

Why Worship is More Than Music | Romans 12:1

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[0:00] Simon, it's great to be here with you again this morning. We had a lovely time last yesterday with several of you.

As I was seated here, I was thinking of this story that I heard several years ago and he's a vibrant, dynamic pastor here.

But like this guy was known for his long, boring sermon. And he gets up one Sunday and he says, you know, the Lord has laid it on my heart that after serving this church for several years that I need to move to a neighboring city and pastor there.

He says, my heart is heavy. It's just been a joy to serve you all. And then he takes a seat. The worship pastor comes forward. He says, you know, let us all stand to our feet and sing this song. What a friend we have in Jesus. Jesus has given. Jesus has taken. What a friend do we have in Jesus. We'll have to wait and see what the final song is for today.

[1:21] As the saying goes, some people bring happiness wherever they go. Some others bring happiness whenever they go. I've titled my sermon this morning, More Than Music, The True Meaning of Worship.

More Than Music, The True Meaning of Worship. When we think of worship, what comes to mind? Usually we think of the times we gather together as God's people at a designated place at a stipulated time where we sing together like we did this morning.

That for a lot of people is worship. Worship is just those moments that we have as a community singing songs unto the Lord.

But is that worship or is there more to worship? What does the scripture teach us and tell us about worship?

Worship comes from the old English word worth-ship. And what is worship? Worship is ascribing ultimate value to someone or something.

[2:43] Worship is ascribing ultimate value to someone or something. Now, in English, we just have this one word, worship.

But if you look at Greek, at the Greek, you will find there are different words used in the New Testament and in the Old Testament for worship. The most commonly used word is proskunuo, which is translated, literally, if it's translated, it is fall down, prostrate.

Now, in Revelation chapter 4, we have this beautiful picture of the 24 elders gathered around the throne room of God. And they fall down in worship, crying out, Worthy, you are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.

For you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. They fall prostrate.

They fall down in worship, singing to the one who is seated on the throne, who is worthy of all honor, of all glory, of all power, and of all praise.

[4:05] Worship is ascribing ultimate value and worth. To someone or something. Psalm 29, verse 2. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name.

Worship proskunuo, the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Matthew 4.10, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6.13.

He says, Away from me, Satan, for it is written, Proskunuo, worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

Another word that is commonly used in the New Testament, which is translated worship, is latruo. Latruo, which literally means to serve.

In Romans 1.9, Paul says, I serve God. I worship God in the preaching of his word. So when we preach, we are worshiping God.

[5:08] Philippians chapter 3, verse 3. It says, True Christian worship service. Latruo. True Christians worship God in the spirit and put no confidence in the flesh.

And then you have this beautiful verse in Romans chapter 12, verse 1. And that is the verse that I want to dig into this morning. And it goes like this.

Therefore, I exhort you, brethren, in view of God's mercy, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

For this is your true and proper latruo service, worship.

Now, Paul, interestingly, begins with, Therefore. Paul is making an argument as you look at Romans.

[6:18] And he's drawing a rational conclusion to the argument here. Therefore. Now, what is, therefore, doing that?

What's the context? If you look at Romans 1 through 11, Paul, as he lays out his argument, he begins with, you know, in Romans 1 to 3, talking about the tragedy of humanity.

In Romans 1, verse 18 to 32 is critical. It's a pivotal text where he writes in Romans 1, 18.

It reads, For the wrath of God is being revealed. For the wrath of God is being revealed.

Interestingly, he uses the present tense.

He doesn't say, Will be revealed. He says, Is being revealed. God's opposition to sin is being revealed in the present.

[7:32] He contrasts that in Romans 2, 5 to the wrath of God will be revealed in the day of judgment that we find in Romans 2, 5. But in the present it is seen.

And Paul's saying, Look around you. You will see God's wrath being revealed. Sorry, my notes went blank.

Yeah. Yeah.

So the wrath of God is being revealed. And then he says, It's directed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made, so they are without excuse.

[8:54] So this is what theologians call general revelation. As you, he's talking to the Gentiles who have not received God's law, and he's saying the Gentiles are without excuse, excuse, because God's character, his nature is clearly seen in creation.

And if you, you know, look at the Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, Plato said there are two arguments for God's existence. One, the argument from the soul, the existence of the soul.

The second, the argument from the order that we see in nature. As the sages of the past looked into the skies undimmed by city lights, they saw the planets and the stars, the constellations moving in such perfect order.

And they begin to, they began to question what explains this order. What is the explanation for the design, the order that is, that surrounds us?

Aristotle says, you know, imagine a man or a people, a race that's under a cave, who's never seen the sky, but they step out of the cave for the first time, and they get to see the skies.

