

The Road to Transformation - Worship

INTRO: We have been talking about our road to transformation. The first week we discussed that for us to transform we have to have Christ as our life. “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” That is a heart that has Christ as their life. We also talked about living missionally. Simply put, we live like a missionary in our own town. That really is what we are. Next we talked about the need to be friendly and building relationships with new folks - even having a process that helps them move to becoming a genuine follower of Jesus Christ. After that we talked about how we need to be depending on God in prayer; not just for the big things, but in everything. We need to make prayer second nature in this church. We pray for people on the spot when trouble comes. We before engaging in ministry - trusting that God will take on little efforts and do something God sized with them.

TRAN: This week we talk about worship. It has, and sadly continues to divide more churches in our nation. For us, we need to readjust our focus as a church regarding worship. If we are joining Christ in His mission of reaching others for His glory and expanding the kingdom, what does that mean for worship?

- I. Worship has been described as the most important action of the human experience
 - A. It is because worship is so fundamental to the human experience that it is so important
 1. The human heart is designed to hold someone or something in highest esteem
 2. God’s intention from the beginning is that He would be who was held in highest esteem
 3. That all changed when sin broke into the world
 - B. Because worship is so foundational to the human experience, I am not talking about the 60-90 minutes we sit here on a Sunday morning
 1. Giving God the glory He deserves is one of many ways that people who are far from God are drawn to God
 2. It is part of the disciple making process
 3. And because it is foundational to us as humans, that means it is a life style, not a program of the church
 - a) If you do not understand that worship is about a life of giving God the glory He deserves
 - b) You will never understand what takes place here on a Sunday morning

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- c) QUOTE: (On Screen) “Many a professing Christian is a stumbling block because his worship is divided. On Sunday he worships God; on weekdays God has little or no place in his thoughts.” D.L. Moody
- d) If you do not understand that worship is a life, and not a program, you are actually a stumbling block to the gospel, according to D.L. Moody
 - (1) The gospel is our mission as believers
 - (2) To be proclaiming the gospel to a dying world
 - (3) If they do not see worship in us as part of our life, we are causing them to stumble
- C. One of the things that leading a life of worship does for the church during worship time, is it brings a sense of expectancy to corporate worship
 - 1. When gathered together as a church family to worship, we expect the Holy Spirit to do amazing things
 - 2. We expect that hearing from God’s Word will help us change and conform us into the people that God desires for us to be
- D. Think about what happens when we gather together corporately to worship God
 - 1. God is glorified when we gather together to worship
 - 2. People look beyond us to the God of our experience
 - 3. We should encounter God as we worship together
 - 4. Worship should connect us with Christ and equip us for ministry
- II. One of the things real worship accomplishes is transformation
 - A. Turn to Isaiah 6:1-8 (p. 685)
 - 1. Isaiah has already been ministering, and it has been a rather depressing venture
 - a) The people he was called to were failing in almost every way - socially, morally, spiritually
 - b) Isaiah was probably rather depressed when this vision occurs
 - 2. Here Isaiah experiences the presence of God
 - a) The first thing Isaiah realizes is his sin - as God’s holiness is revealed to us, we should realize where we have fallen short
 - (1) We on this side of the cross are forgiven
 - (2) But we still can get ourselves into sin
 - b) Isaiah confesses (declares that what he has done was sin)
 - c) God transforms Isaiah, atoning for his sin
 - d) So stop here for a moment - genuine worship transforms the worshiper
 - (1) Because we encounter God’s holiness, we see where we have fallen short, and repent or confess those sins

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- (2) God, transforms us - in our case by reassuring us that Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient
 - e) When all is said and done, Isaiah is ready to accept a new ministry
 - (1) True worship helps us see our place in the mission of God
 - (2) Be it through corporate worship in church, or through a personal life of worship
- III. The big question that comes up is how is worship supposed to look
- A. First let's make sure we understand what the word means - watch this VIDEO: Worship
 - 1. So the word is used in the Bible as an act of the will to bow or prostrate one's self in front of someone greater
 - 2. The key to that statement is an act of the will
 - B. Something else to consider is what worship is not
 - 1. It is not music - but music is a part of worship
 - 2. Style does not have any bearing on the message of Christ
 - C. Worship starts with clearly presenting the truth of Christ
 - 1. Turn to Colossians 1:16 (p. 1182) "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts."
 - a) The first thing listed is the message of Christ - it is to dwell richly among us
 - b) Next, when the truth of Christ is clearly proclaimed, the church can admonish one another to live a life worthy of the gospel
 - c) Then, expressions of praise come through a variety of means
 - 2. When we reduce the focus of worship to a style, we remove the reason for gathering
 - a) The reason is no longer THAT we worship Christ
 - b) The reason is HOW we worship Christ
 - D. Some have sought to get around the controversy of HOW to worship by having different kinds of worship services
 - 1. This can be a valid option IF the focus is reaching new members of the community
 - 2. If it means that our focus is people's preferences, it is better to have one style and have everyone understand that the focus of worship is Christ, and the style gets chosen to reach new people
 - E. Most of us know that there has been controversy about music styles since close to when the church began
 - 1. In the 300's Ambrose, "the Father of Latin Hymnody" introduced new songs into the church that were easier for commoners to sing

