

The Purpose of the Church: Worship

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[0 : 00] You have your Bible, you turn to the book of Malachi. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament that helps you to find it.

We've been going through a series of sermons about what the purpose of the church is. To this point, we've talked about the fact that the church is a body, not a building.

That the church has the job to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ, the gospel to the world. And that the church makes disciples as they proclaim that truth.

And so today we're going to look at the purpose of the church regarding its worship. And then next Sunday, just to let you know, we'll conclude this part. Because, I mean, we could go on and on and on, I believe.

But next Sunday we'll talk about fellowship, the purpose of the church for fellowship and community. And that will move us into February where we, again, the sermons center around what is the purpose of church membership.

[1 : 15] So if you have your Bible, turn to Malachi. If you don't have a Bible, there is a Bible in the pew that you can use. If you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you today as a gift from our congregation to you in hopes that you'll continue to be reading the Word of God.

Would you please stand with me? Reading Malachi chapter 1, verses 6 through 14. And there will be many scriptures for this morning's sermon, so just have your Bible ready to be turning.

First one, Malachi chapter 1, verses 6 through 14. A son honors his father and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor?

And if I am a master, where is my fear? Says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise my name. But you say, how have we despised your name? By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, how have we polluted you? By saying that the Lord's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil?

[2 : 24] Present that to your governor. Will he accept you or show you favor? Says the Lord of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us with such a gift from your hand.

Will he show favor to any of you? Says the Lord of hosts. Oh, that there were among you who would shut the doors. That you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain.

I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts. And I will not accept an offering from your hand.

For from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name will be great among the nations.

And in every place, incense will be offered to my name and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted.

And its fruit, that is, its food, may be despised. But you say, what a weariness this is. And you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick.

[3 : 31] And this you bring as your offering. Shall I accept that from your hand? Says the Lord.

Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it and yet sacrifices it to the Lord what is blemished.

For I am a great king, says the Lord of hosts. And my name will be feared among the nations. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

You remember when you first, for those of you who drive a car, when you first learned how to drive a car, remember how nerve-wracking of an experience that was when you first got behind the wheel with your instructor beside of you and you were conscious of everything that was going on, weren't you?

Where your mirrors were, making sure those were adjusted correctly, making sure that your hands were in the right spots, making sure that you knew how to use the blinkers and the windshield wipers.

I mean, everything that you did as you got into that car and as you drove that car, especially when you went on the highway for the very first time. Do you remember that? You were conscious of everything that you were doing.

[4 : 48] But then, after a while, as you were driving more and more and more, you probably had something happen to you where, say you were at work, and something happened at work that frustrated you.

And so you get in your car in the parking lot, and you're driving on your way home, and all you're thinking about is that frustrating thing that happened, that meeting, or that person who didn't show up, or who let you down, or whatever the case may be.

And before you know it, you're in your driveway. Not that you were unconscious while you were driving, right? That wouldn't be a good thing. But almost as if you were non-conscious.

You just know what you're doing. You're turning. You're using your blinkers. You're making turns. You're doing all these things without really thinking about them. We do that, don't we?

We get so accustomed to doing something that it becomes a habit for us that we really kind of stop thinking about what it is that we're doing, or maybe even why we are doing it in the first place.

[5 : 59] Worship on Sunday morning can become an experience like that if we're not careful. We can be non-conscious.

I know I'm making up a word, I believe, but just going through the rituals, going through the motions. This is just what we do. Not really thinking about what it is that we are doing.

And as we've seen in reading Malachi, God is not pleased with that. Malachi takes place sometime between Ezra and Nehemiah, where the people are offering worship to God, but it's empty worship. They're not giving God their best. They're just going through the motions, through the rituals, through the traditions, and God is not pleased. God is not content with our leftovers, the leftover parts of our time, the leftover parts of our treasures or our talents.

He wants us to pursue Him, to seek Him, to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. And we do that partly when we're conscious of what it is we're doing when we're here.

