

Worship – Our Eternal Calling: Created to Worship
2 Corinthians 5:19

Introduction – My Place in This World

I don't think about it very often. But I'm glad that I don't have to live my high school years all over again. Though I feel no compulsion to attend school reunions – I missed my 40th last year - I remember my high school years well. There were some good times – for sure - but there was a lot of angst, too. I think the thing that underlies so much of adolescent struggle was insightfully expressed in Michael W. Smith's 90's pop hit, "My Place in This World." Here are the lyrics.

The wind is moving
But I am standing still
A life of pages
Waiting to be filled
A heart that's hopeful
A head that's full of dreams
But this becoming
Is harder than it seems
Feels like I'm

Looking for a reason
Roaming through the night to find
My place in this world
My place in this world
Not a lot to lean on
I need Your light to help me find
My place in this world
My place in this world

If there are millions
Down on their knees
Among the many
Can you still hear me?
Hear me asking
Where do I belong?
Is there a vision
That I can call my own?
Show me, I'm...

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If we were dead honest, we'd admit that the search to find our place in this world is one that few of us outgrow. We all want to know the unique purpose of our life. We're looking for a place of significance – where we make a difference.

I believe that God enables us to find a unique place where we will find fulfillment and meaning in life. I have found it. In one sense, there is a unique purpose and calling that all of us should pursue and find. I don't need to give you a proof-text on that. It's universal. We all feel it in our gut. But the Bible also shows us that there is a purpose for which we were all created. There is a role – an understanding – a life that God has designed for each of us to live to find our greatest fulfillment. Simply put, God made us in his image to have a relationship with him. Most of us know the story well from the first three chapters of Genesis. Of all of God's good creation, mankind is unique because we alone are made in the Creator's image. God had a unique relationship with Adam and Eve. They were given stewardship over the earth, to care for it and enjoy its bounty. They also enjoyed being in God's presence and having a relationship with him. The old Reformed Catechism says, "The purpose of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

But when Adam and Eve sinned they became estranged from God. That purpose for which we were created was now unfulfilled because God and humanity were separated. The whole story of Scripture is that of God making a way to restore the broken relationship between men, made in his image, and himself. In 1961, A.W. Tozer put it this way,

The purpose of God in sending His Son to die and rise and live and be at the right hand of God the Father was that He might restore to us the missing jewel, the jewel of worship; that we might come back and learn to do again that which we were created to do in the first place—worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, to spend our time in awesome wonder and adoration of God, feeling and expressing it, and letting it get into our labors and doing nothing except as an act of worship to Almighty God through His Son Jesus Christ. I say that the greatest tragedy in the world today is that God has made man in His image and made him to worship Him, made him to play the harp of worship before the face of God day and night, but he has failed God and dropped the harp. It lies voiceless at his feet. (*Worship: the Missing Jewel of the Church*) <http://worr.org/images/File/Tozer-Worship%20The%20Missing%20Jewel.pdf>

I think his summary statement is profound in its simplicity: “Christ died to make worshippers out of rebels.” The Scriptures say: “...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself...” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Approaching the Topic of Worship

For the last 40 years, worship has been a hot topic and an essential concern in the evangelical church. It hasn't been a peaceful or easy conversation. Entrenchment and insensitivity over music styles have been the catalyst for “worship wars.” I'm a veteran of those wars and I bear some of the scars of the battles I have faced. But like Tozer, I am passionate about corporate worship. Though we are progressing in our understanding and practice we have a great need to challenge ourselves to go deeper in our understanding of worship. After all, it is the ultimate purpose of redemption and the reason for which we were created. As we begin this journey of exploring worship, I believe it is essential that we embrace three values:

1. **We must be committed to the authority of Scripture.** This is always our starting point in everything. But let us not just give lip-service to this value. Let us be, in words of James, “doers of the word and not just hearers, only.”
2. **We must be learners.** That's what it literally means to be a disciple. This will be hard for us. It requires that our minds and hearts be open. It will most likely require change. There is no growth without change. Are you willing to do this?
3. **We must be servants of one another.** Love should always mark the church. Servant-hood means that we honor one another and consider them before ourselves. Are you willing to do this?

Made in the Image of an Outpouring God

One of the essential doctrines of Scripture is that we are made in the image of God. The implications of the doctrine are far-reaching. It is the basis of our understanding that we can have a relationship with our Creator. It also means that our souls carry the echo of God's character. We are not God, but we were made to be like him.

