

Worthy Worship

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Date: 15 September 2024

Preacher: Greg Holladay

[0 : 00] Before Pastor Greg comes, we're going to read Psalm 96. He's going to preach on worship, as you can see by the handout, but he left it open to me to what passage to read, so Psalm 96, a great passage.

I probably should have read it before we sang as it talks about singing, but let's hear this word of God together, and may it help to direct our worship.

Sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name, proclaim his salvation day after day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.

He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him.

[1 : 09] Strength and glory are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O family of nations. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns. The world is firmly established. It cannot be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.

Let the heavens rejoice. Let the earth be glad. Let the sea resound and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant and everything in them.

Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy. They will sing before the Lord. For he comes. He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.

[2 : 11] Let's listen closely as God's word is preached. It is good to be with you once again this evening and to worship with you.

And I bring greetings from the church in Warsaw this evening. We just heard from Psalm 96 of the one who is worthy of worship.

And we sang of the one who is worthy of worship. But what kind of worship is worthy of the one who is worthy of worship?

What kind of worship does God want from his people? That's the question that we want to address this evening. What kind of worship does God want from his people?

Turn, if you would, to the Old Testament book of Ezra. And we're going to be looking at chapter 3. Let me give you just a little bit of background here to set the scene.

[3 : 18] Get us a little bit of our historical bearing here. Israel had been in captivity in Babylon for nearly 70 years when King Cyrus, the Persia, defeated the Babylonians and granted permission to the exiled Jews to return to the promised land and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

That permission was granted in chapter 1 of Ezra. People were invited to go and rebuild the temple. And about 50,000 Jews returned in the first group that returned to the promised land, chapter 2.

So what do the people do once they have returned to the land? When they arrive there, what do they do? That brings us to chapter 3 of Ezra. And we're going to look at verses 1 through 6, our text this evening.

Follow along as I read. Ezra chapter 3, beginning in verse 1. When the seventh month came and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem.

Then arose Jeshua the son of Josedach with his fellow priests and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God.

[4 : 51] They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands. And they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.

And they kept the feast of booze, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule as each day required. And after that, the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the Lord.

From the first day of the seventh month, they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

Soon after their arrival in the promised land, the people of God worshipped Him. So what can we learn from these exiles that have returned to the promised land?

What can we learn from them about the way that God's people are to worship? I want us to consider six characteristics of worthy worship tonight.

[5 : 57] The kind of worship that God desires from His people. Number one, worship by God's people is to be corporate. It is to be corporate.

Now, let me note at the outset that corporate worship is not the only worship that is to take place. Certainly there is family worship that is important.

And there is private, individual worship that is important. Don Carson writes, We cannot imagine that the church gathers for worship on Sunday morning if by this we mean that we then engage in something that has not been engaging in the rest of the week.

And so while we're not dismissing the necessity and the importance of individual worship, private worship, family worship, it is corporate worship that is the focus of our study this evening.

The importance and necessity of corporate worship from God's people. And that's what we find here in Ezra. Look at verse 1. When the seventh month came and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem.

[7 : 11] Here we learn that this remnant, this faithful remnant of Israelites gathered to worship. Upon their arrival in the promised land, the various people have returned to their towns, they've returned to their villages, their places of inheritance.

They have now come together, they've scattered throughout those villages around Jerusalem. And here we find that they come together as chapter 3 begins.

So it says in verse 1, The children of Israel were in their towns. They've come back, they've scattered into the towns and villages, but not for long. Because it was not soon after their arrival, verse 1 says that the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem.

They came from all of their villages, all of their surrounding towns together to worship corporately. One geographical location.

They came to Jerusalem, the place where the temple once stood, the place that was designated by God as the place of worship, that place where the men three times a year had to go to meet there to worship and a designated place for those designated feasts.

[8 : 32] The feast of Passover in the spring, the feast of weeks or harvest, Pentecost in the summer, the feast of tabernacles or booths in gathering in the fall.

