

Last Sunday, we discussed why we gather to worship. Why do we leave our comfort and pleasures to come to a dedicated space of worship? This morning, we focus on an essential part of worship, **the 'Call to Worship.'** It's not just a formality, but a significant moment where we call each other's attention to prepare for the important celebration. The call to worship is the beginning of a worship service that calls God's people into God's presence with a Scripture or anthem that focuses on God and helps us 'tune in.'" When Robert Robinson penned, "Come Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace," he wasn't speculating. He knew the reality of the human condition. The heart is a fickle thing that is restlessly prone to wander and needs to be tuned regularly. **The call to worship functions as a way to tune our hearts and engage us in the worship process.**

How often do we pay attention to the call to worship compared to other aspects of worship? It's often seen as just a signal for the beginning, similar to a bell in a classroom or a whistle at a train crossing. It's a form of making noise or music that communicates "It's time to begin." While it does serve as an attention-getter, the words we say or the songs we sing during the call to worship have deeper significance.

When we come together for worship, we bring with us our diverse stories, experiences, and individualities. We bring our convictions, uncertainties, faith, questions, aspirations, and fears. This messy wholeness is what we bring when we gather. Through worship, we are called to adopt a new perspective and to see and exist in the world in a new way. We are called to view ourselves and our connections with God and the wider community in a new or renewed light. Worship invites us into a relationship of support and acceptance, and it is where we first experience this.

There is a quiet reminder in the call to worship that worship is not our idea. While a pastor or worship leader may issue the call to worship, it's actually a call from God to his people; as Michael Goheen says in his course on pastoral ministry, "It's not something they have decided to do because it is a good idea, it's because God has called them to assemble and to worship. ... " It is God who is speaking to his people, commanding, inviting, and exhorting us to praise him. This call is rooted in a firm commitment to both his glory and our joy. When God's people are gathered in his name, God serves as the host. He has initiated and invited us into fellowship with him and to be nourished.

In the call to worship, we recognize and remember that it is God alone who is worthy of having our hearts, lips, and lives. As truth rings through our bones, we are reminded of the object of our worship. Worship, in the rhythm of revelation and praise, begins with God making himself known and is followed by our response of remembrance and praise.

This worship response is rooted in who God has revealed himself to be. We praise and exhort God because he has revealed Himself to us in his word. The beauty of his character inspires our worship of him. He is the God who has fixed his love upon us as his chosen people. He is the God whose faithfulness cannot be exhausted. He is the God who is worthy of worship from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Our theology leads to doxology.

**Please take note of today's call to worship.** It's the invitation that permeates the atmosphere. We are not summoned because of our righteousness, work, or piety. We are welcomed because God has chosen us, Christ has redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit has sealed us for eternity. This call is for the weak and the weary, the poor and the helpless. The call to worship is an invitation to come and drink deeply from the well that will never run dry (Isaiah 55:1). The call to worship lays the foundation for what we will experience throughout the service. It acts as a catalyst for community building as we come together to declare our purpose in gathering for worship.

**David experienced the goodness and faithfulness of God** as he transitioned from being a sheep follower and a singer to becoming a mighty warrior and, ultimately, the ruler of God's people! One day, while sitting in his palace court, David expresses his desire to build a temple for the Lord to Prophet Nathan. However, during prayer, God instructs Nathan to convey to David that he won't be the one to build a house for God, but instead, God will build a house for David. Uncertain of how David will take the news, Nathan returns to inform the king. **He plans to invite the king to join in a call to worship** as a way to present the Word from the Lord.

David wanted to build a house for God to declare Jerusalem as Israel's spiritual and political center. This seems like a good idea, but why God was against it is unclear. One way to look at it is the timing issue. Even though God wanted a temple, He told David that he wouldn't be the one to build it. Instead of a simple "no" or "not yet" God asked David to consider His perspective. **God wanted David to shift his focus and allow Him to take the central place in David's life and plans,** as well as in the lives and plans of the people of God.

It's important to remember that worship is where we encounter God and acknowledge that God is in control. It's God's vision and perspective that should guide us in living out our lives. **When we gather for worship, we are called to live in a new way as God's people. Let's listen to this calling and live our worship fully.**