Let Us Worship

Mount Zion RDU Kingdom Group

The Attitude of Worship

Brokenness

When we, with all of our imperfections, stand in the presence of the completely perfect Christ, the very contrast is enough to break our heart.

David understood the place of _____ in worship, for he wrote, "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"

Humility

Read 1 Peter 5:5

Brokenness and _____ form a dwelling place for the Almighty God, and God's presence is a necessary prerequisite to worship.

Love

Love must become the _____ of all worship

Giving

In the Old Testament, no worshipper could approach God with _____ _____.

No gift, No worship.

Our worship needs an attitude of

_____ in giving.

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The Attitude of Worship

The Bible does not even give us her name, but she performed a most beautiful act of worship in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Because what she did in worshipping Jesus parallels what Mary, the sister of Lazarus, did to Jesus in the home of Simon the Leper, some believe that this is the same incident. Whether or not there were two separate but similar incidents, or merely one that has been reported differently by two writers, is unimportant at the moment. Luke merely identifies this woman as "a sinner" who brought an alabaster box of ointment, "and stood at His [Jesus'] feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke 7:38).

In this simple story, Luke deals very strongly with the attitudes involved and released in worship: those expressed and released by the worshipper, those expressed and inferred by the spectators, and the expressed attitudes of Jesus who was so lavishly worshipped on this occasion. These, or similar, attitudes will usually be present when worship is being released to God in an earnest and truthful manner. Whether they produce the

worship or are a by-product of the worship may be difficult to determine, but they are active in worship.

The first attitude that seemed to impress Luke was this woman's brokenness, for he records that she "stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears" (Luke 7-38). Brokenness is a good beginning attitude in worship, for tears have a way of cleansing the soul. When we, with all of our imperfections, stand in the presence of the completely perfect Christ, the very contrast is enough to break our hearts.

David understood the place of brokenness in worship, for he wrote, "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). In referring to a broken spirit, David uses the Hebrew word shabor which means to shiver, to break to pieces, or to reduce. A spirit that trembles in God's presence, or has been broken into multiple pieces, is classified as an acceptable sacrifice in worshipping God. He does not indicate whether the spirit may have been broken by God, by the worshipper, or by the harsh realities of life; he just indicates that no matter what has broken us, that brokenness can be brought to God in sweet surrender, and it is accepted as an attitude of worship.

When David spoke of "a broken heart," however, he used an entirely different Hebrew word, dakah, which means to crumble, to beat to pieces, to bruise, to crush, or to humble. To this he adds the expression "a contrite heart." "Contrite" is a word that is used to describe the process of

making talcum powder. In days gone by some brands of talcum came in containers on which were printed the words, "this is stone that has been contrited." It simply means that what was once part of a mountain has been ground and pounded so fine that it will float on water. It now has taken an entirely different form. Did the prophet have this in mind when he wrote, "Is not My word ... like a hammer that breaketh the

rock in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29).

Worship requires being broken! Most of us have built such protective walls around our emotions that we cannot release tenderness, love and adoration. We're more like the alabaster box than the ointment that was poured out. Until something breaks that rock-hard attitude there can be no love poured out on Christ.

But tears are not only an evidence of being broken and contrited; tears are also an expression of full emotion. Jesus told us, "... thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ..." (Mark 12:30). Usually this much concentration and exertion will build such a wave of emotion that it can only be released in tears. As the tension of a beauty pageant reaches the climactic moment when the winner is about to be announced the atmosphere becomes electrifying, and when the winner is announced she generally bursts into a flood of tears as a release of the pent-up emotions that had been building.

Should worship be any different for us? If we, too, have set all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength to come into God's presence, when that climactic moment occurs tears should be a natural expression of the release of joy and happiness. Tears are nothing to be ashamed of, for even great athletes have been seen joyfully weeping after winning an event. Since tears are such a part of our release of high level emotion—and airports, where I spend so much time, are a good place to witness tears as friends and loved ones meet in joyful embrace we should expect to burst out crying like this worshipping woman, for we have finally come into the presence of a loving God.

A second worshipful attitude that this unknown sinful woman displayed was humility. Luke remembered that she "began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head ..." (Luke 7:38). Paul reminded the Corinthian

believers that "if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (1 Corinthians 11:15), which suggests two reasons why this act of wiping the feet of Christ was a display of humility. First, in the days of Jesus the women wore a covering over their hair as an outer symbol that they were under the authority or covering of a man. It was not too unlike our custom of wearing a wedding ring. When this unnamed worshipper loosened her long hair allowing it to fall freely around her, she had the attention of every man in the room, for this was an act done only by a wife in the privacy of her bedroom, or by a prostitute as she attempted to turn a trick. The fact that Simon was so amazed that Jesus, with His prophetic insight, would even let this class of woman touch Him (see Luke 7:39) suggests that Simon either knew her reputation from past experience, or what she was doing was so classified as part of her trade that all the men were horrified. This woman put her reputation on the line in order to worship Jesus in the manner that she felt He should be worshipped, and so must we. Peer pressure has kept far too many saints from releasing their affection to Christ. There must come a time when the question "what will others think of me" gives place to "what will Jesus think of me?"

Furthermore, I see humility in this act of wiping the dusty feet of Jesus now made muddy with the nearly endless tears that have fallen on them, because Paul declared that a woman's hair is her glory, and this worshipping woman took her glory to wipe up the mess.

Her act indicates her attitude. Absolutely nothing she had was too good for Jesus!

