

### The Walk - Worship

Near the beginning of each gospel, you will find a story of Jesus inviting fishermen to leave their boats and nets and families behind to follow Him. **Mark 1:16-20**

*As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

Peter, Andrew, James and John all left behind their business to walk with Jesus, and as they walked with Him, they learned who Jesus was. They learned what Jesus was all about, they grew closer to God, they understood more about the kingdom and plan of God, and they had their lives forever changed. What I love about Jesus calling these four men is that each one followed Jesus individually, but they also followed Him as a team. They were already partners in business, they were family and friends who had been working together for years, so walking with Jesus was both personal and corporate. They did it alone and together.

Today is the first Sunday of Lent and for the next several weeks we are going to talk about what it means for us to walk with Jesus. Individually, but also as a church, we are going to explore five spiritual practices that we can do alone but also together, and when we participate in them, as we walk in them, we will learn more about Jesus, grow closer to God, and understand for ourselves more about God’s kingdom and plan for us and the world. Today we are going to start with the practice and discipline of worship.

Several years ago, we redesigned our children’s playground. We took out a lot of the old equipment that wasn’t in good shape and got new equipment that would give the kids lots of new options. The entire process was a nightmare.

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To make a long story short, and to keep my blood pressure from going through the roof, let’s just say the installation company that first arrived was awful. They didn’t do what we asked and when we disagreed on what was included in the contract and how things were to be done, instead of waiting to get the problems resolved, they went ahead and put down mulch over grass and mud and dirt.

After finally getting ourselves out of the contract with the company, we hired Jabco Landscaping to come in and do the job right. With some help from people here at the church, Jabco literally moved all the mulch so they could install a lining to keep grass and weeds from growing through the mulch. They reworked the border, installed the last few pieces of equipment we had purchased, and put all the mulch back in place. They were great.

After months of frustration and delay, I remember watching the children on the day we finally told them they could play on the playground. After months of watching all this take place and waiting, they ran from the back door yelling and screaming and then they ran from one piece of equipment to the next. They were hardly able to contain their joy and excitement. To this day I still love to watch kids run to play on the playground. I wonder if the joy I experience when I see the children play on the playground is similar to God’s experience when He sees us enjoy the world, He gave us.

I wonder if God looks at the world as a giant playground, He gave us to explore and enjoy. God didn’t have to make the world as beautiful as He did. He didn’t have to paint the sky with sunsets and fill the night sky with stars and planets and comets that we get to explore. God could have made the entire earth as flat as Kansas - which would not have been very interesting, sorry those in Kansas - but He didn’t. God gave us mountains and valleys and seashores and canyons. God created deep forests and dry deserts which each have their own beauty. God filled the world with all kinds of amazing life forms, some that terrify us and some that touch our hearts and fill our imaginations and make us laugh.

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When we think of this playground called creation and experience the awe and wonder and splendor of it all, what is an appropriate response from us to God? One appropriate response is to give God thanks and praise. One good response is for us to worship God. The word worship comes from the Old-English word “worthship” which means to give thanks and praise to One who is worthy. Worship is to declare the glory of God and state that He alone is worthy. The Bible says that creation itself worships God.

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
Night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words;  
No sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world. **Psalms 19:1-4***

Without using any words, the skies proclaim the work of God’s hands. The stars can’t help but shine. The birds can’t help but sing. The mountains can’t help but soar and the oceans can’t help but roar. All creation worships God. All creation declares God’s goodness, beauty and power, but in all of creation, we are the only ones who *choose* to worship God. We are the only part of creation that decides whether or not we will walk in worship and give God thanks and praise.

Like every other part of creation, we were created to worship God. We were created to give God thanks and praise, so when we make that choice, we are living into our purpose. The Westminster Catechism, a statement of Christian faith that dates back to the 1600’s, says that the chief end of humankind is to *glorify God and enjoy Him forever*. Our highest purpose is to worship God so when we make that choice, we are living in that sweet spot of life where we experience all the fullness and beauty and joy of life. So, we need to learn what it means to walk in worship.

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In the New Testament there are three Greek words that are translated as worship. The first and most common is **proskvneo** which means to **bow down before someone in awe and reverence**. It’s why we bow in worship, or kneel, or prostrate ourselves on the ground before the amazing love, power and goodness of God. We humble ourselves because we know the greatness of God.

The word was also used to describe how a dog greets its owner. While some dogs may sit when their owner comes home, most dogs I know dance around with joy. Some dogs know the sound of their owner's car as it drives into the driveway, or the sound of the garage door opening, and they race to the door, hardly able to contain their excitement. We had a little dachshund that got so excited that she would pee everywhere. Her little body literally could not contain her joy. This kind of excitement is also part of worship, but please, let’s not make peeing part of it!

Another Greek word for worship is **sebomai** which means **to fall back in awe and reverence**. For me, this is the fear and reverence I have during thunderstorms. Storms are amazing and beautiful, but their power and force of lightning causes me to shrink back a bit. The sheer greatness and power of God might cause us to stand back in awe and fear, although God does not want us to be afraid of Him. This kind of awe is part of worship.

