



The Trinity Pulpit



“Will You Give Me a Drink of Water?”

John 4:1-42

Rev. Andy Jung

May 18, 2008

"Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness." Psalm 29:2

What is worship? For most of us, our understanding of worship is limited to what we experience in this hour each Sunday. The hour of corporate worship is something to be cherished as it is essential both to our individual faith journey and to us as a community of believers. However, I'm afraid too many of us have taken a back seat when it comes to worship. Our corporate worship should be God-directed and something that we participate in together, rather than sitting back and being entertained by the worship leaders.

Soren Kierkegaard, the 19th century theologian, helped to reshape the idea of worship, even in the mid 1800's. He developed the idea that Christian worship was a drama and had come to the conviction that, though many churches also believed this, the roles in the drama were incorrectly assigned. What he observed was that in the drama, God was the prompter, the worship leaders (musicians, readers of the scriptures, preachers) had become the actors in the drama, and the congregation became the audience. An elite class of worship leaders had implicitly modeled that they were better equipped to be the performers in this drama and that it was best if those in the congregation just watched as onlookers. This understanding of worship, unfortunately, is still maintained and even taught in many churches throughout America today.

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, reassigned the roles. The worship leaders were to be the prompters, preferably behind the curtains so as not to be a distraction. All of us, the congregation as well as the worship leaders, are to be the actors in the drama of worship and God alone is the audience.

To take it a step further, being an active participant in worship with the idea that we are giving God something that God desires is only partially correct. According to Mark D. Roberts, a leading theologian on worship and a former pastor of Irvine Presbyterian Church in California, worship should first and foremost be grounded in the Scripture:

“The Bible inspires and guides every aspect of our worship. The God we worship has been revealed to us primarily through the written Word that consistently bears witness to Jesus, the Incarnate Word. From the pages of Scripture, we discover the true nature of worship and we learn how to worship from inspired directives and examples. The Bible also supplies the foundational content of our worship as it is read, sung, preached, prayed, reflected upon, and enacted.”

Roberts goes on to describe three aspects of worship that help to give a clearer definition. First, worship should be a response to God. It is our reaction to a God who has first reached out to us in love through the

death of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. He is the initiator of the relationship; thus part of our worship is a response to God for first loving us.

Our response to God is only the first part of a clearer definition, because it doesn't specify what type of response we should have. Pharaoh, in the Old Testament, faced God through the message from Moses. His response was to retain the Israelites as captives in slavery. That was not a response of worship toward God. Thus, in addition to responding to God, worship is also making an offering to God. It is giving him something he deserves, whether praise, thanks, adoration, submission, etc.

Finally, the third aspect of worship as identified by Mark Roberts is prayer, which is defined as communication with God. This could take the form of songs, Scripture reading, hearing of the spoken message, time of silence and much more. When we worship, we open up the line of communication with our Lord, giving of ourselves to God.

Most of you, including me, will agree in theory with Mark Roberts concerning the definition of worship. We would also agree with Kierkegaard, who was right to point out that we are the actors in the drama and God is the audience. Unfortunately, even these are too narrow of a definition of worship, for it singles out what we do only once a week. It is my hope that we broaden our outlook on worship. Worship is not only an hour a week in this sanctuary but true worship is also a lifestyle: the way we live our lives on a daily basis that reflects the character of Christ. To worship in spirit and truth means living a life that is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and is under-girded by the truths found in the Scriptures.

In reality, we have a difficult time of living this out. How many times can you remember judging worship on how well the choir sang or how well the sermon was presented? How many times can you remember judging worship on what you got out of it rather than what God received from it? We all do it! We as a staff and as your worship leaders

fall into the same temptation, judging a worship experience by how well the service flowed or how well it was received by you, our congregation.



*“Part of our
worship is a
response
to God
first loving
us.”*

By no means am I down-grading what we receive from worship. No doubt we receive blessings, strength, encouragement, a sense of love and a sense of community through experiencing worship. However, what we receive should not be considered worship, but it should rather be viewed as a by-product or fruit of worship. When we worship God, He heals us, transforms us, and simply blesses us with his presence – which, of course, leads us to worship him even more.

So what does worship have to do with our text of Jesus and the woman at the well? The woman certainly wasn't thinking about worship when she went to Jacob's well to draw water at what would be considered an odd time of the day, back then. The Samaritan woman, who was probably an outcast in her community because of her history of bad relationships, was simply trying to live her life without being noticed. She avoided others by going to draw water during a time when other townspeople would not be gathered at the well for the same reason.

Then, she encounters a Jewish man who dared to speak to her. Jews were intolerant of the Samaritans for they believed that the Samaritans were half breeds who had no right to claim the Jewish patriarchs as their ancestors. In that time, it was also highly frowned upon for any man to speak to a woman in public. None of these barriers deterred Christ from reaching out and giving the Samaritan woman a reason to worship. For her, it all started with a simple question of “Will You Give Me a Drink of Water?”

Because of that simple and seemingly innocent question, the woman found the Living Water, and began to understand true and authentic worship. Worship had nothing to do with the place. It had everything to do with what Christ referred to as spirit and truth. As a result, she understood worship as a response toward God that opens the line

of communication. She understood worship as living a life that is based on the truths found in the nature of Christ described in the Scriptures.