[10:18] What would they feel like? What would that, you know, what would that experience be like? And this is what Aristotle says. When thus they would suddenly gain sight of the earth, seas, and the skies, when they should come to know the grandeur of the clouds and the might of the winds, when they should behold the sun and should learn its grandeur and beauty, as well as its power to cost the day by shedding light over the sky.

And again, when the night had dark in the lands and they should behold the whole of the sky, spangled and adorned with the stars, and when they should see the changing lights of the moon as it waxes and wanes, and the risings and the settings of all these celestial bodies, their courses fixed and changeless throughout all eternity, when they should behold all these things, only the rational conclusion is that this is but the handiwork of God.

This is but the handiwork of God. So the order, the design points to a designer. And so people who have not received God's law are without excuse as well.

And then he says, For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

[12:01] Again, he says in verse 25, they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who was blessed forever.

You know, it's quite interesting. As you read this passage, Paul identifies the human problem. We think atheists, irreligious people, they don't worship.

Everybody worships. The question is who and what we worship. David Foster Wallace in his famous Kenyan address says this, In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism.

There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough.

Never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure, and you will always feel ugly.

[13:19] And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. Worship power. You will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need more, even more power over others to numb you to your own fear.

Worship your intellect. Being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. The fundamental human problem is a worship problem, not responding to the glory of God.

The root of sin is idolatry. It is misdirected, improper worship. And so, then the apostle Paul says, because they have exchanged the glory of God for a lie, they have exchanged worship, worshipping God, and they've started worshipping creatures.

What did God do? What is God's response? God gave them up. God gave them up to their whims and fancies, that they exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

And he talks about sexual perversion, sexual impurity, a debased mind, a depravity, and all kinds of sins. You want to see God's wrath?

[14:54] Look around you. You will see God's wrath as God withdraws his restraining hand, and you see society unraveling, and falling, spiraling in, into sin.

It's judicial abandonment. God has left humanity to its own whims and fancies. That's why C.S. Lewis said, in the end, there are only two kinds of people.

The first kind, they say to God, thy will be done. The second kind, God says to them, thy will be done. God withdraws his hands, so that humanity spirals further away, and into sin.

And then, so, Romans 1, he addresses the tragedy of man, and specifically, the Gentiles, who have not received the law.

in Romans 2, he speaks to the Jew, who also are guilty, because they do not obey the law. And then he says, all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God.

[16:07] And then he goes on to talk about, the triumph of grace. The tragedy of humanity, then he speaks about, the triumph of grace. how God, shows his love, his mercy, his grace, in the person of Jesus Christ.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were enemies to God, Christ died for us. The death of Christ, and how we are justified, by faith, and the fruit of justification, we see, in, Romans 5, all the way, through 8.

And then, you come to Romans 11. Paul, all through Romans 1 through 11, goes at great lengths, to elaborate, on the mercy, the grace of God.

And then he says, wow! He's, amazed, and astounded, by the depth, of God's love.

And he says, oh, the depth of the riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God. How unsearchable, are his judgments, and how, uninstruitable, his ways. For who has known, the mind of the Lord?

[17:29] Or who has been, his counselor? Or who has given, a gift to him, that he might be repaid? For from him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to him be glory, forever.

Amen. He ends with such praise, having expounded, on the mercy, and the grace of God, seen in the person, of Jesus Christ.

And then he pivots. He says, therefore. Therefore. Now, when you look at Paul's letters, you see this pattern, over, and over, again.

Colossians 1, to 3, he talks about, who Christ is, and what he has done. And then, he says in Colossians 3, 1, therefore put to death, the flesh.

Ephesians, chapter 1, to 4, he talks about, who God is, and what he has done, for us, in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, put to death, Romans 1, through 11, high theology, rich theology.

[18 : 35] And then, he says, how we ought to respond, the Christian imperative. So, theologians use this term, the Christian indicative, of what God has done, and who he is, and the Christian imperative, of how we ought to live our lives.

Oftentimes, discipleship can be cumbersome. It can be heavy, when we just look at the commands of Jesus, take up your cross, and follow me. Unless, we see, the beauty, of his grace, and the majesty, and the glory, of the person of Christ.

Who he is, and what he has done. The Christian indicative. When we, get a glimpse, of the Christian indicative. The Christian imperative, is easy to follow.

The Christian imperative, always flows, from the Christian indicative, of what God has done, in Christ, for us.

That is why, in 1 John, the apostle writes, 1 John 3, 1, consider, behold, with, what, great love, the father, has, loved us.

[19 : 58] Then he says, love one another. But first, it is not that, we loved him. It is that, he loved us first. Our love, is awakened, when we get a glimpse, of the love of God.

When we behold, and consider, God's love for us. Our hearts, are moved, and we respond, in love, and worship.