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- a) He was widely criticized
2. Handel, of Handel's *Messiah*, used some melodies in the *Messiah* that he created for operettas that were "off-broadway" style productions
 - a) The first ten times the *Messiah* was presented, Handel was considered a heretic
 - b) He was criticized for using secular music behind the sacred words
3. I have told you in the past, there are several favorite hymns of today, that used to be bar songs - drinking songs - why do you think the melodies are still popular?
4. The reality is, if Satan can keep God's people distracted from God's glory by arguing about how we glorify God, issues of style and preference, Satan wins
 - a) The desire for a transformative experience with the God of the universe is replaced with a desire for musical tastes
 - b) It is a lousy trade off
5. Biblically we find no such thing as Christian music - all we have are Christian lyrics
- F. So we have to wade through this issue of music again as we talk about direction for the church
 1. Regardless of how you feel about musical preference, we all agree that worship is biblical and therefore should be transformational
 2. Worship is often one of the first introductions new people have with any church
 - a) They try out the church on a Sunday morning, and usually try to be discreet in doing so, not calling too much attention to themselves
 - b) So what they experience in the worship service is critical
 - (1) It is one vehicle for making disciples
- G. According to two of Christianity's premier church transformers, the "worship wars" have two sides
 1. One side believes in relevance for the people
 2. The other side believes that reverence is a key element for worship
 3. This leads us to ask a question about how reverence is shown in biblical worship
 - a) David expressed his praised to the Lord by dancing around in a linen robe
 - b) The Apostle John expressed his praise by falling down before Jesus in the vision in Revelation 1
 - c) A reading of the Psalms gives a variety of expressions of worship: Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!" - Psalm 32:11

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- d) “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.” - Psalm 47:1
 - e) Psalm 150 (p. 627)
 - f) The Bible only says that God is to be revered, how we worship does not appear to be the focus
 - g) “Reverence is first an attitude of the heart, expressed and informed by the culture of the worshipper.”
- H. Too often on both sides of the issue people try to pass off preference as divine command
1. If we are going to have a mission mentality, if we are looking to reach a community that needs Jesus Christ, we need to plan worship services with the community in mind
 - a) We need to discern the musical language of the community, and the heart language of the community and plan ALL elements of the service to allow the community to be drawn closer to the God we love and came here to worship
 - b) Choices of style are made according to context
 2. There is no such thing as a style of music that is relevant to every culture in the world
 - a) We recognize this when it comes to missions
 - b) When we go to a foreign country, we expect to hear music different from our own - even in church
 3. What that means for us is our style of music for worship should match what the bulk of the community listens to
 - a) And if that style changes in five years and the bulk of our community listens jazz music - the church should reflect that in our worship
 - (1) I have never liked jazz music - but that is still the way it should go to help reach the community
 - (2) Or if it turns to country music - same thing (however I might have to retire at that point because I hate country music)
 - b) Here is a real scenario - if this community became more latin or Mexican in influence - our music should match
 - c) Music comes down to the culture we are trying to reach
 4. Allow me to give you a practical illustration of this - so forget about music altogether right now
 - a) Think for a minute about toys - particularly the hot toys to have when you were a kid
 - b) Allow me to suggest a few across the decades
 - (1) How about - Mr. Potatohead
 - (2) Or - the Etch-a-sketch

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- (3) Or 1975's Pet Rock - anyone want to admit to having to have one?
- (4) The ever popular Kooshball
- (5) Or Tonka Trucks
- (6) Or the one we get tons of every year at the rummage sale - Beanie Babies!
- (7) And last but not least - the Tamagotchi
- c) Now, imagine if you will, that you want to get your niece or nephew, or your grandchild a hot toy for Christmas
 - (1) They want the Sky Viper Drone - that is the hot item this Christmas
 - (2) Will you go pull out your old pet rock for them to play with?
 - (3) How about giving them your old Etch-A-Sketch? - it has knobs you can play with like the Sky Viper
 - (4) Okay, those aren't electronic, give them your old Tamagotchi assuming it is still alive - at least it needs batteries and makes noise like the Sky Viper
 - (5) Of course not, because that is not the toy they want - that is a toy from your past as a child, not from their life as a child
5. Here is the point: when we insist on having worship styles the way we prefer because that is what we had growing up in the church, it is the same as insisting on giving this child a toy from your past to play with that you got enjoyment out of
 - a) Your childhoods are in two very different cultures
 - b) You would not expect that they would go crazy over a toy from your past
 - c) They go crazy over the toys from their present
 - d) We should not expect or force the community that we say we want to reach to love music that we loved from our past that still near and dear to our hearts
 - e) We should expect them to love music that is from their present and will become the music near and dear to their hearts
6. But I did place one toy in particular in the list to prove another point: the Tonka truck
 - a) It is a timeless toy
 - (1) If I didn't fear people catching me, you might find me in the nursery on days when I am unsupervised playing with the cars and trucks in there
 - (2) It's a great toy that kids of all ages can enjoy - it is timeless
 - b) Just like the Tonka truck, there are some hymns and Christian songs that are timeless

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- (1) Amazing Grace - because of the words and the tune, it is easy to sing, memorable, and meaningful
- (2) Same thing with many of the Christmas carols
- c) Over the years Tonka has made little updates and tweaks to have their trucks enjoyed by new generations (just like cars, and just like electronic geeks and the iPhone or Samsung)
 - (1) Some of the classic hymns and songs of the faith with a few tweaks become loved by a new generation
 - (2) Grab your hymnal and turn to Hymn 24
 - (a) Did you know the song we did for the offering was a hymn that was written in 1875?
 - (b) Some updates to the music and you introduce wonderful theology and get a new generation excited by the music
 - (3) And some hymns and songs of the faith, like the pet rock never become popular again
 - (4) Some, with a little tweaking help a new generation fall in love with the Jesus we love
7. When it comes to the issue of preferences in worship the solution to the problem is simple
 - a) Music is one tool in the box of worship
 - b) If we are to be obedient to Christ's command to make disciples, we will use that tool for God's glory
 - (1) Satan wants to use the tool of music as a means of division
 - (2) We need to be unified in our understanding of what music is for the process of disciple making - it is a tool
 - (3) A tool is most useful when it is used for its intended purpose
 - (a) Grabbing a screw driver when you need a hammer is not very helpful
 - (b) Trying to cut wood with a drill is tough - I know, I have done it
 - (4) Trying to use any musical style that does not connect with the ones we are trying to reach is foolish - its like using the wrong tool for the job
8. God's Word never focuses on the music, or the style to be used
 - a) If it did, we would all singing middle eastern Psalms and songs of ascent
 - b) The Bible focuses on outcome of worship, on the heart of the worshiper
9. The reason I put so much emphasis on this is because, invariably someone will approach me and say, "Well can't we just have a blended service - some music that we enjoy and some that they enjoy?"

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- a) Did you listen to the statement?
 - b) Who is that statement about? Me and Them - OUR preferences
 - c) Blended is built on the wrong foundation: We do we negotiate a truce?
 - (1) We as believers should not be fighting among ourselves over style of worship
 - (2) We as believers should aim the style of worship to the people that we want to reach for Jesus
10. We have to move from focusing on musical style to focusing on purpose
- a) The purpose of the church is to make disciples
 - b) Worship is a spiritual discipline that communicates a biblical meaning in a cultural form
 - (1) God does not have a favorite style of music
 - (2) He wants people to worship Him in Spirit and in truth
- I. The reality is that worship unifies
- 1. We are here to worship the Creator, our Savior, our Redeemer! Amen?
 - 2. Worship unifies us
 - 3. Music rarely does
- J. If we want to see people of the community who are far from God transformed, God's people have to make our worship about God and His glory, rather than preferences
- 1. A good rule of thumb: If you are demanding a particular element for worship that cannot be demanded in expressions of worship anywhere in the world
 - 2. Then you are demanding cultural things, not biblical things
- IV. The final thing about worship, and changes that must happen - worship needs to be understandable to those that would be transformed
- A. In other words, can a seeker understand the worship?
 - B. Everything about the service does not need to be planned around the company that comes, but they should understand some important truths
 - 1. That Christians are seeking Christ in worship
 - 2. All the elements of a service are designed in that manner
 - C. If they come over for a visit and cannot understand the simple truth that Christ is preeminent we are doing something wrong
 - 1. They may not understand everything - and that is okay
 - 2. But they should at least get that Christ is preeminent out of every worship service
- V. Closing
- A. Music is a tool of worship

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1. As a tool, it is used in the purpose of the church, which is to make disciples
 2. End result is that music should match the stylings of those we are trying to reach with the gospel
- B. When we are able to lay ourselves aside and see this, then we will be on the road to better health as a church, and be able to more effectively minister to our community because our tool will match the job

PRAYER CHALLENGE: Lord, please help me understand that my heart needs to be set on you. Your mission is the furtherance of Your glory in the world. That means I come to church to worship You, and let the style be one that draws new people to Jesus. Give me a heart to reach not-yet-Christians, and a peace of how we as a church reach out to them. In Jesus name, Amen.