

Osaka International Church

The Heart of Worship

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Good morning! I hope you have all been enjoying the cold weather because I sure haven't. We are in week 3 of our series called, "Hymns". The first week we looked at the greatness of God and last week we looked at building a solid foundation on the Rock of Jesus. Throughout this series I have been using older hymns for the inspiration for these messages. This week I thought I would mix it up a bit and use a modern hymn.

So the inspiration for this week's sermon comes from the song, "The Heart of Worship" by Matt Redman. Matt Redman is one of the most prolific songwriters of our generation. His songs are sung every Sunday in churches around the world. He is a worship pastor at a church in England. In the late 1990's his pastor, Mike Pilavachi, made a big change in his church. Pastor Mike felt that the worship portion of the service had become too repetitive. He did not feel the people were worshipping in the right way. He wanted to bring new life into the singing time so he made the decision to get rid of the sound system and all the high tech equipment. This is what Matt Redman had to say about the decision, "He decided to get rid of the sound system and ban for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we'd lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away." Pastor Mike asked those in the congregation this question, "When you come through the doors on a Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God?" It was during this time of not using a band that Matt Redman wrote this song, "The Heart of Worship". He did not intend for the song to become an anthem for the church. He was sitting in his bedroom one day reflecting on how the changes at church had affected him personally and out of that time of reflection this song was written.

Worship is not strictly something Christians do. People all over the world worship something. Worship is part of our nature. In America this time of the year people worship on Sundays at the football stadium. Thousands and thousands of people pack into the stadium to yell and scream for several hours for a game. They know all the players names. They know their stats. They cry when their team loses. They celebrate when their team wins. There is nothing wrong with having a favorite football team but when so much time and energy is spent following that football team you have begun to worship them. Some of you here today are old enough to remember when the Beatles were popular. When they came to your country everybody screamed and yelled and wanted to see the Beatles. It turned into a form of worship. On a spiritual level people worship various gods around this world. Today I want to talk to you about worshipping the one true God.

I want to talk to you about the heart of worship. Why do I think it is important that we talk about worship? More importantly, why is it important that we discuss the

heart of worship? Worship is a key topic in the bible. The word worship is found 158 times in the New International Version of the Bible. I would like to read to you a few of those verses.

1 Chronicles 16:29, this verse comes from a song that David wrote and this is what it says, "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name: bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness." In this verse David is telling us that we need to worship God because He is Holy.

Psalm 22:27 says, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you." It is a pretty fitting verse for us in an international community. We are all families of different nations and this verse says that families of the nations will worship before God.

Psalm 95:6 says, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" So here this author of the Psalm is telling us we are to bow down before the Lord, to bend our knees before Him.

In the New Testament in Romans 12:1, "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." Paul is telling us here that we are to offer our bodies as a sacrifice and this is a form of worship.

The passage I want to key in on today is found in John 4:20-24. This is Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at the well. I'm sure many of you are familiar with this passage. If you remember Jesus meets this woman at a well and He asks her for a drink. They enter into a discussion about water and the living water that Jesus can offer. At one point in their conversation they began to talk about worship. This conversation is found in verses 20-24. "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, 'woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth."

The Bible has a lot to say about worship. But I am afraid that many people have a misunderstanding of worship. A few years ago George Barna did a study in North America. George Barna does a whole bunch of studies and research in America. This particular survey was how North American Christians perceived worship. There were 4 questions in this survey. The first one was, What percentage of North American Christians would say they have never experienced God's presence? 32% of those who had responded to the survey said that they had never felt God's presence. Question 2, How many of those same people would say that they had not experienced his presence in the past year? 48% of the Christians responding to the survey said that they had not felt God's presence in the past year. Question 3, when asked to define what worship means how many have no idea or offered bogus responses such as attending church or believing in God? 67% of Christians either could not define

worship or gave such responses as attending church. The 4th question, From all the surveyed church going adults, how many describe worship as a top priority in their life? Less than half of the respondents said worship was a top priority in their life.

When I read this survey I was pretty disturbed by what I saw. Actually more than disturbed I was actually kind of sad. We have all of these people who are attending church and saying they are Christians yet they have no idea what true worship is. They can't even give a definition of worship. As a leader of the church, it made me wonder, why? Why are the people who are attending church so confused about worship? As this survey showed there seems to be a lot of confusion about worship in the Christian community. If I were to ask you today to define worship, would you be able to?

In the remaining time that we have together today I want to share with you what worship is not and what worship is. These points are not original ideas of mine. They are a combination of things that I learned in my theology of worship class in seminary and from a sermon that we had to read in that class. My hope is that by the end of this message you will have a better understanding of what worship is and what the heart of worship is.