When God was speaking through the prophet Isaiah, He declared, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite

ones" (Isaiah 57:15, italics added). God declares that He not only dwells with the angels in heaven, but He also dwells with the contrite and humble spirit here on earth. Brokenness and humility form a dwelling place for the Almighty God, and God's presence is a necessary prerequisite to worship.

Even the New Testament tells us that "... God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5). Pride and humility are not too unlike the positive and negative poles of a magnet. If you attempt to put two magnets together, positive to positive or negative to negative, the combined energies of the magnets will repel and push the magnets away from each other. If, however, you reverse the polarity of one of the magnets and bring the negative pole of one magnet to the positive pole of the other, the combined force in the two magnets will attract each other until it becomes difficult to separate them after they have joined.

If we approach God in the pride of our being, accomplishment, or station in life, we are pushing away from the divine presence. But if we approach God in true humility He draws us unto Himself and none can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Worship without humility is like love without commitment; it is shallow, emotional and fleeting.

A third attitude of worship that is exemplified in this story is love. It was not merely that she felt the love of Jesus or even felt love for Him, but she expressed what she felt. She poured love out in an unashamed, nonsexual manner. She evidenced that love in kissing Christ's feet. Unloving worship is worse than an uncaring stepmother, for love must become the heart of all worship.

Still a fourth attitude that was displayed in this act of worship is giving, for she poured out the contents of the alabaster box on the feet of Jesus. That the ointment was precious and costly is indicated by the fact that it was contained in alabaster. Very

likely this represented her savings account, for widows and unmarried women rarely trusted their funds to the bankers of their day. Gold coins and costly spices were stored as their savings. In Mark's account of Mary anointing the head of Jesus, the value of the spikenard that she poured out was calculated as a full year's salary. Just how valuable this particular ointment may have been is purely a matter of speculation, for Luke didn't even identify the nature of the ointment. But whatever its value, this woman poured it out on Christ's feet as an act of worship. She gave Him the best that she had. She did not confine herself merely to expressing her emotions; she also gave tangible evidence of her love, devotion and adoration.

I have already stated that one of the characteristics of Old Testament worship was jubilation and joy, but another major facet of Israelite worship was gift-giving. Three times God discussed the compulsory feasts that His covenant people were to attend, and all three times God commanded that "they shall not appear before the Lord empty" (Exodus 23 :15, 34:20, and Deuteronomy 16:16). No worshipper could approach God with empty hands, for Old Testament worship involved sacrifices, gifts, and offerings, all of which were brought by the people themselves. No gift, no worship! God made no provision for freeloaders in His economy. They could, if forced by poverty, trap a sparrow or bring a turtledove, but they could not worship empty-handed.

Should New Testament saints do less? The very psalter which formed the hymn book of the early church exhorted the believers:

O sing unto the Lord a new song ... bless His name ... Declare His glory ... Give unto the Lord ... give unto the Lord glory and strength ... Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him, all the earth (Psalm 96:1-9).

After telling the saints in Corinth about the gifts of the Spirit, the power of love, and the surety of the resurrection, Paul concluded his letter by writing, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). Nowhere in the New Testament is worship discussed more fully than in this letter, and in the midst of that discussion Paul, too, says we should not come empty-handed.

It certainly is not that heaven is short of funds and needs the meager gifts that we can bring; it is simply that our worship needs an attitude of surrender in giving. We, too, need to pour out our "ointment" upon Christ to release a greater depth of worship upon our God.

Whenever our expressed attitudes of worship are observed by non-worshippers, we can expect them to react with attitudes of criticism. Like Simon the Pharisee, they will criticize Jesus for allowing such lavish worship to come from such sinful people and they will criticize the worshipper for wasting on Jesus what might well have been given to the poor, as the disciples did when Mary anointed Jesus' head. But if the attitudes of the non-worshippers can keep us from worshipping we will never become worshippers, for they have always outnumbered us greatly.

Simon's criticism expressed an attitude of self-righteousness when he said, "If He knew what kind of person she was ... ," inferring that Simon very well knew. The self-righteous always project that they know something that no one else knows, but the worshipper is only concerned with responding properly to the person he has come to know.

Throughout life, expressed attitudes involve responsive attitudes. Love extended generally induces a love response, while anger vented often stirs an angry retaliation. When this

unnamed woman poured out her brokenness, humility, love, and sacrificial giving upon Jesus, He, in turn, released His attitudes toward her. The first such attitude was forgiveness. Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much ... " (Luke 7:47). Simon had told Jesus that in his opinion the person who had been forgiven the most would love the most, but Jesus reversed it and said it is the love that produces the forgiveness. Salvation is more than a sinner forsaking his sins, it is a sinner responding to God's love!

The next three attitudes Jesus demonstrated to her are given by Luke in the last verse of this chapter, "And He said to the woman, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:50, italics added)". Faith, deliverance, and peace all have their origins in Christ Jesus. None of us can generate them, but all of us can receive them. They are reciprocal responses to our expressed attitudes of worship.

There is no greater place to receive faith than while worshipping at the feet of Jesus. Furthermore, no matter what we may need to be saved from (the Greek word Luke used is sozo which means "deliver, protect, heal, preserve, be whole, do well, save"), our complete salvation is vested in the Savior, and when we are worshipping Him our salvation is assured. Similarly, there is no peace like the peace a worshipper finds when he has completely poured out himself upon his Lord.

Attitudes are vitally important in all of us, for they color and control our actions. True worship will flow out of proper attitudes, but what is our attitude about the object of our worship? Just who is to receive worship? Is it but a name, or a person? Does our attitude towards who He is affect the way we respond to Him?