And that's the one that we find here in Ezra chapter 3, verse 4. The feast of booths. So they have come together as God's people to worship. Now I'm sure that they had many other things they could be doing.

And things that they need to do. They've just arrived back in the promised land. They've gone to their family homes, their villages, the towns where their inheritance was prior to being taken into captivity.

They've hardly settled. And so they have lots of work to do to rebuild their towns, to rebuild their homes. And so they might easily have made excuses and said, well, you know, maybe I'll go next year.

But I've got too much to do this year. I'll just maintain family and individual worship in the meantime, and I'll come next year. That's not what they did.

[9 : 32] Soon after their arrival, they dropped what they were doing to go to Jerusalem to worship God together as His covenant people. They considered worship important, and they considered corporate worship important.

It's not to deny that you can worship God alone. We ought to. And there are times that we must. But as we have opportunity, we are to gather together as God's people in corporate worship.

That's what God's covenant people did throughout the Old Testament. First in the wilderness tabernacle, and then in the temple in Jerusalem. That's what God's covenant people did in the New Testament.

In the earliest days of the New Testament church, in addition to gathering together in homes to worship, it says they gathered in the temple together. Acts 2.46.

Day by day, attending the temple together. And we are to gather together for worship, as we are this evening. You're familiar with Hebrews 10.25 that exhorts us not to neglect being together, meeting together.

[10:48] God wants His people to meet together corporately in worship. Second, we learned that worship by God's people is to be unified.

Unified. Now that may sound like the same thing that we just talked about in point one, but there is more to united worship than simply gathering in the same location, the same geographical space. We must be united in heart and in spirit, in mind. We must have a spiritual oneness that we share, a sharing of one spirit, not just one space.

You can fill a place full of people, even a place that is designated as a place of worship and not have united worship. You may not have any worship in that place at all.

People may be gathering in a church building, but it may be for a bingo tournament or a Cub Scout meeting. They're together, but not united together in worship.

[11:52] Verse 1 continues here, The people gathered together as one man. They not only gathered geographically, but they were united together in their faith, their trust in God.

Their hearts were joined together to worship God. They had one purpose. Unity in worship must not only be spatial, it must be spiritual.

A oneness of heart, singleness of mind, singleness of purpose. We might all be gathered and joined in the same room, but if we are drawn in a hundred different directions in spirit, our worship will not be united.

If some are half-hearted, and some are disinterested altogether, if some are distracted, and some are disgruntled, then the worship is not going to be united as it ought to be.

It will be hindered. It won't be united worship. We must not only be corporate in our presence, but in our purpose as well.

[13:02] The early church again demonstrates this aspect of unity. It says in Acts 2.46 of the early church that they were attending the temple together, and the word together there is literally of one mind, or of one accord.

The New American Standard reads this way. Day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple. Not simply being together in body, but being together in mind.

Paul urged the Philippians 2.2 to be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

That is the oneness of heart that we are to have as we come together to worship as God's people. And if we don't have that with one another, then we are to make it right.

You may remember Jesus' words in Matthew 5. He said, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.

[14:12] First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift. Our worship as a congregation is to be united, to be of one mind.

Sadly, much so-called worship in many churches today is divided, even contentious.

And the reason I believe that that is the case in many congregations is that often in worship, people forget that it's not about themselves.

It's about God. Too many people go to worship to have their expectations and their personal preferences satisfied or their feelings fulfilled, rather than going for the purpose of worshiping God. We don't come to be entertained by the kind of music that we prefer or the kind of stories we like to hear from one pastor or another.

[15:24] We come to gratefully respond to our redeeming God for His gracious work as it's revealed in His Word.

Worship is not just about us. It is about God. And united worship in our day has become increasingly difficult because many churches have allowed so much of the surrounding culture to be absorbed into, even to control, life in the church.

Michael Horton observes, We no longer share a common body of church praise across the generations and around the world. In the past, traditional liturgies and music were sufficiently different from any particular cultural form, classical, jazz, blues, rock, that everyone could participate regardless of personal tastes.