[7 : 20] And not just here. I'll get into that in a moment. But as you read the Bible, one thing that is clear is that God is very much aware of our worship.

And that theme really dominates all of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, where in Genesis, Adam and Eve fell, right? Because their center, their focus, became man-centered and not God-centered.

And so they fell. In Revelation, we see, though, the redemption of humanity, how God has saved us, culminating with our being physically present with Him in His kingdom forever.

And interwoven between those two books, Genesis to Revelation, we find that Scripture has a lot to tell us about worship. For instance, in Mark 12, verse 29 through 30, if you recall, Jesus is asked a question.

The question He is asked is, what is the most important commandment? And Jesus quotes the Old Testament. He quotes Deuteronomy 6, verses 4 through 5.

[8 : 35] And He answered saying, the most important is, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

And so what He's saying there to us is that the greatest priority that we should have in our life is to worship God with all that we are and with all that He has given us.

Now quickly, I want to say that a lot of times when we think about worship, our thoughts are on music, on singing, on playing instruments, but that is a part of worship.

But really what we're going to see here today, I hope, is that God is after more than that. He looks at your entire life as an act of worship to Him in everything that you do.

And we're made to worship. We were created to worship. And we see, because of our fallenness, that oftentimes we direct that worship that we should be giving to God to something else, don't we?

[9 : 51] Especially right now with football season coming to a close, correct? Or basketball, NGCA basketball moving towards March Madness.

And I'll never forget, and it pains me to talk about KU basketball today after yesterday. So you guys have been gracious to me. But anyhow, I remember the first time I went to a KU basketball game, and it's historic.

You walk in, and they have all of their trophies and their national championships chips, and all these other awards that, you know, and you walk through and you're just in, oh my gosh, this is amazing. I can't believe that I'm here. And then you walk into the arena, and it hasn't really changed. It's like walking back in time, and you sit on wooden bleachers, and they play this video that goes over the history of KU basketball with their very first coach, who was James Naismith, who invented basketball.

And so you see all of these videos and these pictures in it, and it gives you chills to watch it. In fact, and I will confess that I almost felt like I was brought to tears the first time I watched it.

[11 : 02] That's sad. Now, a member of our church in Leavenworth, they had some tickets, and they gave them to me, and I took Dani, and I was excited.

She's going to see. You know, she doesn't really care about this. You know, she's going to see this game. She's going to be involved in this experience, and she's going to come out passionate like me.

And so we go through all the motions. They wave the wheat. They do all of these different rituals. They go around the stadium, and you have these different chants, and it's the same every game.

And then they play the video. And I remember, you know, trying to get excited and looking over to her, and she's just kind of sitting there like this and not impressed.

And then in looking at her, I was convicted. Because seriously, because I was looking around, I was like, you know what this is? This is a worship experience.

[11 : 58] We are worshiping some young men playing basketball in some history that when it all is said and done, doesn't really matter.

It was a giant worship service to basketball. We do that. We direct our worship towards people and towards things that we shouldn't.

And we know from Scripture as we've read, God is concerned about that. He's concerned about your worship and the quality of it, the focus of it.

Our worship, not just right now on Sunday morning or Sunday night, but every day in everything that we do, He is concerned about our worship.

And this has always been the case if we look back through Scripture. If we go back to Exodus chapter 20, there with the giving of the Ten Commandments, God established first and foremost above all other things that His people understand that in their lives, in all things, He comes first.

[13 : 08] Let's look at that. Exodus 20, 20 through 5. There He declares, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down. You shall not worship. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I am the Lord your God. I am jealous God. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me.

God is concerned about your worship. And God not only commands our worship, but again, He's concerned with the details of it.

Again, we go back to the Old Testament. We look at the tabernacle which God had given instruction to Moses on how it was to be constructed and how it would serve the purpose of worshiping Him.

[14 : 14] And there we see that God gives Moses seven chapters of details about this place. So He's concerned about the little things of our worship as well.