The third word for worship is **latreuo** which means **to serve and give**. This is where we get the word *liturgy*, which is what we might call our order of worship. The liturgy is the songs and prayers and readings that we use to give thanks and praise to God.

All of these words shape our understanding and practice of worship. There are times we bow in humility before God, or dance with joy when we feel God’s presence, or shrink back in fear and awe when we see God’s power. All of this is a part of our worship, but the reason we worship is because God alone is worthy.

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***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. Revelation 4:11***

We worship God because God alone is worthy of our praise and we worship God both individually and collectively as God's people. In the Old Testament you will find the book of Psalms which was the worship book of the Jewish people and the early Christian Church. The book contains songs, creeds, and prayers which helped people worship God. In a very general way, the Psalms can be divided into two categories, the "I" psalms and the "We" psalms.

The "I" psalms are personal. We might read them as a personal prayer or a profession of faith. We might use these psalms as a personal song of praise and thanksgiving. An example of an "I" psalm is the **23rd Psalm**.

***The Lord is MY shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes ME to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads ME beside the still waters.  
He restores MY soul;***

The "We" psalms are corporate and are meant to be used by a group of people or a congregation. **Psalm 95** is a great example of this:

***Come, let US sing for joy to the Lord;  
let US shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.  
Let US come before him with thanksgiving  
and extol him with music and song.***

The book of Psalms shows us that worship needs to be personal and private, but also corporate. Worship is something that we need to do individually and together. Jesus modeled for us corporate worship when He went to the Synagogue and Temple. Jesus worshiped with His disciples when together they would sing and pray. Walking with Jesus means worshiping God with others.

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One reason it's important for us to worship together is because there are things that can happen when we are together in worship that can't happen when we are alone. Look at **Psalm 100**.

***Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.  
Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.  
Know that the Lord is God.  
It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.***

Do you notice something about Psalm 100 that we also saw in Psalm 95? Our worship is to be joyful. We sing and shout for joy. We praise God and give thanks to God and celebrate who God is and what He has done. We enter God's courts with praise.

I'll be honest, I don't always feel this way. I don't always feel like giving God thanks and praise when I get here. I might be burdened by a difficult week. I might be dragging or feeling bad about the choices I have made. I might be struggling in some way, but when I worship with others, and when I lift up God's name with others, something happens. I am encouraged. I am lifted up and I am reminded of who God is and who I am.

Together we proclaim: *He made us. We are His. He knows us. He loves us. He is the Rock of our Salvation.* When we come together in worship, I am reminded that we are God's people. God created us as the sheep of His fold and the lambs of His flock. He hasn't forgotten us or forsaken us. He loves us. When we don't feel like singing and others do, we can find hope and courage and a strength that is often hard to find when we worship God alone.

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Corporate worship is important, but so is private worship. Jesus often went off alone to pray and talk with God. In moments of stress or confusion, when Jesus needed direction or strength, He would go off to be alone with God. It was just Him and God in worship. Private worship doesn't have to be structured and organized. You don't have to sing songs or pray specific prayers or even read scripture, all you have to do is reach out to the One who is worthy of all honor and glory.

The most powerful private worship we can engage in might be just repeating two simple words. **Thank You.** Thank you, God, for the gift of this day. Thank you for my family, my friends, for the people you give me. Thank you for the beauty of the world. Thank you for the signs of spring. Thank you that the groundhog didn't see his shadow. Thank you that we didn't get a foot of snow this week. Thank you for the food you give. Thank you for the sun that warms the day and the moon that shines at night. Thank you for the playground of your creation that you give us to enjoy and explore and play in. Thank you for the adventure we call life.

If you want to worship God in every moment of the day and with every breath you take, learn to say Thank You over and over again. Five times a day, give thanks. When you get up, when you eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner, when you go to bed, say thank you. When you are happy say thank you God. When you are sad, frustrated and even depressed and grieving say thank you God. Thank God because we are His people. He has made us and He will lead us to green pastures and through dark valleys.

The Apostle Paul, who didn't have an easy life, said this:  
***Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***  
**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

We were created to worship God and when we choose to walk in worship individually and together, we are experiencing the purpose for which we were created and enjoying all the fullness of life.

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## **Next Steps**

### ***Walk - Worship***

Reflect on the following questions:

- What does it mean for you to worship God?
- Why do you worship God?
- Why do we worship as a church?

Reflect on times Jesus worshiped alone and with others?

**Mark 1:32-39, Mark 1:21-22, Mark 14:26, Mark 14:32-42**

What do these times teach us about the importance of private and corporate worship?

The New Testament has three Greek words for worship:

- Proskyneo - to bow down in awe and reverence.
- Sebomai - to fall back in awe and reverence.
- Latreuo - to serve and give.

How do each of these words shape our worship of God?

Create private times of personal worship.

- Use **Psalm 19, 23, 25, 27, 42, 51** in times of private worship.
- As an act of worship, write a psalm or prayer to God.
- Take time to worship God as you enjoy creation.

Commit to worshipping God with others.

- Commit to Sunday morning worship during Lent.
- Worship with others at the Easter Cantata (March 24)
- Commit to worship on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday (March 28 & 29)
- If you are part of a small group, think about how you can worship together when you meet.
- How can you make time with family and friends be times of worship?