To the extent that pop culture dominates and that distinctive church culture surrenders to it, churches will become more bound to the inherently divisive nature of the culture of marketing. We have one God and He has made us one in Christ. We are indwelt by the same Spirit and so regardless of our differing personal tastes in music or preaching style, we are to be of the same mind maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose.

[17 : 05] God's people are to be united in worship. Number three, worship by God's people is to be obedient.

Obedience. Obedience. Now when I speak of the obedience of God's people, I am speaking of the obedience of faith. The fruit of faith.

Obedience as a fruit of faith that issues from faith. It's motivated by faith. Not obedience that seeks to earn salvation, which it never can, but obedience that is the evidence of salvation, which it always will be.

Obedience is not something that results in salvation. It is the result of salvation. God's people are to be obedient because they love the Lord God.

We obey because we love Him and out of gratitude for what He has done, we want to obey Him. We love Him and so we obey Him.

[18 : 12] That's the order that Jesus outlined in John 14, 15. If you love me, you'll keep my commandments. And we obey, not in our own strength, but in the strength that He supplies by His indwelling, empowering, enabling, transforming Spirit that indwells us as believers.

Now that's not to suggest that obedience doesn't require personal effort. We all know that it does. But it is to say that obedience is not fundamentally self-reformation, but divine transformation. And that being said, we are to be obedient as God's people. We are to be obedient in our worship. There was an emphasis on the obedience of worship here on the part of these Jews that were returning from captivity in Babylon.

Look at verse 2 of our text. Then arose Jeshua, the son of Josedach, with his fellow priests.

Whoops, lost my thing here. And Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, with his kinsmen.

And they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God.

[19 : 39] Notice the phrase. As it is written in the law of Moses. Verse 3 says that they built the altar in its place. Not just any place, but in the place where it had been before, before the captivity.

That place that God had designated for David to establish the altar. Look at verse 4. And they kept the feast of booze as it is written, and they offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule as each day required.

Notice again. As it is written according to the rule. Verse 5 mentions appointed feasts.

This faithful remnant of God's people worshipped by the book. They obeyed in their worship. Now this doesn't mean that actions in themselves are of ultimate import.

We all know that right actions can come from wrong motivations. Even the actions of worship can be faked, right? You can go through the liturgical ritual with a wrong heart.

[20 : 56] And it is the heart of the worshipper that God is most concerned about. Repeatedly, in the Old Testament, we find the prophets condemning a mere show of religiosity apart from a heart of faith.

with issuing. He wants obedience from the heart. He wants that heart behind the obedience.

Samuel told Saul, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices and as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams. The prophet Hosea.

God declared through him, For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice. The knowledge of God

rather than burnt offerings. King David prayed, For you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it.

You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Now, those verses do not mean that God was not concerned about the sacrifices and the ceremonies.

[22 : 16] The religious ceremonies, the rituals, were part of God's law. He commanded them. They were part of obedience. But obedience is to issue from a heart of faith.

Motivation is more important than mere motion. And apart from a heart of faith, that's all ritual is, is just mere motion. There must be a heart of faith.

That was the problem of so many Jews in the New Testament that we read about, especially the religious leaders. And we find that while they were consumed with the ceremony, they completely missed the reality to which those ceremonies pointed.

Namely, Jesus, the perfect, blameless, final, complete, ultimate, sacrifice for sin. There must be a heart of faith in order to truly worship.

But given a heart of faith and a heart that desires to obey God, He has prescribed the way worship is to be conducted. And so in our text, this believing remnant of Israelites worshiped as it is written, according to the rule, it says.

[23 : 34] They didn't just make up their own rules. They didn't just worship any old way they wanted to. They followed God's rules of worship. And thus, they would have built this altar the way it was prescribed out of undressed field stones, Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 27.

They would have set up the altar in its place, the place that God designated, and it says that they did that. Then, Jeshua and his fellow priests, verse 2, carried out the sacrifices precisely as prescribed.

