Worship II

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Preacher: Bishop Dave Bena

[0:00] Jesus said, For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, I am the bread that came down from heaven. They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?
How does he now say, I have come down from heaven? Jesus answered them, Who is from God, he has seen the Father.
Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.
This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
[1:54] If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. Let us pray.

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Christ. Be with us, Lord, as we open your word and see what you have for us.
In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Please be seated. Okay, I'm getting my little pad ready to go.
Okay. So, the interesting things you find on the internet. It says, if you are spiritually alive, you're going to like this.
If you're spiritually dead, it doesn't matter. Okay, so here it goes. A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.
[3:00] I've gone for 30 years now, he wrote, and in that time I've heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm just wasting my time, and the pastors are wasting their time by giving sermons at all.

Well, this stirred a good controversy in the newspaper. Much to the delight of the editor, eventually someone wrote this clincher.
It says, I've been married for 30 years now. In that time, my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. His wife cooked that many meals.
Anyway, but for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu of a single one of those meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work.
If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today.
[4:06] Not too bad. No. So, you get to live through another sermon. Listen, have you got your no-dos ready? And once again, if I could ask our timer, you got it.

Okay. So, here we go. I have a question for you. Is our worship beautiful or is it boring? That's an important question.
I go back to my childhood days. We were in a high church. It was not high, like, elevation-wise, but it was high liturgically. And I have to tell you, these boys might attest to it.
The sermons, to me, seemed kind of boring. But the liturgy, I mean, they had incense and they had clanging bells and beautiful vestments.
Well, I was just entranced by that. For me, worship was watching the action. It was beautiful. Now, it's important that we look at this for Holy Trinity in that as God begins to now send us more visitors, what is our worship going to be like to them?
[5:19] Will it call them into us or will they say, that's the weirdest thing I ever saw in my life? What is it? To talk about that, we need to go back to this summer's series, What's the Local Church for?

And, of course, you've got this memorized by now. Our verse we're using all summer is Acts 2.42. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread,

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and to the prayers.
Last week, while Mary Ellen and I were in Connecticut with a sister Anglican church, Raymond gave a very good sermon on breaking of the bread.
I listened to it online. He covered Holy Communion in a wonderful way. Now, what I'm going to do is finish it up by talking about worship in general.
Why do we do this? Why aren't we all sitting in bed right now reading the newspaper? Half the world is doing that, you know.
[6:26] The other half is walking their dog. We are here in church. So, we're going to do, once again, What was worship like in New Testament days?

What's worship like today? And what is worship for us at Holy Trinity? So, to go back to what was worship like in New Testament days, we have to do a word study.
Eyes glaze over. All right? Word study. This is a very interesting word study. How many of you have ever heard of the tractor Kubota? Anybody ever heard of a Kubota tractor?
Yeah. What company is that made in? Japan. It's a Japanese tractor. Well, you will be interested to know that the Hebrew word for worship is Kubota.
And it means work or service. Well, a Kubota tractor, what does it do? It works. Okay? So, the main thing is, Kubota means service.
[7:34] What do we call worship sometimes? Worship service. It comes back from that word. What time are services? Okay, so, Kubota. When you move that into Greek, there are a couple of words, Latreia and Laos, which mean the people working together.

We're praising God. That's our work. Worship is a kind of a dance that we do. And we do it for the Lord.
And if we're tuned in, we're dancing with the Lord together. That's the beauty of it. Which brings us to the word worship. The old English, of course, was worth ship.
Giving God his worth. That's what we do together. We give God his worth. He's worth everything to us. And we show it in worship.
The definition I'd like us to hold is this. Having reverential, adoring wonder for God.
[8:39] Having reverential, adoring wonder for God. In three words, it's saying, Father, you're awesome. That's what worship's supposed to be.

Sunday after Sunday. So that's the way it was back in those days. Back in the Old Testament Jewish days, they had two forms of worship.
Temple, synagogue. Temple was the razzle-dazzle. It was the sacrifice. Incense. Slaughtering of animals.
A little kid would love going there to see all this happen. It was the sacramental, you might call it. Then they had the synagogue worship.
That was ministry of the word. They would listen to the word. The president would preach on the word. They would have the prayers.
[9:34] They would sing the psalms. It's a lot like our ministry of the word at Holy Eucharist. So, certain things we bring from that kind of worship.

Have you ever heard of the Aaronic blessing? It was Aaron's blessing when he was brother of Moses. He was the high priest. And he said, Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we place you.
Using the more Hebrew word. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance and grant you peace, which is what we all desire.
That's thousands of years old. That was a linchpin for Jewish worship.
And then the psalms. We had a psalm we prayed responsibly. In the Old Testament Jewish assembly, they would chant. They would sing. In fact, the book of psalms was their hymnal.
[10:46] So, they just worshipped with everything they had. All the senses were involved. Smell?

They smelled the incense. Action? They lifted their hands to pray. They sang. They listened intently. They saw the action. And their emotions followed. I think if we could go back in that time, we would be able to worship God. Of course, something's missing, isn't it?
Jesus is missing from that. And so, when we get to this Acts 2.42, we know that 120 people leapt out of the building speaking in languages they didn't even know.

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And then Peter gave a sermon. And then 3,000 people became believers. So, they went from 120 to 3,120. And they had to train these people what it means to believe in Jesus, how you live it out. [11:56] And one thing they had to do was teach them about worship. They had to add the Jesus element. Which is the whole deal.

And so, what they did was they took, and this took some years to put together, they took the synagogue ministry of the word and the temple ministry of sacrifice sacrifice.
And they put it together in one service. And that's why a couple thousand years later, we're still using that form of worship. Listen to these words from, it's a book called Documents of the Christian Church.
And some scholars went back and looked at all the old parchments. And they found this by Justin Martyr who died around 150.
So, that goes back quite a ways. He wrote this before 150. He said, And on the day which is called the Day of the Sun, which would be Sunday, right, rather than the Sabbath Saturday, there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or in the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or readings of the prophets are read as long as time permits.
[13:17] That's what we do. We read the Old Testament. We read New Testament. We read the apostles, the Gospels. Then the reader ceases and the president, the priest, speaks, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate these excellent examples.

Sermon. Ta-da. Okay. And then, then we arise all together and offer prayers, prayers of the people. And as we said before, then, after we have concluded our prayer, bread is brought and wine and water and the president in like manner offers up prayers and thanksgiving with all his might.
And the people assent with Amen. And there is the distribution and partaking of all the elements. And to them that are not able to be there, the deacons take them by their hands.
And they that are prosperous and wish to do so, give what they will each after his choice. You've got to have an offering if you're going to worship. That goes back.
You see what we're doing today? We're simply following what was taught in the early Christian community. Now, when we have the Eucharist today, I'm going to change that a little bit.
[14:40] I'm going to use the Holy Eucharist from the year 200. You're going to be surprised. You're going to say, wait, what's the difference about that?

Okay. Now, meanwhile, my computer went back to sleep. Wake up. Okay. All right. So, I just followed a rabbit trail, by the way.
Now, I'm getting back on the road. Okay. So, today, today, worship today.
Now, I've been wanting to use this word for a long time. And if I use it ten more times today, it'll be a permanent part of my vocabulary. Today, there is a cacophony of competing traditions.
Go look it up. There is a cacophony of competing traditions on worship. I have noticed that most worship today is pointed toward man rather than pointed toward God.
[15:52] It's symbolic of our generations. The attitude we often have when we go to church is, what am I going to get out of this? Not, how can I give my best to God today?

I watch TV sermons. They tend to be about how to be a good, outstanding citizen and make a lot of money. And they throw in some God words.
Now, there's nothing wrong with being an outstanding citizen. There's nothing wrong with making a lot of money if you do it honestly. But the sermon's really not self-improvement.
The sermon is to be the gospel. So, what that says is we have a consumer mentality when it comes to church today. I'll stick with you as long as I get something out of it and then I'm history.
It's kind of the way it is. Worship is supposed to be weans getting together to express reverential adoring awe or wonder for God.
[17:00] Anything else is counterfeit. I want to make a disclaimer. It's okay in the sermon to talk about self-improvement, but that's not the main reason for a sermon.

Worship today, I've really thought about this, worship today is torn between intellectualism and emotionalism. Most of us in the Anglican tradition tend to be rationalists.
We want to hear all the arguments. It's good if there's some paradox in there that we can say, wait a minute, that doesn't make sense. We tend to be intellectualists. Much of the world, however, lives on emotion, doesn't it?
Look at election campaigns. Look at church conventions. Instead of laying out logic, we throw somebody up there to give a heart-rending announcement of what happened to them.

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Now, emotionalism is good, intellectualism is good, but one opposed to the other is not really worshiping God. God wants our minds involved in worship.
[18:06] He wants our hearts involved in worship. We need a combination to truly worship God. Some people believe they haven't really gone to church unless they can cry during the service.

Some people believe they're not going to church again if somebody cries. We've got to live together in this. It's okay to cry. It's okay not to cry. The point is we're here to give wonder for God.
And so, what happens is we trivialize things. You know, we have church wars about should we use the old English or modern English. For a while, there was a group called the Society for the Preservation of the Prayer Book.
That meant the 1928 Prayer Book. When you're in church, you say thee and thou, don't you say you. That was the thing. And on the other hand, some people are so into contemporary language that they get freaked out if somebody says thy or thee.
Why is that? It's trivializing where we're supposed to be. How much time have we got? OT. See, that's a referee.
[19:15] He's got this lingo. Okay. I'm in OT. Okay. Well, good. So, you know what? I don't care.

So, now, point three. Our worship at Holy Trinity, is it beautiful or is it boring?
Can you give the gift of yourself to God today? If you can, our beautiful worship will even touch others.
when we give ourselves to God in worship, worries, pain, anger, all fall away as Almighty God fills our lives.
Beautiful worship toward a loving God is what God calls us to do. Let us pray. Lord God, sometimes we don't even know how or why we're here, but you do.
[20:18] You called us. Teach our hearts today and our minds that we might worship you in spirit and in truth, to give our best to you because we love you, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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