

Renewing our Vision through: Worship

Introduction:

This past Sunday, I walked with us through a journey to "Renewing our Vision" for life and ministry... Oftentimes after a period of relaxation or holiday we can find it difficult to get back into the swing of things. We enjoy our time of rest and now it is time to get back to work. So for the next few Sundays we will be renewing our vision. The International Foursquare mission is "...dedicated unto the cause of inter-denominational and worldwide evangelism" while our local mission is to see all people restored to God's original design by establishing a community vision of apprehending God's heart and fulfilling His dreams.

Renewing our vision is a priority if we want to bring pleasure and purpose to our relationship with God. Some of us may need to be renovated or refurbished or repaired. Others of us may need restoration or to be replenished with strength and wisdom. This morning I want to suggest that we can renew our vision for life and ministry as we establish worship in our lives, corporately and personally.

Worship – God’s Big Idea:

Worship brings a panoramic view to us of numerous thoughts, ideas and emotions and expressions. Worship is a broad term and some have said that it defies explanation. Worship is spiritual and natural; it is heavenly and earthly and it is spirit and truth. Merriam-Webster defines worship as, "to honor or reverence a divine being or supernatural power" or "to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion" following up with "to perform or take part in worship or an act of worship." Three thesaurus entries for worship include: revere, adore and love.

- William Temples who was a Bishop of the Church of England in the 1800's says, "Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of will to his purpose -- and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin."
- Rick Warren in The Purpose-Driven Life says, "Anything you do that brings pleasure to God is an act of worship."

Worship is to take one's eyes off of ourselves and to place our total trust in God Almighty. Worship is the dramatic celebration of God in view of his Sovereignty in such a manner that our lives become inspired by his infinite greatness and personal love.

- Transcendence (describes God who is beyond our limits in thought or belief; to exist above and apart from the natural world): ***the aspects of God that exceed human power to grasp...***
- Immanence (describes God as existing in and extending into all parts of the created universe): ***the aspects of God that he reveals to, and in, humans...***

As we connect with God understanding the significance of worship we are renewed in our relationship with him releasing a personal encounter of intimacy and friendship with God. Another important aspect of worship is that the Father of heaven is actively seeking those who will worship him in spirit and truth as we see in **John 4:23**. To worship one is required to engage “in spirit and truth” with the Creator – our Lord of Life. Worship then becomes our response and expression as believers to a divine initiative. Throughout the Scriptures we see responses to God, singing, shouting, rejoicing, silence, quiet, dancing, raising hands, clapping hands, and waving hands.

The revelation of our *transcendent* Almighty God is fully experienced in the *immanent* presence of God who chooses to freely interact with us in our midst releasing his sons and daughters into the essence and expressions of charismatic worship.

Here is a quote from Saint Augustine in early 5th Century describing a member of the congregation: “During the singing of a psalm you will see him singing with intense emotion, with the expression of his face adapting itself to the spirit of the psalm and with tears often coursing down his cheeks. Yes, he sings with the very marrow of his bones, with voice, face and profound sighs, all showing how deeply he is stirred.”

So much more could be said of God’s Big Idea as related to worship. The Scriptures are full of encounters of men and women experiencing God and following up that experience with such a variety of expressions. Suffice it to say, God is interacting with mankind and worship is abounding.

Worship – Man’s Response:

The Bible has many statements about worship and its various experiences and expressions. Worship Involves both the corporate and personal; in both the Old and New Testaments, we see groups of people getting together to corporately worship God. As well, there are numerous references to individuals expressing their praise and worship of God. Worship is both corporate and personal; both are needed to fully engage one’s life with God. One without the other minimizes God’s original idea of worship thereby robbing God of true worship and lessening our intimacy with God. As believers we were born into a family wherein worship is both public and personal.

However, in the context of church a lot of misconceptions exist about worship. I want to look at several things that worship isn’t. There are a bunch of others things that could fit into this discussion, but these are important.