Look at verses 3-5. They set up the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the land, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening, and they kept the feast of booze as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the rule as each day required.

And after that, the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon, and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the Lord.

They conducted their worship as it was prescribed by God. They worshipped by the book. Their worship was obedient.

[24 : 54] In the same way, we, as the New Testament church, are to conduct our worship as God has outlined it in His Word. We're not free to just worship any old way we want to.

God has told us how to worship, what's to be included in our worship, and we're to follow His instructions. Now, we refer to this as the regulative principle of worship, regulated worship per His instructions to us, excluding what is not warranted in Scripture, including what He prescribes in His Word.

And so, in our worship, we have the confession of sin, we have the singing of praise, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, offering of prayers, the reading of Scripture, the preaching, exposition, explaining of His Word, the observing of the ordinances, baptism, the Lord's table.

In short, as one author writes, worship, in its content, motivation, and aim is to be determined by God alone. Our worship is to come from an obedient heart.

We are to exercise faithful obedience in our worship. Number four, worship by God's people is to be ongoing.

[26 : 16] These Jews were not just committed to worship, they were committed to continuing in worship. worship. This corporate worship was not a one-time thing.

They continued to worship. As they established this altar, they were just beginning a life of worship again in Jerusalem. Verse one says, when the seventh month came, the people gathered.

And then verse six says, from the first day of the seventh month, they began began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. They reinstated and set in motion the whole system of sacrifice and offerings and festivals that were commanded by God.

Now the seventh month was a particularly important month ceremonially. They celebrated New Year and the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

All of that during the seventh month. Verse four said, they celebrated the Feast of Booths or Tabernacle, which began on the 15th day of the month and lasted a week and according to Numbers 29 included many sacrifices.

[27 : 29] And then verse five adds, and after that, the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at New Moon and at all the appointed feasts of the Lord and the offerings of everyone who made a free will offering to the Lord.

this gathering for worship was only the beginning. The whole sacrificial system was set back in motion again. From the annual feast to the regular burnt offerings offered every day, morning and evening, to the free will offerings that could be offered any day.

These faithful Jews did not limit their worship to rare, isolated occasions, but were constant in their worship. In the same way, we are to freely offer our worship to God.

And our worship is not to be limited to particular times and places. It's to be constant. It's to be ongoing. Even our corporate worship is to be frequent, regular, not occasional, or sporadic.

It's not just seasonal, Christmas or Easter. It's not confined to old age or to a crisis. It should be a rare instance when the church gathers for worship and we are not there.

[28 : 49] Like the early church, we are to gather on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, to worship, to gather. And of course, beyond our corporate gatherings for worship, we who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus, to whom all of those Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies pointed, those of us who have received redemption through His blood have been made a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

And through Him, we are, the writer of Hebrews says, to continually, continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that acknowledges His name.

Worship by God's people is to be continuing, ongoing. Number five, worship by God's people is to be priority.

Priority. One of the clear teachings of this passage is that the worship by this faithful remnant of returning Jews was not incidental, but essential.

It was not peripheral. It was priority. And we see the priority of their worship indicated several ways here in our text. Verse one indicates that it was soon after their arrival in the promised land that they began to worship.

[30 : 22] It says they began to worship in the seventh month when they all gathered in Jerusalem, which they were required to do for the Feast of Tabernacles that began on the 15th.

Now, we do not know precisely when they arrived back in the promised land. It's estimated by scholars that it may have been between three and six months prior to their worship that they arrived.

And so they've barely had time to locate their homesteads, their family inheritance, find those homes, unpack their suitcases when they go to Jerusalem to worship.

No doubt they were eager to get started rebuilding their homes and their cities when they up and head to Jerusalem to worship. And there they built little booths out of branches to reside in for the Feast of Tabernacles.

And so soon after their arrival, they worship. And that shows what a priority worship was for them with so many other things to do. They expended effort to go and worship.

