

9/19/2021
Text: Psalm 27:1,4-6

Sunday after Pentecost Pastor Priewe
Theme: Our Family Worship

My Grandmother gave me one of those gifts that keeps on giving. She gave it to me not on Christmas, but one particular New Year's Eve. Grandpa had died and gone to heaven a few years prior and at age 92, she was now living in an independent senior home. We had made arrangements that I would come over to see her Christmas tree in her little apartment and then I would take her to church for New Year's Eve service.

When I showed up and began knocking on her door with no answer, I began to worry. Maybe she was asleep, but there was no answer to the phone or the door. Getting one of the staff to let me in, I was fearing for the worst. My stomach dropped when I saw her feet jutting out from behind the bed down on the floor, but her loud breathing, almost snoring, immediately told me she was alive. She was flat on the floor and I knelt beside her and I lifted her head to wake her. Her eyes popped open, she looked at me and spoke profound words I'll never forget. "Timmy, (she always called me Timmy) we're late, we gotta get to church!"

I looked at her, helping her to realize she had fallen down and was laying on the floor and I said, "Grandma, I don't think we're gonna make it today." Still, it took the paramedics to convince her she wasn't going anywhere but the hospital. That night the X-rays showed she had broken her hip, but the fall hadn't broken the habit, the custom, the priority she had had since she was a little girl.

Those profound words she spoke to me as she first popped her eyes open, "Timmy, we gotta get to church," were her translation of the words of our sermon text for today from Psalm 27. King David originally spoke them in Hebrew. **"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple."**

It was about a week later that Grandma died. God had granted her that psalm's prayer: the privilege of going to dwell in the house of the Lord for the 92 years of her life. That privilege and habit and priority she passed on as a gift to her daughter who passed it on to me, truly a gift that keeps on giving: the ingrained custom of going to the Lord's house to worship!

Last week Pastor Wordell told us what it means that we're *A Family Growing in Christ*, and he said we'd spend the next 4 weeks focusing on each of the things we do as a *Family Growing in Christ*: We Worship, Study, Serve, and Share. Today our focus, as you may have guessed, is *Worship* and our theme is this: **Our Family Worship**.

That's not just a description of what people around here do, it's a declaration, it's a commitment. Worship is the pre-eminent thing the people of God do to express their relationship with God and with each other as a congregation. But why? Why is worship at the top of our list of priorities, or if it isn't, why should it be? That's exactly what we'll look at today.

But first, can I tell you a secret? I didn't really want to come to worship today, or at least not here. That's a big secret, especially for a pastor. Pastors are supposed to live for church! It's been a long week--an ambulance ride to the E.R. after Josie had an allergic reaction and choked on her own spit-up. Two nights in two different hospitals for observation and tests. I wanted to worship at good old St. Matt's... St. Mattress's that is. I wanted to stay buried under the covers and not wake up til noon. I wanted to stay in my PJ's on the couch and not get up till next week.

Sound familiar to you? You've heard the call of St. Mattress too? They have the largest attendance nationwide with St. Couch and St. Work coming in a close second and third. After a long week, I knew I wouldn't want to worship. Let's face it, when do we ever really wake up in the morning bursting from our bed and running out the door whistling on our way to worship. No, we wake up with the devil holding a pillow over our face (as Matt Papa likes to say). And

our sinful nature is all too willing to say, “Yes to bed, yes to being lazy, no to worship and no to God! And see how dangerous that is, when he’s what our soul needs the most.

Today we’ll look at the blessings God gives us through worship that we simply can’t afford to miss out on. The most important blessing God gives us is the gift of himself. Have you ever thought about the fact that our worship services are called just that: services? Isn’t that kind of a funny title for a gathering? They’re called services first and foremost because our God serves us: divine service as it’s sometimes called.

God comes to us with a feast of all that he has done for us, like a full course fine dining experience. We begin with a hymn as an appetizer, next we confess our sins and hear God’s servant stand in his place to proclaim forgiveness to our weary hearts and bodies. We get to savor the lessons and the sermon like a nice juicy steak. The Lord’s Supper and the Blessing follow as the finest dessert, the sweet assurance to leave with.

In worship, God feeds your faith in a special way that involves your senses and your surroundings. David said he longed to be in the house of the Lord, **“to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple”** (27:4). There really is something about being in the house of the Lord, about coming and standing before him in his place of worship. That’s even the reason that churches have a big and grand space with high ceilings, to point you upward and represent the presence of the Lord. Above all, we see the beauty of our God displayed to us in the message of the cross of Christ, which stands before our eyes as the centerpiece of Gospel truth.