Therefore, I exhort you, brethren, in view, of God's mercy. He condenses, the entire chapters, from Romans, of Romans 1, through 11, with two words, God's mercy.

Therefore, in view, of God's mercy, worship, first and foremost, is a response. It begins, with beholding, the mercy, of God.

The Christian, indicative, and then the Christian, imperative. Many times, you know, we say, ah, we ought, to worship God.

[21 : 11] It's our duty, to worship God. We are obligated, to worship God. Yes, we are. You know, C.S. Lewis, says this, about praise.

He says, praise is like, imagine, you enjoy, some great food. You had a sumptuous, delightful meal. You want to share, the joy, of that, great food, with someone else.

and our joy, is only complete, when we share it, with someone else. Let's say, we love someone. We truly, genuinely love them.

Our joy, is only complete, when we express, our love to them. Tell them that, I love you. He says, worship is like that. Our joy, is complete, when we praise God.

God, it comes out, of a heart, that is full, that delights, in God. Worship, is a response.

[22 : 19] There's a, a theologian, slash philosopher, by the name of, Edward Carnell. Edward Carnell, says, suppose, a husband, comes to his wife, and says, must I kiss you, good night, each night.

Husbands, don't try it. Edward Carnell, says, being the philosopher, that he is, he says, his wife would respond, unless a spontaneous, affection for my person, motivates you, your overtures, are stripped, of all moral value.

Unless a spontaneous, affection for my person, motivates you, your overtures, are stripped, of all moral value. You know, any ordinary wife, would probably, give him a slap, for that question.

Must I kiss you, good night, each night? You must, but it's a different, kind of must. Out of love, we love, we express our love.

worship, worship, worship, is a response. It doesn't start, with us. It starts, by seeing, it begins, with the mercy, of God, and we respond, to his mercy, to his love.

[23 : 47] Worship, is first and foremost, a response. Second, he says, present, your, your bodies. You find that, in Romans 6, 13 as well.

Present your bodies, not, don't offer it, as instruments, for sin, but, as slaves, to righteousness.

Your entire being. You know, interestingly, when we go for, evangelistic meetings, people say, give your heart, to Jesus. Have you given, your heart, to Jesus?

Does Jesus, want our heart? Absolutely. But Jesus, is not just happy, with our heart. He wants, all of us. Our entire being.

Present, your bodies, your entire being, as a living, sacrifice. Now, the sacrificial language, is interesting, because, you know, we find that, all the time, in the Old Testament.

[24 : 54] But, Paul uses, sacrificial language, in the New Testament, as well. In Romans 15, 16, he calls the converts, an acceptable, offering, in worship, to God.

In, Philippians 2, 17, he speaks, of his own death, as a drink offering. In Hebrews 13, 15, we read, the praise, and thanks, of the lips, is a sacrifice, to God.

We find the sacrificial language, in the New Testament. Now, when you look at the Old Testament, you have the offerer, who brings an offering, as an atonement, for his sins, to God.

In the New Testament, in Romans 12, you have the offerer, bringing himself, as the offering, not as an atonement, for sins, but as a response, to the one, who has offered, himself, as a sacrifice, for, the worshiper.

We, offer, ourselves, the worshiper, is the offering, and he brings, himself, as the offering, to God.

[26 : 16] And Paul says, look at what God, has done. His mercy, the depth, of his love, that he gave himself, completely for us, wholly for us.

He is worthy, of all, of us. Our entire being, for the one, who gave himself, to us, and withheld nothing, don't withhold, anything.

Give yourself, completely, as, worship, as an offering, to him. And that, is true worship. Present your bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, and, pleasing, to God.

That's very interesting. You know, our best, days, in our best days, we see a lot of, issues, temptations, and failures.

Our, acts of obedience, you will find, imperfections, in them. How can our, imperfect, offering, our imperfect, lives, be, pleasing, to God?

[27 : 36] It's quite interesting, that when you read, the New Testament, you have, I think it's in, 2nd, Peter, let's see, in 1st Peter, chapter 2, verse 5, Peter writes, about spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through, Jesus Christ.

Our, offering, of ourselves, is offered, to God, through, Christ. Or, our, offering, is mediated, by Christ.

Christ. Our lives, ought to be, Christ shaped, and our lives, ought to be, Christ mediated. Our worship, should be, Christ shaped, and our worship, must be, mediated, by Christ as well, to be, pleasing, and acceptable, to God.

Our lives, imperfect as they are, as we seek, to honor God, as we seek, to live, Christ shaped lives, or cruciform lives, we fall, and we fall, terribly, but they are, pleasing, and acceptable, to God, because they are, offered as a, sacrifice, through, Jesus Christ.

They are, Christ mediated, offerings, to God. So, first, worship, is our, response, to God.