Number 1, worship is not what we know. Just because we know the songs, know the order of service, doesn't mean that we are worshipping. For example, I know a lot about sumo. I've read many articles about sumo. I go to a sumo website and I read about the different wrestlers, their training methods, and their wrestling techniques. I've attended 3 bashos. I watch it on tv as often as I can. I even have an English student who knows how much I enjoy sumo and gives me a calendar every year. With all that I know about sumo that doesn't mean I am ready to step into the ring and wrestle Hakuho. Just because you know and have memorized every song that we sing here at church, doesn't mean that you are worshipping.

(Make this a second slide after number 1) Worship is not what we know but it is about who we know. We know God. As Christians we have a personal relationship with God. We know all the things that God has done. We can read the bible and know everything that He is going to do and that is why we worship Him. We know God and that alone should move us to worship. Psalm 86:8-10 says, "There is none like you among the gods, oh Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, Oh Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God." He alone is God and He alone is worthy of our worship. John McArthur says this, "Worship is all that we are responding appropriately to all that He is." Worship is about knowing God.

Number 2, Worship is not our idea. Man did not invent the idea of worship. There wasn't a group of cave men sitting around one day and decided to have a meeting and invent worship. They didn't invent the wheel and then say, "Hey, we need to have a worship session because this is a great invention." Remember worship is not a manmade practice.

(second slide) Worship is not our idea it is God's idea. The first commandment that God gave to Moses says that we are to have no other gods before Him. In other

words, God is the only one we are to worship and at the same time he is commanding us to worship Him. Worship is not just what we get out of the relationship but what we give to God. It is our offering to God. God finds pleasure in our worship that's why he created us with hearts that desire to worship.

Number 3, worship is not a spectator event. Unfortunately many people have decided that worship is just sitting in their seat at church watching others perform. It is not looking around how other people are worshipping and copying them or being upset with their form of worship. True worship is not about the performers. It is not about putting on a show. It is not about the instruments. It is not about the music and quite honestly it's not about the songs. True worship isn't just sitting there listening to others talk about how great God is and how wonderful His mercies are. Worship is not a spectator event.

(Second slide)Worship is a participation event. We are not the audience, God is. When we worship we are worshipping to an audience of One. We are not to be concerned with everyone else around us and what they are thinking and feeling. We are to be concerned with the One who we are to be worshipping. We are to be involved and active in worshipping God. The book of Psalms is full of action words that describe worship. Here are some verbs that are found in the book of Psalms: Shout to God. Dance before Him. Clap your hands. Bow down. Lift up your heads. Walk in His ways. Still your heart. Lift your hands. Run to Him. Seek His face. These are all action verbs. Things that we do. You can't sit there and run to God. You have to be active in your worship. Participate. Louie Giglio says this," Worship is something that you do. It isn't something that you watch." Are you being active in your worship or are you just watching?

Number 4, worship is not just physical. If we are not careful then we can just go through the motions of worshipping God. We can raise our hands because the song we are singing says raise your hands or we stand up because the song says to stand or the worship leader says to stand or everyone else is standing up. Or we say "Amen" when hear something good in the message but our heart is not in it. If our heart is not in the physical things that we are doing then we are just going through the motions. Worship is not just physical.

(second slide)Worship is spiritual. Our spirit. Our heart. Not just our bodies should be engaged in worship. Yes, our bodies are involved in worship. I just said that worship is active and you have to use your body to be active but real worship starts in our heart. It starts in our spirit and it flows from there and it flows into the rest of our life. It flows into our body and it is from there that worship begins from our heart. True worship is our spirit connecting with the spirit of God. When Jesus was talking to the Samaritan women he says that God is spirit and we need to worship in spirit and in truth. If worship is not starting from your heart then you are just pretending. Let me clarify what I mean by heart. I am not talking about our physical heart that pumps our blood but our spiritual heart. A heart that is pure and clean that is not holding on to bitterness or resentment one that has been washed clean by Jesus blood. In order to make sure that you are worshipping with a pure heart we need to confess our sins to God. We need to take a look inside and see if there is anything that we need

forgiveness for because we all do. It is from that forgiveness that we respond in spiritual worship.

Number 5, worship is not just singing. Before you throw stones let me explain what I mean. People tend to think of worship as singing or the song time at church. Unfortunately church leadership has fed into that image by creating things and titles such as the worship team or the worship leader. This creates an image in people's minds that this is the time when these people are up on the stage that we are worshipping. We actually attended a church where they reversed the title of the worship leader. The worship leader did not like the title worship leader so he called himself the lead worshipper, emphasizing that he was just one part of a group that was worshipping. Yes, worship is singing but worship is not just singing. I don't have a problem with a worship team or worship band. I enjoy a good worship team and a good worship. As much as I enjoy singing and listening to worship music that is not all that worship is. Worship is not just singing.

(second slide)Worship is a lifestyle. Again Louis Giglio says this, "Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is! And what He has done! Expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live." Remember Romans 12:1 that we read earlier we offer our life as a spiritual act of worship. Everything that we do should be an act of worship. Let's stay in the church for a minute with this idea. Yes, the singing is a part of worship. The preaching is also part of worship. The offering is part of worship. Did you know that when you give your tithes and offering that you are worshipping God? That is why the bible tells us we are to give with a cheerful heart. Today we took communion and communion is a part of worship. Even the guys who come here every morning and set up that is part of worship. The ushers who are out front greeting everyone as they come in that is an act of worship. Sunday school teaching is part of worship. Everything that we do in church with the right heart is an act of worship. Because if we aren't doing it with the right heart we are just going through the motions and not worshipping. This leads to our next point.

Number 6, Worship is not only done at church. We can and should worship at church but we are not limited to worshipping at church. The Samaritan woman in our story thought that she had to go to the holy mountain in order to worship God. People today think that the church building is the holy place that they need to go to in order to worship. They have a misunderstanding that this building is the church. But the church is not the building but it is the people. You do not have to go anywhere to worship. There is no special place that we are required to go to. Worship is not only done at church.

(second slide)Worship can be done everywhere. Just like the woman in her story that had it ingrained in her that she had to go to the mountain, Christians think that they need to go to church to worship. Worship should be done everywhere. 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So, whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." To the glory of God. Giving glory to God is a form of worship. Outside of the church, how can we worship God? In your home, you can worship God by treating your family members right. By speaking gently to them, by loving them, serving them and doing things for them. When we intentionally put the needs of someone else

ahead of ours, we are worshipping God. In your community you can worship God by serving your community. In Japan there are always neighborhood clean-up days in the park, you can join those clean-up days and show the community that as a Christian you care about them. You can help families that are in need. Maybe God has blessed you with extra resources and you know of someone in your community who is in need. You decide to share with them and that is an act of worship. It is also a wonderful testimony to that person. There is a man in our community who lives in a storage shed. A couple months ago my wife had made some extra baked goods and decided that she would give those to him because he is always friendly to us and his grandson attends our children's school. Since the time that he was given those baked goods, we have been able to talk with him many more times. He has come to our house to invite us to community activities. He brought us some fruit that he grows on top of his storage shed. God is opening a door there for us to build a relationship with this man so that he can feel the love of God. You can also worship God at work. Don't grumble and complain when your boss gives you extra work. Be grateful that you have a job. Do your work as an act of worship to God and as a testimony to your co-workers. Be nice, be kind at work to your coworkers.

Number 7, worship is not insincere. We cannot fake worship. It cannot be done half-heartedly. Half-hearted worship is not worship at all. God doesn't want half of our heart or effort. He wants all of it. Worship is not insincere.

(second slide) Worship is sincere. Worship must come from the heart or else it is not real. It is fake. If there are any kids in the service you might want to cover your ears now. You know when you are a little kid and you are all excited because Santa clause is coming and he is going to bring you your presents. You have written Santa your letter. You have asked him for your legos or new doll. You have drawn pictures of Santa and his reindeer. In America you have gone to the mall and sat on his lap and told him what you wanted for Christmas. You get your picture taken and he whispers in your ear that you are going to get your present because you have been good this year. And you have tried really hard all year to be good so that you will get your present. Then later in life you find out that Santa is not real. You are disappointed. You can't believe for all these years you had believed this was real and it turns out that it was fake. You are disappointed. That is the same feeling that God has when we offer half-hearted worship. See sincere worship involves our attitude as well as our heart. We must have an attitude of worship. We have to wake up every day, not just Sunday, looking for ways to worship God.

In conclusion, worship is what we do in response to the majesty of God. It encompasses everything from bowing before his greatness to extending a hand to help a fallen neighbor. Worship is not a passive expression. It is not showing up on a Sunday and saying "Amen! Praise the Lord!" It is a commitment to seeing the name of God lifted up. "Authentic worship is a response to an authentic encounter with the Living God. When we worship God we declare His worth. But in order to declare God's worth, we must first discover His worth. And that brings me to a question: What is God worth to you?" Let's pray.