[31 : 28] Another indication of the priority of worship. They didn't just hop in the car and drive a few blocks or even a few miles to come and sit in a comfortable church building on padded pews with heat and air conditioning.

They walked whatever distance was required to spend most of a month there. They lived in little booths made out of branches, worshiped outside at an altar with no building, situated in the ruins of a city that had no walls.

And so there was even a certain risk involved for them in going to Jerusalem and worship. They arrived, they've just started to settle in their cities and they leave the town.

Leave their cities empty and go to Jerusalem. Leaving your house and your town empty when you have people all around you that don't want you there in the first place is probably not the safest thing to do.

But they went even though there were such people. Verse 3 mentions that their fear of the people of the lands which may indicate something of their motivation that prompted that worship because they recognized their dependence upon God to guard and protect them.

[32 : 53] but it also shows us that their worship was in spite of their fear. The New International Version begins verse 3 this way.

Despite their fear, despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar. They did not let the opposition of the enemy prevent them from worshipping God.

Yet another indication of the priority of these Jews to worship was the fact that they worshipped without the temple. Engaging in worship was more important to them than the edifice of worship.

They didn't wait until they had the building built. All they had was the altar. But that, along with the priests, was all that was necessary to conduct worship.

It would be another seven months before they would even begin to work on the foundations of the temple. It would be another 20 years before the temple would finally be completed.

[34 : 04] Now, part of that delay was due to opposition, as you read on through the book of Ezra. And sadly, part of that delay was succumbing to their own fears, their own laziness, their own selfishness.

And though we don't excuse those delays due to their sin or their weakness, the point here in chapter 3 is the act of worship was more important than the building in which it was conducted. Now, that doesn't mean that the temple was not important. It was important in the Old Testament that they have that building in a way that it's not important in the New Testament. Remember, it was in the wilderness tabernacle and in the Jerusalem temple that God's presence was manifested in the glory cloud in the Holy of Holies.

But with the coming of Jesus, the glory of God dwelt in Him. John 1.14. So, the Old Testament temple was a shadow pointing to Christ, the temple, and to God's people who are a temple built of living stones in whom the Spirit dwells.

[35 : 28] But in the Old Testament, it was important that Israel rebuild this temple where God manifested His presence. Even so, the fact that these Jews first built the altar and worshiped, apart from the temple building, shows us the priority they placed on worship.

That same priority should be ours. More important than a building, more important than personal ease or schedules or safety or convenience or comfort is the gathering together of God's people to worship our Creator and Sustainer and Redeemer.

worship is to be a priority. Corporate worship is to be a priority. Now, there's another lesson displayed in worship at the altar apart from the temple building and that's number six.

Worship by God's people is to be authentic. It is to be authentic. And this point really builds on two that we've already looked at that worship is to come from the heart and a heart of faith not just going through motions and the point we just made that worship itself is more important than the building in which it takes place.

In other words, worship is primarily a heart issue, an internal issue, not a matter of externals. This remnant of Jews did the right thing.

[36 : 58] They worshipped. They had all they needed to worship. It wasn't much but it was all they needed. They had the altar and they had priests. And so verse 3, they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.

Now the burnt offering was the offering that all went to God. It was totally consumed on the altar. The whole thing was burned up to Him. It was an offering of total dedication, total consecration of the worshiper to God.

It was the basis on which sinful people could come before holy God. And this act of total personal consecration was offered on the altar without any building.

Verse 6, from the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

They had not even placed the order for the building materials for the temple yet. That comes in the next verse, verse 7. Here all they have is the altar of sacrifice by which they could consecrate themselves to God with a burnt offering.

[38 : 14] This worship here is bare bones. It's basics. Genuine, true, authentic worship apart from any external trappings. Sometimes people get caught up in the externals and lose sight of the essence of worship.

We can confuse worship with the trappings. The externals are nice, aren't they? But they're not necessary. Pews are nice.