Whereas conversely, there's only 31 verses that talk about how God created the world. He is concerned about the details of how we worship Him.

the tabernacle was designed for one purpose. Again, that purpose was to worship God, a place where God would meet with His people located at the center of their camp, indicating that in all that they did, God wanted them to know that He was there and that He must be the focal point, the center point.

But when worship becomes decentralized by God's people, when we fail to worship Him properly, what eventually happens as we've seen indicated here in Malachi and throughout scriptures is that

they eventually fall away in all other things.

This is really the first part we see with Adam and Eve, don't we? They fail to look at God, fail to trust in Him, fail to give Him the honor that He is due, we begin to fall.

[15 : 33] We begin to fall away. So this is very important, that we not become man-centered, but that we always strive to be Christ-centered. Never asking, what is in it for me?

Never losing sight of the fact that we have been blessed to be saved by Christ, to be called to be a part of His church, to proclaim His truth, to make disciples, and to worship Him now and forevermore with the lives that He has given us and the lives that He has redeemed.

So the main idea for this morning's message is this. I'm going to let you read it while I mute my mic so I can clear my throat. worship should be the priority of believers and the church they belong to because they exist to worship God and in so doing they find lasting satisfaction.

Worship should be the priority of believers and the church they belong to because they exist to worship God and in so doing they find lasting satisfaction. So we should worship God because He is God.

And we've been created to worship Him. And there's something to that. When we are worshipping God like we ought to, we find satisfaction in our lives.

[17 : 00] St. Augustine said it so well. He said, our hearts are restless until they find rest in you. Our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.

Because God has created us, He's created us for Himself. And in worshipping Him, in setting our minds on Him and obeying Him, what we discover, what we find is a life that is satisfied.

A satisfaction that gives purpose to our lives, that motivates us to serve, as we've seen. Proclaiming the truth, declaring the gospel, making disciples.

But a restless heart, a restless church, often has forgotten its purpose to worship God.

I'm sure many of you have been on Facebook this week. And there's a lot of restlessness on Facebook, isn't there? A restful heart, though.

[18 : 05] A restful church is one that is always keeping its eye on Christ. Always maintaining their focus on Him.

Worshipping Him. Seeking His kingdom. Seeking to fulfill the purpose that He's given us. To make much of the name of Jesus Christ with the lives that He has given us.

And in doing so, we experience satisfaction. And a believer who does that, or a church that embodies that, will be a church that God uses greatly.

To make disciples. To be a blessing to those within that local body and that community. And so I ask you, is that what you want?

Do you want to be a part of a church like that? Do you want God to use our church like that? To be a blessing to our community? Do you want to be used by God to be a blessing to other people within this church?

[19 : 07] And I hope that you say yes to that. So how do we fulfill our purpose to be used by our greatest potential for God? So again, we see the church's purpose.

Part of it is to worship. But that really begins with you and me. Each one of us individually. And so the first thing that I want us to see here from Scripture is that we are called to live worshipfully. We are called to live worshipfully. Again, we can be of the mind that worship only means singing or playing an instrument.

But it's so much more than that. Scripture says that worship is a way of life. Turning your Bibles to Romans 12, verses 1-2.

And I have it on the screen as well. But Romans 12, verses 1-2. Again, the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says here, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your, what?

[20 : 28] Spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. So that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

And so when we just read that, did you catch a paradox there? Something stick out to you that's like, that seems to not fit together.

Well, what it is is a living sacrifice. That's the paradox. We are to be, Paul says, living sacrifices. We are to present ourselves to God as these living sacrifices.

And it's a paradox because usually, whatever is sacrificed is what? Dead. It's dead. Or if it's alive, which God didn't prescribe that, but if it's alive and it's sacrificed, it's going to be dead soon. But we are called to be living sacrifices. What does that mean? What is Paul talking about? [21 : 43] Well, in the Old Testament, God, if you recall, established the sacrificial system as part of Old Covenant worship. And animal sacrifices were used to atone for the sins of the people.

And we look at Hebrews 9, verse 22. That sheds some light on why that was the case. It says there, Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood. And without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

So, one life was given in order to spare another. Now, of course, we know that we live under a new covenant and we no longer offer animal sacrifices because those sacrifices were just a shadow of Christ and His coming to be the Lamb of God who shed His blood to atone for the sins of His people permanently on the cross.

So, animal sacrifices are no longer necessary to atone for our sins. However, there is a demand here from God that we offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices.

Just as sacrifices were dead before they were to be presented upon the altar, in a similar way, Scripture tells us that prior to our salvation, we were dead.

[23 : 15] Ephesians 2, verses 1-10. Paul says there, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved. And raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast, for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So we see here that we were dead, but now, through Christ, we are alive. And just as the Old Testament believers were commanded to offer the best of their animals in sacrifice, so we now, with our redeemed lives, having been brought from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, having been reborn, renewed through Christ with these lives that He has given us now, we are likewise then as living sacrifices to give Him what?

[25 : 12] Our best. Our best. To seek Him wholeheartedly. Not serving God through empty ritual, but giving Him our very best.

Not to atone for our sins, not because we think that doing so will make God love us anymore, but to express our thankfulness to God for His saving us, giving us a purpose, calling us to be a part of His redemptive plan, giving us an eternal life.

If you know God has saved you, you know that He, you know what He's saved you from. and in knowing that, worship should continually flow from you as a result of that.

Like David in Psalm 45, 1, he says there, my heart overflows with a pleasing theme. And there in Hebrew, that word overflow can be used to describe something that is boiling.

If you ever put water on the stove and you turn it on to boil, you know if you leave it unattended, what happens? It boils up and it boils over. And so David is saying is when we know the Lord, when we've been saved by the Lord, when He is central to all that we are and all that we think and He is who we live to worship, our heart can't help but be hot for Him, boil for Him, overflow out into others in the lives that He has given us to live.

[26 : 56] Does that describe you? Is your heart hot for God? Is it overflowing in praise? Does your heart burn and yearn for Him?

Are you living your lives worshipfully? Or are you busy going through the motions in the rituals?

It happens. Look at Luke 10 verses 38 through 42 where there we encounter two sisters.

Luke 10 verses 38 through 42. It says there in the Bible were on their way, Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house and she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching.

But Martha was distracted with much serving and she went up to Him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

[28 : 15] Tell her to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary and Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her.

So notice, where is Mary in this story? where is she at? Where is her position? She is at the feet of Jesus.

That is about as close as you can get to someone, isn't it? As they are sitting to be right there at their feet. And what is she doing? She is listening to Him.

She is attentive. She is absorbing every word that is coming out of His mouth and when you sit that close to Jesus you can't really be distracted, can you? Because in her vision that was pretty much all that she was going to see.

She wasn't looking around. She wanted to see Jesus. She wanted to hear Jesus. She was completely absorbed by Him. Now her sister Martha, what is Martha doing?

[29 : 23] Well she is busy. I almost feel her, sense her scurrying around one place or another huffing and puffing as she does that because she is so annoyed that no one is paying attention that she is doing all the work.

Mary should be helping her out. She is serving. She is serving but as Jesus pointed out her serving was not properly motivated was it?

It was making her anxious. It was making her troubled. It was making her angry. Do you think that God is pleased by that kind of service?

No. Did Jesus seem impressed by how busy Martha was? No. He wants our service but he wants it to be motivated by our worship to him.

So we can get so busy here doing things but if our motivation for doing that isn't because we love the Lord, we want to serve him and to worship him and others to do the same, God is not impressed by that.

[30 : 37] And listen, he doesn't want you to be busy, anxious, running around crazy like your hair is on fire. He wants you to be at his feet first. Listening to him.

Spending time with him. Several months later, look at John 12 verses 1 through 8. Again, we know that Mary and Martha, their brother was Lazarus. This was soon after Lazarus was raised from the dead by our Lord.

