

Worship, For Real

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[0 : 00] Mark 7, 6-7 It says, The Lord Jesus speaking, and the concept here is of the Lord and...

He was in the company of some Pharisees and certain of the scribes, and they found false. Verse 2 And then verse 6, he says, He answered and said unto them, Well, hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, searching for doctrines, the commandments of men. It says there, the Lord Jesus is quoting Isaiah, This people draw near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

They honour him. It's got the sense of constantly honouring him with their lips, but their heart is far from me, he says, or it's at a great distance from God.

We can draw near to God with our lips, yet our heart can be at a great distance from him. And we know from this text you get the expression that's common of lip service, paying lip service.

[1 : 30] It's got the sense where these folk that Isaiah prophesied of, and our Lord referred to, of giving just a lip service, but yet not a heart service, not a heart worship.

And God does not accept all worship. He does not accept all worship. Not every worshipper is heard. And some worship is in vain, it's rejected, it's refused.

For example, in Amos, chapter 5, God refers to fake worship, and he says that he hates it. He hates it. People going through the motions, going through the rituals, but not the reality.

For example, in Amos 5, verse 21, he says, I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them. He will not accept them, he will not regard the worship. He says, I hate these solemn assemblies, this worship, this religious gathering.

[2 : 37] And he says, take away from me the noise of thy songs. Verse 23. The Lord God, he didn't even like the noise of their songs, the sound, the music, the praise and worship.

It disgusted God. He was sick of it. It was phony. And you could see this in the text we started with, of vain worship.

It's vain, it's empty, it's phony, it's fake. Contrast vain worship with true worship. For example, John 4, verse 23, where our Lord spoke to the woman at the well.

John chapter 4, verse 23. There's some discussion there. She's debating with him about where they should worship and how the Samaritans worship in one place and the Jews elsewhere.

And verse 23, he says, But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

[3 : 45] God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. So some worship is vain. It's not accepted. It's refused.

But some worship, thank God, it is accepted. Some worship he does accept, and he seeks such to worship him that can worship him in spirit and in truth.

The question for all of us is, Are you the real deal? Are you the real thing? Or are you a mocker? Got the sense where it's one or the other. It's vain worship, or it's true, it's real worship.

And that's true for faith as well. Examine yourselves, we're told, whether you be in the faith. Take a search in your heart. Take scrutiny.

Take an examination whether you're in the faith or not. Is it real, or is it a mockery? And how can we tell the difference? In the past, Phinney, an old-time preacher said, To mock God is to pretend to love and serve him when we do not.

[4 : 47] To act in a false manner, to be insincere and hypocritical in our professions, pretending to obey him, love, serve and worship him when we do not.

There's people that are in that camp. They're a mock Christian. You know, you've heard of mock cream. And there's such things as a mock Christian.

They look like they're the real thing, but they're not. And is it real, or is it a pretense, that devotion that we show, that worship that we give, even by coming to a gathering of worship, but yet we are not genuine?

And there's a danger there, isn't there? That we can be guilty of vain worship, just like our Lord referred to, that worshipping in vain. Worshipping that's really valueless and not hurt.

It's not accepted. God despises that kind of worship, that kind of sacrifice he will not accept or regard. And for all of us, we've always got to question, when we're worshipping, is it from our heart?

[5 : 52] Are we drawing near to him? Not just with our lips, but with our heart as well. And confessing not just mere words on a page as we sing, but the truth of these songs, the soul truth that's here in these songs of Scripture and worship.

Not just mere words on a page, but life-changing truth that we're confessing. And not just lips that professing devotion, but lives that measure up to our profession. So is it that we're just professing to be a Christian, yet missing the inward reality?

Moody says too, confessing sin without repentance is also mocking God. Now we can say all the right things, and yet not have that heart repentance that really manifests that faith that is real and true and biblical.

And so we see vain worship, it's empty, it's a worship that is not based on truth.

It's a worship from lips only, not from a heart that's close to God. We see true worship that's from spirit and truth. The question for us today is where is that true worship found?