This last year we’ve learned the great benefits of our Livestream worship, giving us the opportunity and ability during a pandemic to stay connected to worship even when we weren’t able to meet. But we also realize, there are things a screen simply cannot deliver in the same way the worship experience is designed to serve you. It’s kind of like the difference between watching a documentary about the Grand Canyon and standing on the edge of the Canyon taking it all in. The documentary isn’t bad, it’s good, but it doesn’t deliver the full effect!

Let me give you a for instance. Last Easter, Carissa and I and Josie, only two days old, worshipped with you here in spirit from the Neonatal ICU at Children’s hospital 90 miles away. What a blessing it was to hear Pastor Wordell preach the message of Resurrection Hope from this very pulpit. But that morning was the second Easter in a row outside of God’s house after the previous years’ service had been during the Safer at Home Orders. I just couldn’t go another Easter, so I pulled in the parking lot of my childhood church in Milwaukee and snuck in the back of the narthex unnoticed, so I could hear the end. I was still wearing my sweatpants from the day Josie was born, but my heart knows now exactly what King David meant when he said, **“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock!”** (Psalm 27:5)

I waited there in the back, still unnoticed, knowing exactly what was coming and when I heard it begin, I wept and wept as God’s people, gathered together with the organ resounding and trumpets blaring, sang, “I Know that My Redeemer Lives.” Without ever even knowing I was there, God’s people were blessing me on one of the hardest days of my life by preaching exactly the sermon my heart needed to hear that day. Each person sang in unison, **“He lives to bless me with His love. He lives to plead for me above. He lives my hungry soul to feed. He lives to help in time of need.”**

That’s the blessing of worship that no computer will ever replicate. It’s you! Each one of you proclaiming the word of God to each other’s heart with your voice and your presence and

your song, just as King David said, “**I will sing and make music to the Lord.**” (Psalm 27:6). God uses your voice to feed those around you and at the same time you get to praise him for all he’s done. You get to exercise and express your faith as you offer your worship to God and encourage others!

Dear friends, we cannot afford to give that up, just as the writer to the Hebrews pleaded. “**Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**” (Hebrews 10 One Christian author notes how true it is, “*Joy shared is joy intensified*”. That’s the reason thousands pack the stands for the big game. It’s one of the reasons we gather when *Our Family Worships*. It’s better when we’re together, and you don’t want you to miss it. Ask any one of our shut-ins what they wouldn’t give to be back here dwelling in the house of the Lord with you!

Now I could go on for days about the blessing of worship, but there’s Communion today and we better get to it. But that’s actually the last thing we need to spend a few moments talking about: the Lord’s Supper. God once again comes to us with the gift of himself as Jesus truly gives us his own body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, just as he instituted with his disciples on the evening of the Last Supper. Just as they shared it together, so this is a supper we share as a family, gathered together, growing in Christ.

We celebrate it and distribute it from one believer to another, in keeping with the way Jesus commanded us to celebrate the Supper. The idea of Virtual Communion, that is, communing with the elements at home over the livestream, is a question that has certainly come up lately, but it brings with it so many questions. Does it work the same over the stream? Is it proper? Is it in keeping with what Jesus instituted and intended? The answer to a lot of those questions is, “Welllll... I don’t know, maybe?” All those tough questions are precisely part of the problem. The supper is all about certainty, the certain assurance of the gospel, on your lips as you look God’s servant in the face and he proclaims forgiveness to you and you proclaim the Lord’ death to each other until he comes. We want to maintain the certainty of what happens here, in person from one believer to another. That’s why we gather for it and don’t just send everybody home with the little kits. If you’re realizing it’s time again to be communed, please reach out to your pastors. We want you to be fed.

So many blessings we’ve talked about today, we simply can’t bear to miss them. God serving us, us serving each other, and all of us together worshiping the Lord. It’s a way we deny ourselves our laziness or our business or our aversion to people or whatever else keeps us away. It’s the place and the time where we position ourselves to receive exactly what we need the most. It’s the way we declare our priorities and commit to giving and receiving all the blessings God wants to give to us and through us. **Our Family Worships**. 1) to be fed, 2) to encourage one another, 3) to gather for the Lord’s Supper. Let’s make that not just nice phrase or a nice logo. Let’s make it the truth. You and your family worships. This family worships, Our Family Worships. Amen.