Prayer is necessary. A wood pulpit is fine. Preaching is fundamental. You see the difference. The externals aren't wrong.

They can even enhance our worship. The reason we have a heavy pulpit front and center and a communion table up front is to visibly demonstrate the priority of the teaching of the word, the preaching of the word and sacrament.

I contrast that with the not so subtle message sent by many churches today that have replaced the pulpit and communion table with a theatrical stage and laser lights and a bar stool.

[39 : 36] The externals can actually reinforce and help communicate our priorities and our understanding of worship, but they are no substitute for worship.

I pastored churches that met in elementary school cafeterias. We sat on plastic chairs and the room was filled with the aroma of last Friday's hot dogs.

I pastored a church that met in a fire hall and right behind me was a huge bingo board and we sat in hard folding chairs.

But our corporate worship together as God's people was no less authentic than when we years later built nice buildings. We can appreciate the accoutrements of worship and we should, we should, but we must never confuse them with true authentic worship.

Sadly, there are many people meeting in fancy facilities even this day, this morning probably, in towns all over with pulpits but no preaching of the word.

[40 : 57] Padded pews filled with people that are spiritually deaf. Piano and pipe organ but no praise.

A steeple, stained glass but no spiritual unity. a beautiful edifice but no edification. Beautiful buildings but maybe no believers at all.

What God desires is authentic, true worship. And for that, we don't need fancy buildings, we don't even need a fixed location, just a place to meet as the people of God.

Remember Jesus' words to the woman at the well. He said, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

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.

[42 : 03] God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit in truth. In Ezra's day, a physical temple in Jerusalem was the place where God manifested Himself to His covenant people.

The temple and all of its offerings, all of its ceremonies, pointed to Jesus. But in the coming and the death and the resurrection of Jesus, everything changed.

In Him, the fullness of God dwelt. God's glory was tabernacled in Jesus. He was the complete and final sacrifice and the great high priest who offered it.

And by His indwelling spirit in the lives of His people, His church, the new temple, worships Him. true worship can now take place any place that His people are found.

Corporate worship is not confined to a location or to old tangible ceremonies that pointed to Him. It is spiritual in nature, it is empowered by His Spirit, and it is to be conducted from a heart of faith in keeping with His truth.

[43 : 35] But, true worship can only issue from true worshipers. And true, authentic, genuine worshipers are those who personally know the one they worship and worship Him through Christ Jesus, having established that personal relationship with Him.

Repenting, turning from sin, turning to Christ in faith, trusting Christ alone for salvation. Otherwise, the actions of worship are only empty motions devoid of a heart of faith.

Acceptable worship can only come from those accepted by God in Christ. Only the genuine believer can genuinely worship.

Are you a true worshiper? What kind of worship does God desire from His covenant people? He desires worship that is corporate, as His people gather together to offer Him praise.

Worship that is united, as His people are joined in heart and mind in worship. Worship that is obedient, as God has prescribed it from a heart of faith, issuing an obedient, grateful response to His redeeming grace.

[45 : 02] Worship that is ongoing, continually offering a sacrifice of praise, praying without cation, meditating on His Word day and night, gathering weekly without neglect.

Worship that is priority because He alone is worthy of worship and nothing is more important than our worship. And worship that is authentic, it is in Christ, it is from the heart of faith, it is in spirit and truth to the praise of His glory.

God, what a privilege, what a joy to be gathered like we are tonight and to worship, worship the living God.

Let's pray. Lord, how we thank You for Your authoritative Word that instructs us.

As we gather on Sundays as Your people, we ask, Lord, that we would not take that for granted, that we would treasure every one of those opportunities that You give to us, that we would worship in spirit and in truth, that we would rejoice as Your people, that it would be priority in our lives, and

that we would gather each Lord's Day to praise You.

[46 : 49] And throughout the week with our families and individually, we might continue that praise. Thank You, Lord, for drawing us to Yourself.

Cause us to respond gratefully with hearts of worship to the praise of Your glorious grace in Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen.