

July 14, 2024

Gather to Worship

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb. 10:23–25),*

**This morning, we begin a worship series on the topic of Worship.** I have noticed that people need regular reminders about the significance of gathering for worship every week. For many of us, weekly worship has become a routine, and we may forget the purpose of coming together. While there is beauty in routine and being familiar with the liturgy, hymns, and rhythms, it can also lead to a lack of awareness and appreciation. Throughout this series, we will focus on King David and King Solomon to understand what it means to be people of God's heart. Despite their influence and fame, worship has a way of humbling them, just like it does for us. Our Worship Liturgy consists of Gathering, Call to Worship, Call to Confession, Prayers of the People, Message, Benediction, and Sending out.

**Today, we start with the act of gathering.** I want to express gratitude to our ushers and greeters for their hospitality as we entered the sanctuary and to everyone who volunteered to make this space a sanctuary dedicated to God. We all play a part in creating this sacred space; our presence and unity make it special. Jesus set an example for us by consistently attending the Temple for worship and encouraging his disciples to continue these practices. Similarly, in Hebrews 10:23-25, early Christians were encouraged not to forsake gathering together, despite the potential dangers. This shows that Christian faith is not just about personal beliefs and reading the Bible alone; it involves gathering together in worship and supporting one another. Faith is not meant to be lived in isolation, as Christians need each other for spiritual growth. Therefore, being part of a church community is essential for a thriving Christian faith.

**Many believers today choose not to assemble for worship for three main reasons:** individualistic spirituality, negative church experiences, and the busyness of life.

**The first reason is the increasing trend of individualistic spirituality.** Instead of connecting with Christ through committed church membership and gathered worship, many prefer a more personalized spirituality from websites, books, and informal fellowship. Some have preferred online worship over in-person gatherings due to convenience and autonomy.

**A second reason is negative church experiences.** Some believers have been deeply affected by abusive leadership and toxic relationships within a church, resulting in real emotional scars. It's important to remember that not all churches are the same, and judgment should not be based solely on negative experiences. Despite the pain, Christ understands and emphasizes the importance of gathered worship and the means of grace within a healthy church.

**Lastly, various life obligations such as work, family, and stressors** may hinder Christians from attending church on the Lord's Day.

Regardless of these challenges, we can draw inspiration from the lives of David and Solomon. David's character is particularly intriguing, as he is described as a "man after God's own heart"

(1 Samuel 13:14) despite his imperfections. Understanding this description and how Solomon carried on this legacy can bring valuable insight.

In the following series, I invite you to consider that, for David, worship was life. Worship was not just something David did; it was who he was. David lived and breathed worship. Although he made mistakes and sometimes followed impulses that led him astray, he consistently lived as though his life was an offering to God.

David brought the Ark to Jerusalem to honor God and bring Him to where He is known and worshiped. David loved the Lord and expressed that love through his songs, many of which are still beloved today. I believe that the primary purpose of our gathering is to honor God.

**Of course, we want to honor God and love being in His house. But what happens when things go wrong? When technical issues arise, and it seems like everything is falling apart?**

That's when worship becomes the best response. David continued to bring the Ark, even when there were no explanations for his troubles. He danced with all his heart in times of grief and joy. He danced alone; at other times, the whole city joined him. They participated in the sacrifice and the following feast, rejoicing and thanking him, claiming him and the God who inspired him.

**But what about those who don't gather?** There are those on the sidelines who keep to themselves. Who stands apart and above and doesn't like what they see? Michal didn't gather with them for worship that day. She stood apart, looked out, and looked down, and "she despised him in her heart" (2 Samuel 6:16). There are those who won't gather for many reasons. That is not to discourage us. We can keep inviting, extending our hands, but keep dancing. And gathering, mixed motives, incomplete stories, lack of answers and explanations, and all. And just keep dancing.

In this series, we want to see that life is worship. Worship is the workshop of the Holy Spirit. The means of grace are the sacred tools by which God shapes and fashions us into the image of His Son. We will walk together through the order of worship and gain insight into how our lives are shaped and bounded by our inclination and calling to worship. We seek after God's heart as we worship and as we live. When we learn to live wholeheartedly, we will find our way to worship with rejoicing.