So...what do we do with our new definition of worship? The obvious answer is to work on living our lives as an act of worship, day in and day out. In addition, I would like for us to consider three fruits or byproducts that occur due to our authentic lifestyle of worship.

First, when we live out a lifestyle of worship, we recognize the needs of others. Christ recognized the need of the woman at the well. Christ, in his infinite wisdom knew that the Samaritan woman was broken emotionally, relationally and, most of all, spiritually. Christ was aware of her needs. When we are living a lifestyle of worship, we begin to see the needs around us in our community, in our nation and in our world.

Many in our congregation have seen the needs of the homeless of our community. We've responded by being a part of the Wake Interfaith Hospitality Network, a ministry that takes in homeless families, houses them in local churches, assists them in finding jobs, and, ultimately, helps them in finding a place of their own. In addition, our senior adults have taken the lead in creating "Cold Water in a Bag" to give to the homeless that we encounter on the streets. As a congregation, we have noticed the need of the people in our country who live in poverty. We have sent several mission teams to McCreary County, KY to minister to a community that has been identified as one of the ten poorest counties in our nation. Through the leadership of Rev. Melton and our Missions Committee, mission teams will go back this summer to continue the ministry that was started last year. This morning, our Missions Committee, once again, has brought to our attention a need in our world for clean wells in India. Too many in our world die because they don't even have something that we take all too often for granted. We can't just sit back and watch people die when we have the power to help. When we live a lifestyle of worship, we see the needs of those around us.

Second, when we live out a lifestyle of worship, we share love and grace with others. Christ shared the "living water" with the Samaritan woman, something that will last for eternity. When even his own disciples could not understand why he would talk to a Samaritan woman, Christ shared love and grace with her. Through meeting the physical needs of those in our community, nation and the world, we "earn the right" to share the love and grace of Christ.

However, we must be careful with this. By meeting the physical needs, we are not trading it for an opportunity to share the "living water." It is not a quid pro quo. Too often I have witnessed well meaning ministries to the homeless force the homeless to "sit through a service" in exchange for a hot meal. This is not the example of Christ. As part of sharing love and grace of Christ, we meet the physical needs. In doing so, we open up opportunities to further share that love and grace. Their hearts are more open to the witness of Christ when the physical needs are met.



***"What
do we do
with our new
definition of
worship?"***

Finally, when we live a lifestyle of worship, we leave a legacy of salvation. The Samaritan woman did not keep her encounter with the living Christ to herself. Though she was an outcast of the community, she wanted others to experience what she experienced. She went and told anyone who would listen about her encounter with the Living Water. When our acts of worship lead people to Christ's grace and salvation, it becomes contagious. Not only does the person that first encountered Christ go out and tell others, we too will tell our stories to any-

one who will listen!

St. Michael's had always been a very wealthy church. Its 300 members usually gave a combined annual offering of over one million dollars—because they could afford to.

Over the years, however, the neighborhood around the beautiful old church began to change. Immigrants flocked to the area, changing the complexion of the community. Steel bars replaced welcome signs in store windows. Homeless people could be found wandering the sidewalks and

streets. The changes made some members of St. Michael's very uncomfortable. They usually tried to avoid that part of town except on Sundays.

One Sunday, shortly after a young associate priest had joined the church staff, the church members were gathered after the morning service for coffee and pastries. In the spring months, they loved to gather in the flower garden outside the church among its gazebos, fountains, and vine-covered arches.

As the elegantly dressed worshipers sipped coffee and chatted in the garden, a homeless man shuffled in off the street. He entered through the garden gate without looking at anyone but all eyes were certainly on him.

He quietly walked over to the table where a spread of expensive pastries was displayed on silver trays. He picked up one of the pastries and bit into it, keeping his eyes closed. Then he reached for a second pastry and placed it into his coat pocket. Moving slowly and trying not to be noticed, he placed another into the same pocket.

The garden buzzed with whispers. Finally one of the women walked over to the new priest and said, "Well, do something!"

Still feeling a little awkward in his new position, the young priest handed his coffee cup to the

woman, walked over to the table, and stood next to the homeless man. He reached under the table, where the empty pastry boxes had been stored. Then he picked up one of the silver trays loaded with pastries and emptied them into a box. He did the same with a second tray of expensive goodies. Then he closed the lids on the boxes and held them out to the homeless man.

"We're here every Sunday," the priest said.

The man smiled at the priest, cradled the boxes in his arms, and shuffled quietly out of the garden and down the street.

The priest returned to his coffee cup, smiled at the woman holding it, and said, "That's what you meant when you said, 'Do something,' wasn't it?"

Worship is a response that is directed toward God that opens up the lines of communication between God and ourselves. It is a way of life that takes on the character of Christ and is under-girded by the Scriptures. As a byproduct of this lifestyle of worship, we are called to meet the needs of those around us, share the love and grace of Christ and leave a legacy of salvation for others.

Are you ready to "DO SOMETHING?"

Are you ready to give someone a DRINK OF THE LIVING WATER?



Trinity Baptist Church • 4815 Six Forks Road • Raleigh, NC 27609 • 919.787.3740
www.tbcraleigh.com • jroberts@tbcraleigh.com