[29 : 07] Second, worship, is a, whole life, response. It's not just, part of us, but all of us, that Christ, wants, and the, offerer, himself, as the offering.

And third, our lives, ought to be, Christ shaped, and our lives, ought to be, mediated, or Christ mediated, sacrifices, or offerings, to God.

You know, the story, is told, of, a, young, Indian, Christian, who became, a Christian, post, the events, unfold, in the early, 19th century, if I'm not mistaken, after the, Welsh revival, there were people, who came from, the shores of England, and, from the United States, to, India, to a northern state, in India, called, Assam.

One, missionary, couple, served there, for seven, long, years. The end of seven, long years, nobody came to know, the Lord, and they were so, so, discouraged.

One day, one young man, comes to know, the Lord, and then his wife, and his two kids. The village elders, were really upset, to find out, that this one family, from their village, has given their life, to Christ.

[30 : 44] So, they decided, to make an example, out of this family. So, they call, a village meeting. They're brought, to the town square. And then, the husband is told, unless you recant, your faith, we will first, shoot your boys.

And then, we will shoot your wife, and kill you, at the end. They said, here is your chance, to recant, your new found faith.

The husband, looks at them, and says, you know, I have decided, to follow Jesus. No turning back. No turning back.

They shot us two boys. Jesus. Then, he tells them, and then, they tell him, we mean business here. Now, we're going to kill your wife.

What are you going to say? He says, the cross before me, the world behind me. No turning back. No turning back.

[31 : 48] They kill his wife. They said, what do you say now? He says, though none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back.

No turning back. They killed him. A few years later, the entire village, came to know Christ. And these words, were put into music, and that's the song we sing.

I have decided, to follow Jesus. The origin of the song, is in a state, called Assam, in a little village, when a young man, stood up for his faith, and would not recant his faith.

because he found, the greatest treasure, the one who gave his all, to make him, his very own.

The apostle Paul, and in the New Testament, we find over, and over again, you are not, your own.

[32 : 48] You belong to him. You were bought, purchased, with a price. My eyes are not mine, they are his. My wealth is not mine, they are his.

My heart is not mine, they are his. My feet are not mine, they are his. I belong to the one, who gave his life for me, to make me, me, his own.

Worship, is responding, properly responding, to who God is, and what he has done.

Recognizing, that he gave his all, and offering ourselves, wholly, and completely, to him. You know, we say, well, if the time comes, if we, are called, to give our life, I'll give it.

We sometimes say that, with such confidence, but may I say to you, what is worth, dying for, is worth, living for. What is worth, dying for, is worth, living for.

[34 : 08] If you, really mean, with all your heart, if you mean, that you are going, to give your life, if the time comes, well, show it, by living it.

Let us, give ourselves, completely, without reservation, wholly, all of us, to the one, who gave, his all, for us.

So, as I close today, remind us, again, worship is, first and foremost, a response. Second, worship begins, by beholding, the mercy, of God.

It is, responding, appropriately, appropriately, and properly, and properly, to who God is, and what he has done. It is the most, fitting, and proper, response, to God, our maker.

Second, worship, is a, whole life, response, where the, offerer, offers, himself, and herself, completely, without reservation.

[35 : 32] Thirdly, worship, is transformational. You know, if God, changes us, as we, offer up, ourselves, continually, and seek, to honor him, there are, imperfections, but they are, Christ mediated, as well.

And as, we, seek, to honor him, we are being, changed, and transformed, more and more, into the person, of Jesus Christ, as we, offer ourselves, over, and over, daily, to him.

It's an, ongoing, sacrifice. It's an, ongoing, daily thing. It's a, living, sacrifice. Shall we, close in prayer?

Heavenly Father, we thank you, for your word, that is timeless, and timely.

We thank you, for the reminders, in your word. And we thank you, for your heart, for us. The depth, of your love.

[36 : 49] The mercy, of God. Lord, no language, can put into words, your heart, and your love, for us.

No song, no poetry, can do justice, to the beauty, of the person, of Christ, and the depth, of his love. but Holy Spirit, you alone, can give us, a glimpse, of the depth, of the love of God.

We pray, that you would pour out, your love, into our hearts, and that you would, give us a fresh, glimpse, of your love, for us.

so that, we may, truly, wholeheartedly, fully, appropriately, respond, to that love, that, deep, love, that you have, for us.

you, gave yourself, completely, and shed, your blood, to make us, your priced, possession.

[38 : 11] Lord, help us, give ourself, unreservedly, wholeheartedly, completely, to you.

For that, is our true, and proper, worship. I pray, I pray, for this church, that there, be a shining light, in the city, and that, before a watching world, they will, live out the gospel, with clarity, and speak the truth, in love.

May you be exalted, in Christ's name, we pray. Amen. Thank you.