[7 : 13] Where can we find that true worship? Where does that true worship begin? In a way it starts with that kind of holy discontent, that discontent, that dissatisfaction of where we are, and of how distant we are from God.

It's that dissatisfaction with the status quo. It's that desire, that longing for something more, for something closer, for that relationship, for that heart relationship with God by faith.

Where that heart is resolved not to compromise, but to be steadfast, to be committed. Not some unholy mixture where we're toying with the world, and the flesh, and the devil, and not committed to Christ.

Not that unholy mixture that endangers our walk with God. That kind of mixture, it's a bit like you could compare it to when Daniel saw the statue and it had feet of iron mixed with clay.

It made that statue weaker, the very foundation point. It looked powerful, it looked like iron, but the iron had been compromised and weakened and made brittle because it was a mixture.

[8 : 31] So not that kind of mixture, a mixture of compromise or lack of separation, but a mixture that is good. The Bible does talk about a good kind of mixture.

It tells us in Hebrews 4 verse 2, for example, it says, For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Now we can hear messages after messages. We might tune in to all manner of gospel preaching in various forms and media and yet miss the truth of God's word because the truth of God's word has got to be mixed together with faith.

It's like my lovely wife when she mixes a cake or mixes some food for me to eat that she makes sure it's mixed to the right measure and likewise to God's word for it to work in our hearts.

God's word has to be mixed with faith in them that hear it. Otherwise it's not going to profit us. It's not going to be beneficial because you can be a walking Bible but go to hell without faith.

[9 : 39] You know, there's many, many well-meaning cult members who are well-versed in the Bible. You could go down to Mormon church or all manner of different flavours of church, even regular Christianity that might have a lot of knowledge about the Bible but they don't know the Saviour.

They don't know the Lord. He's not personally known by them. The word hasn't been mixed with faith. It's not come to that point. So don't be satisfied with just the word, with just a worship that is a mouthing of words, but a worship that is heart-founded.

It's heart-felt. It's heart, a heart in tune with God. You know, it tells us that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

You know, man hears the word and with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. The heart's got to be engaged and sadly we can miss heaven. It's like someone has said, I don't know, what's the distance between you?

Your head and your heart. There's a tract out there somewhere that says, you can miss heaven by whatever amount of centimetres it is between the head and the heart.

[10:53] You know it all up here but it's never got down to the heart and so the heart change has never happened. And sadly, Christianity is mocked.

We've seen it, we know, only too well when we witness it in different ways that we can see the mockery. It's regarded as a mock, as something to mock, to scorn. Christianity, something to ridicule.

And in some quarters, this reputation that Christianity receives to itself, sometimes, it's rightly deserved because at times, churchianity, Christianity, without the Bible, is a mockery.

And it's like the Lord God Himself hates church like that. As we read in Amos 5, God hates the solemn assembly, He hates that worship gathering, that sacrifice, if the heart is not engaged, if it's not by faith, then it's in vain.

And, are you a mocker today? The question for you, is your worship real? Or is it a mockery? Is it a sham? A pretense?

[11:59] Are you the real deal? Where does true worship begin? In the heart, in the heart of man. Finney again says this, repentance is heart rejection of sin. And if the heart turns away from sin, the life must also of necessity.

For the heart governs the external life. If a man's heart is right, his life will be right. So it's when that repentance happens, that change of mind, that change of living, that change of heart, that change of direction, then the heart is changed, is transformed by faith.

Our very church service, though, can be a mockery. If we might preach things, and, you know, I can give you all manner of learning and truth, but if faith is not mixed with it, it will not benefit you, and you'll not profit from that.

And even your singing and worshipping, and your praise, God might even hate it. He might hate it because He knows where you're at, in the real world, in your real heart.

He knows where you're at. And we've got to be honest with God, people today, not some kind of performance, or engineering of our own, or, you know, it doesn't matter what the musical accompaniment is, or is not.

[13:17] But what matters is, is your heart engaged with God? Is your heart far from Him, drawing near just with your lips? Yet your heart is so far distant, so far distant.

And worship, it's got to be biblical, it's got to be truthful, it's got to be in spirit and in truth. And, as I say, sometimes, that Christianity almost deserves to be mocked, in some quarters, because of what can, at times, occur, where it's a performance without the reality, where it's a measure of truth, mixed with all manner of other things.

And, I'd like to think and hope and pray, that at this church, what you see is what you get. That we will be real, that we'll be honest, that we'll be true, that we won't put on airs and graces, and pretend to be something we're not, but that we'll be real with God, every one of us here, individually, and corporately.

That we won't have to resort to games and gimmicks, to draw a crowd, as much as we like a crowd. But, here are some churches, playing the numbers game, so much, that it's all, something, fadding and crazy, to bring people in.

For example, I've heard, where some churches, play the numbers game, so called, that they resort to, all kinds of antics, where, for example, the pastor says, I'll swallow some live goldfish, if we get so many, come to church.

[14:45] So, that might be an incentive, for you to bring someone, with you next Sunday. But, really, we don't have to resort, to that kind of, those kind of tactics, can we? It, in a way, it cheapens Christianity, doesn't it?

That we should, that the church of God, should have to resort, to such measures, to, to draw a crowd, to market itself. We don't need that. But, we do need, true worship.

We can have, a place packed, with, many people, mouthing words. They might be, good words. They might be, meaningful words, truthful words, and yet, drawing near, with their lips, and their heart, is far from God.

That's what matters, people today. That's what counts. Whether we worship, truly, in spirit and truth, whether we really, are God seeking, truth seeking people, whether we stand, for that which endures, forever.

You know, I'm encouraged, to think, as it tells us, in 1 Peter 1, 25, the context there, is of, the flower, fading, and, and, the grass of the field, passing away, and withering.

[15:50] But Peter writes, but, the word of the Lord, endureth forever, and this is the word, which by the gospel, is preached unto you. So, whether you believe in, in climate change, or, or, you know, the sun is going to, fizzle out one day, and that could well be the case, in, in a million, or, or a few years from now.

But, one thing's for sure, forever, God's word will endure. This book, is forever. It's not just for here and now, it's forever. This book, will be treasured, by us in eternity.

And someone wrote about this book, they said, this is, the greatest book, on earth. Unparalleled, it stands. It's authored God, it's truth divine, inspired in every word, and line, though written, by human hands.

This is, the living rock of truth, which all assaults, defies, or every stormy blast of time. It towers, with majesty sublime. It lives, and never dies.

This is the volume of the cross. Its saving truth is pure, its doctrine pure, its history true, its gospel old, yet ever new, shall evermore endure.

[17:03] Within this wondrous volume, lies the mystery of mysteries, happiest they, of human race, to whom their God, has given grace, to read, to fear, to hope, to pray, to lift the latch, to find the way, and better had they, ne'er been born, who read to doubt, or read to scorn.

God's word, it shall evermore endure. This is the word, which by the gospel, was preached unto you. The word of the Lord, endureth forever. You have the privilege, today, of owning a Bible. For some fellow believers, in other lands, they scarcely get to borrow a Bible, or a page. Friends, we've said privilege, don't we?

To own a Bible, it's a great privilege. And will you hear it? Will you live it? Love it? Obey it? How far does your faith go? Are you a mocker? Is your faith only going so far?

Do you have this kind of mentality, that I'll give my life to Christ, but so far and no further. Just to, I'll give my life to Christ, to this extent, I'll draw the line, God can have this much of me, this much of my life.

[18:19] Or will you go over the line? Will you step over the line? Will you let God have all of you? Let God have all of you. I've heard it said of a man, asking God to bring revival, and he drew a line around himself, like a circle, and he stepped into it, and he just asked God, to bring revival inside that circle.

That everything in that circle, that everything that was him, that would be revived, would be touched, by the hand of God. And, are you a mocker, or is it real for you?