And again here we have a lesson to learn from Mary. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, surprise, surprise, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.

the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, who was about to betray him, said, why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

[31 : 48] He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and having charge of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put into it. And Jesus said, leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.

For the poor you will always have with you but you will not always have me. So again here we see first of all that Mary was making sure that she was spending time closely to Jesus.

And then here we see her actions to worship him by anointing his feet and washing his feet with her hair. Now what we need to understand here too is that in this culture a woman's hair was her glory. It signified her beauty and that hasn't changed all that much I think in our culture. You know if a guy gets a bad haircut he usually just gets it cut shorter or waits for it to grow out.

But if a lady, if a woman has her hair chopped off in a way that she doesn't like she's mortified often right? And we understand because that means a lot to a woman and we understand why the that is.

[33 : 00] And so it wasn't any different back here. In fact I think it was even more important to them. Their hair signified the glory and the beauty of a woman. And here she is taking her hair and using it after anointing Jesus' feet to clean them.

And we also know, we also know from this culture that right, they often walked or they only walked around barefooted or with sandals on. And it was dusty and it was dirty and it was grimy.

And so a man's feet were gross to clean. But here she is, again, at his feet, worshiping him with this perfume that would have cost a year's worth of a person's wages.

Valuable. pouring it all over his feet. And instead of using a towel to clean them off, she uses the hair on her head.

That is a heart. Hot for God. That is a heart that has been warmed by him. She worshipped him with her very best.

[34 : 20] Nothing else was worthy of her Lord. And Christ praised her for it.

You know what we need in our church? And I say this to myself too, is we need more Marys, don't we? We need more Marys.

Believers who worship Christ the Lord with all that they have and all that they are with the lives that they've been given. And you know if that doesn't describe you, then it's probably because you're not spending enough time at the Lord's feet.

I think that's where it began with Mary. Spending time with the Lord at his feet. Continually. A couple weeks ago, I had planned out when I was going to write this paper for my class.

20 to 25 page paper. And the way I like to do things is to write everything in a week. Do all the preparation and the research beforehand and then hit the computer hard with my tapping and write that paper.

[35 : 41] And so I had the plan. You know, this many pages this day, this many pages this day, this many pages this day. And so the first day got off to a hard start. But I had hit my goal, but I was not happy about it.

And I was not looking forward to the rest of the week. And again, thoughts of why am I doing this? I don't have to do this. Why am I doing this? And then the next day, coming into my office and I was about to do the same and I realized that on Monday, this was on Tuesday, I hadn't done my Bible study, I hadn't spent much time in the Lord in prayer, and though I still had, you know, 17 or more pages to do, I stopped what I was doing and I went to the other room adjacent to my office and I just gave that time of my day to the Lord.

And it was sweet. And it was good. And I went back to my work and I'm telling you that I got twice as much done in that day as I had planned to do. So oftentimes we think that, you know, I'm so busy, I got so much stuff going on, Lord, I just, you know, I know that you love me and I'll talk with you on my drive home from work or from picking up the kids at school or whatever, but God wants the best part of you and the best part of your day.

And I'm telling you that if you do that, it centers you in such a way that everything else around you makes sense and gives you pleasure in ways that maybe it wouldn't have otherwise.

And ultimately, God has given his best for you. And shouldn't we want to give our best then to him?

[37 : 25] And don't waste precious time here in life being busy, being anxious over things that only take you away from Christ.

Live your life worshipfully. Now, how can you do that? Well, I think we see by the example of Mary. Draw near to Jesus. Fill your mind and fill your heart with his word and eliminate everything else that keeps you from doing so.

Because God wants to use you. God wants to use you to proclaim his truth. God wants to use you to make disciples. And he wants you to give him and this church, I believe, your best.

Christ. So how do we fulfill our purpose to be used to our greatest potential for God collectively?

Well, second, Scripture tells us that we must participate in a worshiping community.

Live worshipfully. And living worshipfully, Scripture says, means participating in a worshiping community.

