

A sermon preached at Eternal Love Lutheran Church, Appleton, WI, by Pastor Robert O. Balza on the 13th Sunday of Pentecost, August 22, 2010.

iLife: “It’s Not About Me”

Sermon # 1

iWorship

It’s All About the Glory of God

Hebrews 12:28–29

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, dear friends:

We always thought that we were the center of the universe. We were convinced that everything revolved around us. In 150 A.D. Ptolemy and Aristotle and other philosophers concluded that planet earth was fixed and immovable, and that all celestial bodies, including the sun, moon and stars all bowed down to us. It seemed to make sense. And our egos loved the thought that we held center stage.

Then along came Nicolaus. Nicolaus Copernicus with his maps, drawings, bony nose, Polish accent and pestering questions. In 1543, just before he died, Copernicus book *De Revolutionibus* was published. In this book Copernicus wrote that he believed that the sun was the center of our universe and that the earth and all the planets revolved around the sun.

His ideas were rejected by virtually everyone, until half a century later the astronomer Galileo agreed with him. Even then, Galileo was threatened with torture and death unless he renounced all belief in Copernican theories.

What Copernicus did for the earth, God does for our souls. In His Word God points to the Son, the Son of God, and says, “Behold, the center of the universe.”

It’s not about us. God puts the spotlight on His Son, and proclaims Him the King of the universe, the center of all things. “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:17-18).

Jesus is the Star of the show. Our message is about Him. Our service is for Him. Our work is about Him. Our love is about Him. Our worship is about Him. Our lives are about Him. As John the Baptist said, “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

Today we will examine a little text to help us understand that worship is not about me and you, but about the glory of God.

WORSHIP WITH A THANKFUL HEART

The apostle says that “*we are receiving an unshakable kingdom.*” Whose kingdom is that? In the Lord’s Prayer we say, “the kingdom is Yours.” The kingdom is the Lord’s.

And His kingdom is unshakable. His kingdom – His majesty and rule over all things on our behalf -- is certain and unchangeable and will outlast all other kingdoms.

Hurricanes blow. Buildings fall. Markets crash. Jobs are lost. Loved ones leave us. Satan rages. Yet, God still works in our behalf. He makes all that happens work together for our good.

Earthly kingdoms and empires come and go. But God’s love for us stands sure and eternal. No matter what happens, you and I have God’s love. In the darkest of days, or when all things are going our way, God is working on our behalf in order to bring us safely to a glorious and happy eternity.

Our lives change. Sometimes we succeed. Sometimes we mess up royally. Sometimes we love. Sometimes we don’t. Our faith is easily shaken by bad news and circumstances beyond our control. But God’s love never changes. He is our Rock of refuge. His kingdom is unshakable, and we can count on Him working out everything to bless us and bring us safely home.

So let us be thankful and worship God acceptably. Sometimes people ask, “Do I have to go to church to be a Christian?” Putting the words “have to” in that question implies that we worship as an obligation, as something we are supposed to do. And that reveals our self-centeredness.

As a child I was blessed with generous relatives and friends who showered me with gifts on my birthday. Afterwards, my mom would give me paper and something to write with and tell me to write a note of thanks. There were times I never did. I played with my new toys and wore my new clothes and never bothered to say thank you. That’s how self-centered I was. And saying thanks still doesn’t come easily. I must still think that it’s all about me.

Lord, change our hearts! Fill us with thankfulness for Your grace and blessings! For Your unshakable kingdom. For Your unchanging and eternal love. For Your unbreakable promises. For hope that won’t disappoint, lead us all to say, “I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’” (Psalm 122:1) Then our worship will be acceptable and give You glory.

WORSHIP WITH REVERENCE AND AWE

Our text continues: “*and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.*” How do we worship God reverently?

To reverence something is to take it very seriously. To worship God with reverence is to regard worship as very important, and to do everything possible to do it in a way that would honor Him.

Let’s define reverent worship with this little quiz. You choose between the two answers: Which is reverent worship ...

- To close our eyes when we pray so we don’t think of something else.
- To look around when we are praying.

Which is reverent worship?

- To read the Love Notes during the sermon.
- To take notes during the sermon to help remember important points.

Which is reverent worship?

- To sing the hymns and songs the best we can, even if they aren’t our style

- To refuse to sing the hymns because it's not cool

Which is reverent worship?

- To get to bed early enough on Saturday so that you can concentrate on Sunday
- To get to church if you get up in time.

Which is reverent worship?

- To wear the clothes that you would wear for a job interview
- To wear the clothes that you would wear for mowing the lawn

Which is reverent worship?

- The pastor shakes the sermon "out of his sleeve"
- The pastor works hard to understand the text in the original language and to carefully write, illustrate and memorize a sermon that is faithful to the Scriptures

Which is reverent worship?

- Coming to church early enough to pray and prepare by meditating with the preservice slides
- Rushing into church during the first hymn

Which is reverent worship?

- Planning the offering ahead of time and giving it gladly
- Throwing something into the plate

Which is reverent worship?

- Saying the traditional things without thinking
- Thinking through everything that is said

Which is reverent worship?

- Coming every week, listening politely, and going home the same as before
 - Coming to church, listening to God's Word, and putting it into practice all week long
- I hope that the answers to all of these are obvious (if not, they will be supplied upon request).

Reverent worship is an expression of how important God is to us.

Someone said that the word "worship" comes from "worth-ship." They say that the way we worship is an expression of how much we value God and His blessings to us. How much is God worth to you and me? He is worthy of our best, isn't He?

Al was talking with a few others during break-time at work the other day. Somehow the conversation got on going to church. A couple of Al's fellow employees commented on the previous week's worship experience, then asked him, "Al, where do you go to church?"

"Actually I don't."

"Why not?"

"It's boring. I just don't get anything out of it. I figure that church is supposed to make me feel good, and if it doesn't, I just don't see why I should go."

"Well, worship isn't about us, Al. It's not about feeling good. It's about honoring God. It's about praising Jesus for dying on the cross for us. It's not about us, Al."

Al didn't know what to say. He just thought going to church was something people did in order to be good Christians.

What's most important to you in your worship experience? Let's keep the "i" small when we worship. Let's focus on the grace of God, praise Him for our forgiveness, give Him our best, and worship Him with reverence and awe.

*Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness. (Psalm 115:1)*

Amen.