We can be a mocker, we can be like those, who Isaiah spoke of, who our Lord referred to, drawing near with their lips only, but their heart was very far, far away from God. Or will we be like, as James tells us, draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Some would say, I will follow Jesus, so far, as long as he doesn't cramp my style, as long as it doesn't cost me everything, or anything, as long as it suits me.

Are we of the crowd who will say, I'll act like a Christian, so long as I don't lose face with my friends, so long as it's convenient, so long as I don't have to give up anything. And if you're a Christian, you'll be a Christian on Facebook.

[19:39] You'll be a Christian at school. You'll be a Christian in the workplace. You'll be a Christian in the home place. You'll be a testimony 24 by 7, by 365.

Every day, every moment, all of you, don't just have the kind of mentality, that I'm going to give Christ my life, but it's only when I'm at church, or in a certain circle of acquaintances, amongst a certain influence of people, and yet, when they're not around, the chameleon skin colour changes, and I'll blend in to the other crowd, and talk like them, and walk like them, and think like them.

Christianity's not like that. It's in boots and all. 100%. Don't be 99%. It's not enough. And I'm not saying that to mean that the Christian life is based on your works, or being a certain way.

But if you're a real, genuine, real Christian, then it's 100% commitment. Otherwise, it's not commitment at all, is it?

And yet, many professing Christians have little or no wholehearted commitment. There's no commitment, no devotion in terms of time, giving, of sacrifice, of giving up, of convenience, of self, of comfort.

[21 : 06] Like David, let's be like David in 2 Samuel 24, verse 24, when he was about to give an offering, when he was about to worship, there was someone that offered him something to give, as worship, and he said, he didn't want to worship with that.

He wanted to worship with something that cost him something. 2 Samuel 24, verse 24, he says, I offer the Lord my God some burnt offerings that cost me nothing.

Christianity, if you're a real Christian, you'll take the walk and live the life that costs everything. It costs you everything. That you're willing to lay your life on the line, like those in other nations, where, when they stand for Christ, in many lands of the world today, they face death.

Certain death, in some cases. And, you hear stories where some will say that they're challenged. Recant.

Give up your faith in Christ and you can live. Confess Christ and you'll die. It's one or the other. It's life or death for some.

[22 : 24] And yet, for us, it's easy, easy come, easy go, lax, lazy, lukewarm, corrupted Christianity, easy believers and padded pews, lost conviction, a Christianity without a cross.

The Christ says to you, deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow me. This must be the call that we must respond to.

It's in boots and all. Give Him your all. Don't hold back. Don't leave part of your life untouched by Him.

Let Him have your hold. And this is what authentic Christianity is all about. It's letting go and taking hold of God. 100%. Stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross.

God's looking for men. Men and women with faith, with conviction, with integrity, with character, who'll stick with and stick through. Christianity is costly.

[23 : 29] Look back in the pages of Scripture. We read that the men and women of God of old, we're told what's and all their stories. We know they weren't always living up to what they could have been in God.

But people are Abraham. He left everything. He left his homeland. Noah left everything when he built the ark. Just was the target. When Noah started building the ark, he painted a bullseye on himself, didn't he?

Of mockery, of scorn. What a wacko they would have said of him, I'm sure. Joseph lost everything. His brothers sold him. Daniel risked his life not eating at the king's table.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they gave their bodies not to worship the idol. John the Baptist stood up to Herod and he was beheaded.

These were men of grit, men of faith, men of integrity, failing men, but faithful men. Inadequate men, yet God-filled men.

[24 : 32] And you can be that man, you can be that woman today. Christianity, authentic Christianity, is costly. It costs Christ everything. To give his life for you.

One day, you'll meet him. One day, you will meet him face to face. Every single one of you here today, one day, you will look into his face and he will say to you one of two things.

Two statements. He'll make one or the other to you. Out of his lips, he will speak to you personally. And he will say directly to each and every one of you, either one thing or another.

In effect, he'll say either, well done. Well done. Our good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. Or he will say, depart from me.