[38 : 31] look at Hebrews 10 24-25. We all know this one pretty well, I think. And let us consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, excuse me, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

And so we understand as we've gone through this before that it's important to Lord. that he's called us into community with himself and into community with other believers. We are a part of the body. But too often that verse that we just saw in Hebrews is used in ways that I think the Lord would be displeased with. Often we use it to shame those who aren't here that we believe should be, don't we?

And all we've got to do is look at the parable of the sheep, right? And Jesus leaves the 99 in order to find the one and rejoices over the fact that it's been found and brought back to the flock.

And so we should have the same attitude as well. And we need to be more aware as a church, I think, especially during this difficult time of COVID where many of our body parts, our church members aren't able to be with us here physically.

[39 : 52] We've got to show them that we still care, that we still love them, that they're still very much a part of us. And maybe it's another situation, maybe we know it's just somebody who has unfortunately slipped through the cracks and they're not coming.

You know, we're not going to get them back if we go up to them and we use the scripture and say, hey, you sinner, you know, get your behind back in church. We're going to get them back by loving them and showing them, hey, we need you here.

You're a part of us and we care about you. That'll work. I wonder how often we do that, though. You know, I recently, it was a little while ago, within the past year, was back at home, my home where I grew up, and I pulled out some things under my bed, this bin I had of just treasures that I collected as a boy.

And you know what was in there? Was a postcard I'd received from my youth pastor, and that postcard was about pushing 25 years old. And there it was, and I pulled it out, and Jack said, well, what is that?

And I explained, you know, in the summertime I'd be playing baseball a lot, I'd miss youth group a lot, and so this was my youth pastor writing me a note just to encourage me and let me know that he loved me.

[41 : 17] And I kept that for all that time. How long did it take him to do that? Five or ten minutes? Well, what a lasting impact. We have to do that kind of stuff for one another, don't we?

Show that we care. Participating in a worshiping community by living a life that is worshipful, which means you're centered on Christ, and when you're centered on Christ, you begin to pay more attention to other people besides yourself.

1 Peter 2, 1-5. Another element of this that we need to see. So there it says, the encouragement, so put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and slander.

Live like newborn infants, excuse me, long for the pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[42 : 32] And so what here Peter is talking about this, participating in a worshiping community, talking about the church, he's saying that the church isn't a place that is made up of stone like we saw a few weeks ago, but the church is a place made up of flesh, of people.

It's a community that is marked by their common salvation in Christ and their common desire to worship him. But notice what he says before all of that.

He points out that there are things that disrupt them, disrupt them from being the kind of spiritual house that the Lord uses, that he's placed them into, that they should not have any malice or deceit or be hypocritical or envious or slander one another.

And so I have to say, too, that I think that right now in our nation, it has become fashionable to put the church down. It's become fashionable to be critical of the church.

Now, it's okay to be constructively critical of the church, but what I've seen a lot, and I feel like what I've heard a lot, and I'm sure you have, too, is just people putting down the church for all different kinds of reasons.

[43 : 53] And, you know, it's been a difficult year for the church, I think, especially this year. But you know what we've always got to keep in mind when we're talking about what it means to be a participant in this worshiping community?

is that the church is the bride of Christ. It's his bride. Now, husbands, if someone is slandering your wife, if someone is acting maliciously towards your wife, if someone is doing harmful and saying harmful things to your wife, how are you going to respond to that?

Hopefully not well. Hopefully not well. Because why? Why? You love your wife. The Lord loves his church. And so it's important that when we belong to this worshipful community, we're participating within it, that we understand that we've got to love the Lord's bride, and we're a part of it as much as he does.

Be careful about how we treat one another. Be careful about what we say about this place. Constructive criticism is helpful, but criticism that is not constructive takes our minds off of Christ where it should be, and our worship of him, and our ability to be used by him. We need the church. We should be thankful for the church. And those who are a part of the church, we should be glad that the Lord has loved them and saved them as he has loved and been gracious to us.

[45 : 32] But, when there is discontentment in a Christian, it's typically the result of their either not worshiping the Lord six days a week with their life, or not worshiping one day a week with the Christian community that they have been blessed to be a part of.