What worship isn’t and is:

- Worship isn’t about what we know.
What we know can get us a long way in life, but not in worship. Many think they know so much about God and focus on their knowledge and understanding. The Bible tells us “knowledge puffs up” making an individual proud and thereby leading us away from God.

Worship is about who we know. Remember the women at the well in John 4; she came to worship Jesus who was being revealed to her. It is knowing God that makes worship real.

- Worship isn’t our idea.
Religion is man’s attempt to appease God through acts of sacrifice or worship. Worship is not a human innovation. Some of what we do in worship is born of human creativity, but that does

not mean worship is our brainchild. Humans, using their God-given creativity, wrote the songs we sing.

Worship is God's idea. We must remember that God is transcendent not us. We didn't think up the need for worship. God created us to be loved and to love others. Worship was inspired in the mind of God.

- Worship isn't a spectator event.

A few weeks ago we had the Labour Day Classic, between the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. We won... not so a week later unfortunately. At the Labour Day Classic there were 30,000 plus people watching the game at Mosaic Stadium. Only about a 100 or so people will be directly involved in the game, including players, coaches and officials. Not all the players will even get into the game. Football is, by and large a spectator event.

Many times, people look at a worship service as a spectator event. We see ourselves as the audience, but the real worship takes place up front with the worship team. Not the case.

Worship involves participation. God expects us to get involved. God is the audience. The person up front is the prompter, and the congregation is the performers. We are to experience worship and then express ourselves to God before each other. It's a celebration...

- Worship isn't simply physical.

Every church has a liturgy of some sorts. We walk through our order of service; first of all, we attend, we sing, raise our hands, and say "amen". We do announcements and take an offering and listen to the preacher. All the while our minds can be in a 100 different places.

Joke: there is a story about a church and had a man in the choir who couldn't sing. Others tried to help him find other places of ministry in the church without hurting his feelings but with no success. The worship leader became so desperate that he went to the Pastor and told him that he had to do something or he would quit, and half the choir would as well. After trying to beat around the bush, and make a point unsuccessfully, the Pastor finally told the man that he needed to leave the choir. Why asked the man... Several people have told me you can't sing! That's nothing the man said to the pastor. Fifty people have told me you can't preach but you're still here!

Worship is spiritual. Worship is more than singing. True and genuine worship must engage our spirits. As we go through the motions our spirit must encounter God's Spirit, releasing revelation and inspiration for life and courage and vision for ministry.

In Conclusion:

We are looking in this fall season to renew our vision for our lives personally and on behalf of Courts of Praise. We are called to be a people of purpose and vision and yet at times we find ourselves limited in vision for a variety of reasons. One of the best ways to renew of vision is to walk in the fullness of worship. We must encounter the transcendent Majesty of Heaven, thereby inspiring our lives, like the saints of old, to worship. We put into practice the freedom of worshipping God in spirit by expressing ourselves openly before him and each other.

Worship is so much more than simply going to church. Our worship of God is a lifestyle that causes us to reflect and rejoice in our relationship with him throughout our everyday experiences. Anything less is half-hearted and not worship at all. Worship can never be faked because God sees right into our hearts.

Our worship must be about God, participatory, spiritual, and genuine and lived out as a lifestyle. We must worship both personally and corporately. Our worship must be in spirit and truth. The Spirit will pour out his life to us, apprehending us with his love and freedom. Our truth in worship must be sincere in our praise of him, while fulfilling his purpose and vision for our lives and ministry.

In Application:

Here are a number of questions to consider this morning.

- In my worship of God do I experience his Greatness and Glory which are beyond measure?
- In my worship of God do I express myself appropriately or am I indifferent?
- In my worship of God do I explore new ways of bringing pleasure to him?

As we worship God fully, it is his desire and passion to empower us with his purpose and grace. He longs to fill us with fresh waves of his Spirit helping us to be the witnesses he has called us to be. Let's apprehend his heart in worship and allow his Spirit to create and fulfill God's dreams in us. Let's take a few moments to reflect on the questions above.