Depart from me. I never knew you. I never knew you. And as we read that verse where that occurs, it's talking of some quite religious. They were, they were quite held in regard, I would imagine, the crowd that he spoke to of doing all kinds of wonderful works in his name.

[25 : 51] But he says, depart from me. I never knew you. That's a challenge, isn't it? They might have had some great worship services, praise and worship, and all kinds of wonderful works, whatever they could be.

You could, maybe we can't even imagine how wonderful those wonderful works were. Yet, they never knew him. He says, I never knew you. And could that be said of you?

You might go to worship day in, day out, week in, week out, midweek, morning and night, and miss heaven because it's vain worship.

It's not true. Your lips draw near but your heart is far from him. Could it be that you're missing that true worship of worship in spirit and in truth, worship where your heart is engaged with God, you're in, you're drawn near to him, in personal relationship to him.

How is your heart? That's the question that is at the foundation of it all. We know, for all of us, really our heart is not one to lead us because the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

[27 : 01] Don't, as I've said it before, you know, don't follow your heart. God forbid that you follow your heart if it's deceitful and desperately wicked. But, friends, follow Christ.

Let him have your heart. Let him have your emotion, your everything. Let him have your future. Let him have your past. Let him have your present.

Let him have your heart. Let that convicting power of the Holy Spirit work within your soul. How is your heart today? Is it still cold, dark, Christless, hell-bound?

that maybe so. Maybe so. Their heart is far from me. Maybe your heart is far, far from God. You want to have something but on your terms.

Well, that's not how it is. It's on his terms. We come to him on his terms. How close is your heart to him today? For all of us and for Christians too.

[28 : 03] Our heart can grow cold. Our love can grow cold. Our heart can be crowded with other things. Friends, we all need to think and question, have you experienced authentic Bible Christianity, Bible salvation, personally, personally?

Do you know him personally, that authentic intimacy with the Saviour? Today is a good day to count the cost. To count the cost as we know our Lord gave everything.

What a cost! What the cost of your salvation is. Of course, we know salvation is free for those that receive it. But what it cost, the giver of it, so costly an expense.

So costly. And he says to you, take up your cross, follow me. Will you be his disciple? Discipleship costs everything. Luke 14 in 33 it says, So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

We've got to lay ourselves on the altar as a living sacrifice to be his disciple. Don't you want to be his disciple? It's the most wonderful privilege that any of us can have, isn't it?

[29 : 20] To belong to him, to be a learner, a disciple of Christ. Count the cost of discipleship.

Verse 28, the Lord says, For which of you when he builds a tower, sits down not first and counts the cost whether he hath sufficient to finish it?

Now when you build a building, there's all matter of cost. It just adds up. One thing after another. Every little bit adds up and up and up. It accumulates. And when you want to build something, I know there's someone talking about building something today, to me, earlier tonight.

They've got to count the cost. They've got to realise the budget is going to blow out more than you can imagine. But think of the cost. The Lord, in this context of Luke 14, he's talking about the cost of discipleship.

Calculate the cost, he says. Compute that expense. Count the cost. Are you ready to be a disciple? It's time to give up.

To give up your worldliness. To give up your carelessness, your lukewarmness. To give up on yourself, to deny yourself, and to pick up your cross and go the distance.

[30 : 26] And when you are a Christian, it's something that drives you. It motivates you.

It's not something you clock on and off of. It's like our Lord says in John 9, 4, I must work the works of him while it's his day, the night cometh. Where no man can work.

I must work the works of him that sent me when it is day. We don't clock off till the trumpet sounds. It's when the trumpet sounds, that's when we can put our feet up.

But then it says we'll serve him there too. But it'll be glory, won't it? It's like when you're at work, the old-fashioned clock in, clock out cards that they use, you don't clock out.

When you become a Christian, you are full-on, full-time. Worship him in spirit and in truth. And work the works of him that sent Christ while it is day.

[31 : 30] The night cometh when no man can work. Employ your time. Use your talents, your energy, your strength while you have it. Use it. Employ it for Christ's glory.

Thank you.