Colossians 3, 16 through 17. Instructions for the church. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. You see, your participation here is important because when we are here, when our focus is on Christ, we have a way to be used by the Lord to stir and to stimulate one another to becoming more like Jesus Christ.

But again, being critical of one another is not going to cause that to happen. Ultimately, our worship should be a reflection of the fact that we've been saved and of the fact that we know where we are going.

Do we know where we are going? We are going to be with each other as believers forever. Forever.

[47 : 05] And when we go to heaven, we are going to be together forever. We're going to be worshiping the Lord. Let's look at Revelations 21, 1 through 4.

Press the fast forward button here. Okay, here we are now. Let's fast forward and see where we're going to be. Then I saw a new heaven, John reports, and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

[48 : 09] Now move over to, amen, Revelation chapter 22, 3 through 5. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him.

They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more. They will need no light or lamp or sun for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever. And are we going to, amen, are we going to hear that and go through the motions here? Are we going to know that that's our future and go through the motions and the rituals and the traditions here?

Man, I hope not. Are we going to be anxious about our lives? Are we going to be busy bodies running around thinking all these things that we're doing are so important for getting Christ and where it is that we're going?

I hope not. I hope not. And I know the Lord does not want that for us. Live your life worshipfully.

[49 : 30] All of us. And then participating in a worshiping community. And let me tell you, God will use that in amazing ways. We will benefit.

You will benefit from being loved and served by your brother and sister in Christ and the world will see our good works and give glory to God. Before I get to our application questions, there is a story I think is pretty awesome that I heard in a sermon John MacArthur tell about a Jewish lady who was going to her neighborhood synagogue.

And she went there because she was having problems with her husband and she was afraid that their marriage was going to end in divorce. And so she was anxious about that, obviously distracted about that.

And so she went to the synagogue to her rabbi to ask if he would counsel them. Well, the rabbi told her that she was behind on her monthly dues. And so until, and this is a true story, until she paid up, he wouldn't be able to help counsel her and her husband.

And so she leaves, obviously distraught. And as she leaves, she sees a crowd of people on their way to church and they're going to John MacArthur's church. And so for whatever reason, the Holy Spirit just pushed her in with that group and she went into that church.

[50 : 52] Three weeks later, she was saved and she was baptized. And when John MacArthur asked her, what was it? You know, well, obviously we know it was the Lord that saved her. But her testimony was, when I came into this church that morning, I saw a desire for God.

I witnessed a worship that I'd never experienced before. And God used that to reveal the truth to me. It's possible.

And what we should hope and pray for is that God does bring unbelievers into this place. And that they would witness by the way that we love the Lord in our worship and the lives that we live worshipfully of Him and the way we participate as we ought to in a community that worships the Lord, that they see that, they realize what's missing in their lives, they are aware of their sin, they repent and they turn to Jesus Christ.

Christ. And I hope that you want that. And I pray that we'll see it happen here in our church. Let's move on to our application questions that we'll talk about tonight.

So we meet at 630 and encourage you to come and be a part of that as well. If you can't make it, I encourage you to just take these and reflect on these later this afternoon, later this week as well.

[52 : 10] First of all, why is God worthy of your worship? You've got to understand this part. You're not going to worship Him unless you understand how worthy He is of it.

Why is God worthy of your worship? Spend time thinking about that. Secondly, why is God right to be displeased when our worship is empty or when we're going through the motions and it just becomes ritual and tradition?

Why is He right to be displeased with that? Third, a question that we'll get a little more deeper into tonight. I didn't have time to get to John chapter 4 where Jesus is with the woman at the well, but we're going to reflect upon this.

So I encourage you to go back and look over that text. What does it mean to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth? What does it mean to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth?

That's what He desires. And then finally, why does participation in corporate worship matter? Why does it matter to the Lord?

[53 : 15] And then the follow-up for you would be why should it matter so much to you? Thank you.