's taken place in His life.

The soul satisfaction that He has in knowing God. His soul was just thirsting for Him. that kind of inner spirit longing for God's exaltation will be manifested through outward worship.

There are outward expressions of our adoration of Him and how we speak and live and how we move through our day. Psalm 86, 11-13, those aren't verses on the screen for you, but there's ones that I've used numerous times in the past.

Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth. Give me that undivided heart that I might fear Your name. I'll praise You, O Lord, my God, with all my heart. I'll glorify Your name forever.

Why? For great is Your love for me. You've delivered me from the depths of the grave. I mean, that's a fullness of joy and satisfaction in God, in the heart of the person who is truly worshiping God in spirit.

[33 : 27] spirit. Well, Jerry Bridges identifies worship as a way of life. We worship in truth and spirit and just identifying a little bit more of what that looks like with an understanding of the truth of God with longings in our hearts to glorify God.

We worship Him. Those outward expressions of our adoration of Him show up in how we think, how we speak, how we live, how we move through our day.

Psalm 145, 1 and 2, I will extol You, my God and King, and bless Your name forever and ever.

Every day I will bless You and praise Your name forever and ever.

And Paul instructed the believers in Rome that the reasonable spiritual act of worship for them is to present their bodies, their whole beings, as living sacrifices to God.

I appeal to you, brothers, therefore brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual worship.

[34 : 36] He just finished writing to them about the wonders of God, the mercies of God to them in the previous chapters, and what would be the right response to all that they had heard and read from the Apostle Paul.

Well, the appropriate response would be to worship Him, and to worship Him by yielding their lives to Him as living sacrifice.

That would be their most reasonable spiritual act of worship as Jesus yielded Himself up to the Father. Let us yield ourselves, our bodies, our whole beings unto Him as an act of reasonable spiritual worship to Him.

well, we worship, the worship is seen and certainly in what we say, praise, thanksgiving, rejoicing to God as we move through our day, telling of His wondrous works to people, the gospel of Jesus Christ, not drawing back, not being afraid of their terror, what's that before us, speaking the truth in love, gracious speech, and all that we do, we do all for the glory of God and our family roles and how we do our work, how we serve in the body of Christ.

So many ways in our private lives as we move through the week that we're worshiping God and as we yield ourselves as living sacrifices unto Him, but we also do that in our corporate church life.

[36 : 08] We certainly worship in our private lives throughout the week, but then we, well, here we are. We've come together. As people who have transformed hearts, who want to express some adoration and praise to the God who's done such wondrous work on our behalf.

A quote from Jerry Bridges, the vitality and genuineness of corporate worship is to a large degree dependent upon the vitality of our individual private worship.

So what we're going to do here this morning after Sunday school is just an expression of what we've been doing throughout the week. Man, can you imagine, well, you won't have to imagine because we're going to be doing it, what that's like when you get individuals who are doing that through week come together and do that together where we as a body can present to God and exalt Him together as one body.

How do we do this? In our giving, our praying, our reading of God's Word, our singing, our pastor's proclamation of God's Word, in our reception to what is proclaimed in the ordinances of baptism, the Lord's Supper, in all these ways we are exalting and worshiping God.

Well, you want to know the joy of fearing God? Worship Him. The hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

[38 : 08] Are you that true worshiper this morning? I trust that you are. If not, the hour is here. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, this morning we give thanks. We couldn't be here with transformed hearts as a result of our own works of righteousness.

There is filthy rags before you. We're only here as of the wondrous, because of the wondrous work that you have done through Jesus Christ, the work of your Spirit and your Word.

And so we give thanks to you and praise your name and would ask that that's really you would be honored through that sacrifice of praise that we can present to you in the next service.

In Jesus' name, Amen.