The nature of God is that he is eternally pouring out himself. The Apostle John tells us that God's nature is love. (“God is love.” I John 4:8.) Love is the outpouring of oneself toward

another. In outpouring love, God created the heavens and the earth. In outpouring love, God created us to have relationship with him. In outpouring love, God sent Jesus to reconcile us to himself. In outpouring love, God blesses us with good things. Everything that God does is an outpouring of himself. He is eternally active. He is an eternally outpouring God.

In the same way, because we are made in his image, we were created to be outpouring beings. This outpouring of our lives always has a focus towards an end. (Use a flashlight to demonstrate...) The focus of our outpouring could be toward us. Or it could be money, or status, or some other thing that is the deep desire and focus of our soul. Harold Best, in his book, *Unceasing Worship*, says that the *outpouring* of our life is, in essence, worship. If the focus of my soul is upon myself, some other person, or some thing, then that is what I am worshipping. Best says, “Nobody doesn’t worship.” Bad English, but insightful theology. We are always worshipping because there is always an outpouring of our life. We can’t help it. We are either idolaters or worshippers of the true God. It all depends on why we do what we do and the focus of our soul.

Let that sink in for a while...

Three Words...

All of our life is worship. Wow. That’s both a disturbing and exciting thought. Can Scripture give us more insight on that idea? The Bible was written in two primary languages – Hebrew and Greek. Before Jesus came, the Old Testament was translated into Greek called the *Septuagint*. It is considered authoritative and would have been the text that the early church used. Together with the New Testament, which was written mostly in Greek, they form the complete Bible. I mention the Septuagint because I want to explain three Greek words that were translated as “worship” in both the Testaments. These words will give us more insight into what the Bible teaches about worship. The word, “worship” itself, is an English word meaning “ascribing worth.” It is not technically a biblical word. It is the word that the English translators used when they encountered these three Greek words:

1. The first word is *sebomai* and it is rarely used in the Scriptures. It literally means “fear” or “respect.” It tells us that God is God and we are not. *Sebomai* speaks of God’s otherness and mystery. We should always approach him in awe and wonder.
2. The second word is *proskynein* and it is the word most often translated as “worship.” It is the word from which we get “prostrate” – laying flat out on the ground. It literally means “to kiss toward.” It implies bowing down. The implications for worship are that we approach God with humility and a bowed heart. The descriptions of worship in Scripture also strongly suggest that there is often a physical component to worship, symbolizing our humble engagement with God. We’ll deal with physical expression in worship exclusively in a sermon later in this series.
3. Lastly, the Greek word, *latreuein*, is translated as “worship.” Simply, it means “to serve.” When *latreuein* was used in the Old Testament it was always in the context of corporate worship. It meant that the people would serve God. I love this word, because it broadens our perspective of worship and aligns with the idea of a continuous outpouring of our souls to God in worship.

“Lifestyle Worship”

We often get the idea that worship only happens on Sunday morning when we gather together at this time and in this place. What we do here is very significant as a gathered people in corporate worship. But we are worshipping all the time. It is just a matter of who or what we are worshipping. That’s why the concept of worship as the outpouring of our soul and service is so helpful. We can worship God when we’re in the nursery, changing diapers. We can worship God in children’s church through our service. We can worship God outside the walls of this place: on the job, in our homes, when we are at play. We’re always worshipping. It is a just a question of who or what.

Through Jesus, we can be restored to be worshippers of God rather than rebels against him. The Book of Romans is a tremendously rich theological book. Throughout the book, the Apostle Paul explains God’s plan of salvation and redemption. It is truly glorious. At the high point of the book, the Apostle issues this strong appeal: “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-

around life—and place it before God as an offering.” (Romans 12:1, *The Message*) That was Eugene Peterson’s “rubber meets the road” translation in *The Message*. Other translations add, “[this] is your spiritual service of worship.” (ESV, NASB)

Summary

So here is the simple message of today’s sermon. God made us in his image to be worshippers. Worshipping God is the continual outpouring of our soul toward him. That is the “sweet-spot” of life. Worshipping God in his presence is fullness of joy. It is the place where we will find fulfillment. It is ultimately, “our place in this world.” But we can only be worshippers as we are made right with God through Jesus Christ. Jesus died, rose again, and is ascended to the right-hand of God the Father in order to make us worshippers rather than rebels. And that is what we celebrate when we come to the Lord’s Table.