

Now is the Time to Worship

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 February 1998

Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 0 0] no doubt when some of you go home tonight somebody will ask you how was church tonight and how do you reply we had a great time of worship tonight we sang some really good worship songs the atmosphere was so worshipful there's a really good worship band really good worship leaders the worship time at the beginning was really cool maybe you've heard that sort of thing before maybe that you go home and say the exact opposite of all of that but worship is an in word and it's very often used let's say wrongly what i mean by that is that it's not used in the way that it's used in the bible often we had a great time of worship what's worship about us having a great time or maybe god we sang some really good worship songs does that mean that some songs we sing aren't worship songs what's the distinction what makes a song a worship song it's mood it's tempo it's tune oh the atmosphere was so worshipful tonight what sort of atmosphere is a worshipful atmosphere does that mean that worship is emotional to do with mood experience oh it's a really good worship band and good worship leaders tonight what does it mean to lead worship what's a worship band the worship time at the beginning was really cool does that mean the rest of the time we spend here is not worship christians today often have a very small or narrow very often self-centered even indulgent view of what worship is about what's god's view the verse that's up here on the screen about to be roger thank you the verse that's uh now about to be up on the screen is a very important verse it's the beginning of the bible reading tonight romans 12 verse 1 it tells us what worship is and there are three things i want to highlight from that verse which will remain up there throughout the sermon saint paul writes and this is the niv it's a little bit different to the pew bibles therefore i urge you brothers but brothers and sisters in view of god's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to god this is your spiritual act of worship the first thing is that worship is a response to god's mercy the first part of that verse is a definition in effect of what worship is for god and the first thing is that it's a response to god's mercy therefore and the therefore implies everything that's happened in romans 1 to 11 which we haven't got time to read and study tonight you'll be pleased to know therefore in view of all of that and i appeal to you by the mercies of god this is how to respond so worship is a response to god's mercy to us which is a mercy extended to us through the death of jesus christ on the cross if we were to summarize what romans 1 to 11 is about it is that each and every person in each and every age needs forgiveness through the death of jesus christ on the cross it's only through that death that we receive god's mercy which makes us righteous in god's eyes

there is no other way whether we're jewish or whether we're not jewish jesus christ and his death on the cross is the only means by which we can receive god's mercy that makes us righteous in god's sight there's a whole lot more in romans 1 to 11 to unpack that but that's in a nutshell what it's about jesus death which obtains our salvation and forgiveness and righteousness and it's god's initiative as well from the beginning of romans 1 to the end of romans 11 it is very clear in the argument that god is sovereign god's in charge it is his initiative at every step it's not something we earn or obtain or something that we even provoke god into responding to us we respond to him not vice versa which is so important when we get to chapter 12 and it says therefore chapters 1 to 11 tell us what god has done in order to make us righteous through his mercy extended in christ in response to that chapters 12 to the end verse chapter 16 about how we respond to god's initiative so worship is a response to god's mercy through the death of jesus christ that mercy has enabled us to be called children of god god's mercy has enabled us to receive god's spirit through which we cry out to god as our father abba is the word that's used in romans 8 so worship is something that is done by christian people that is it's something done by people who've received mercy from god in jesus christ it's done by those who therefore receive god's spirit which cries out to god it's done by those who are adopted into god's family which is again the mercy of god at work in our lives there's no

other way of worshipping god other than as the children of god who have received his mercy through jesus death there's no other way of approaching god apart from through the death of jesus we can only worship god if we have personally received his mercy in jesus death what are some of the implications of that for us firstly it's to remind us that our worship is not our initiative not our idea it's not something we do in order to win god's favour or to provoke god into doing something for us rather it's response to god's work and god's mercy that's very important sometimes we hear conversations or we think in terms of our worship has been so good that god's therefore going to look favourably upon us well that's rubbish god accepts us regardless that's his mercy at work it's in response to that mercy that we worship god related to this is thinking through how do we praise god how do we respond in church often it's good to actually start by reflecting on god's mercy sometimes it's actually hard to just walk into church and sing a song of worship to god without actually remembering what god's mercy is to us because it's god's mercy that comes first that's the initiative and we ought to respond to that we don't often use the old prayer books in the evening service in fact we hardly ever do but one of the features of anglican prayer books that is very helpful is that they begin the services begin by reminding us of the mercy of god that's the catalyst then for how we respond in song in prayer in confession and so on sometimes we lose that in our modern styles of service that the prompt the initiative is god's mercy it also means that worship is accompanied by faith you cannot worship god without faith because faith is the means by which we receive god's mercy therefore worship is an act of faith it's an act of trust in an almighty and sovereign god and if we have no faith in particular in the death of jesus on the cross for our sins it doesn't matter what we sing or what we pray or what we listen to or anything else it's not worship worship necessarily is accompanied by faith in the death of jesus christ for our sins a second implication of worship being a response is that it is god directed it's not for my benefit but it's a response to god who's extended mercy to us and it's motivated by god as well it's his mercy that prompts me to respond with worship whatever worship is and we're getting on to the definition but it means that worship is not about feeling good it's not about something stirring inside me that makes me sort of feel a big buzz it's not a feel good factor in fact in some ways it doesn't really matter whether we enjoy worshipping god or not it is whether god enjoys it that matters so often we're selfish or self-centred as i said before even indulgent in our worship very often when people say oh we had great worship tonight means that i enjoyed the singing that's what it means very often sometimes we think that god loves us enjoying ourselves and i guess there's an element of truth in that but we should love god enjoying himself more sometimes we think that god just loves a great big sing-along so the more we sing the more worship we must have done to please god but again i think that's a bit of a narrow even selfish view it is god's enjoyment that matters more than ours a third implication of what i've said about worship being a response to god's mercy is that worship must be truthful and you think well how is that linked the mercy of god is extended to us through the death of jesus on the cross and by faith we receive that mercy so anything that is away from god's mercy through jesus death on the cross for us received by faith is not really responding to god's mercy it's a made up idea that's not truthful and therefore it's not responding to god's mercy as god's mercy really is offered to us that is worship must in the end be cross-centered centered on the death of jesus for us that's where mercy the mercy of god is most keenly seen in history and in our lives for us so worship or any other style of thing that's off-center is in the end not proper worship because it's not being a response to the mercies of god as paul here says now that's very important it's important because words are more important in the end than music because truth is expressed in words not in music and our worship must be truthful that is it must be honest about what god has done for us which we have received by faith now there are some great tunes that we can sing things to but if the words are wrong if they're off-beat as far as what god is on about then it seems to me we must not sing those things let me give some examples to show what i mean let me pick an old hymn it's a great hymn the tune is fantastic dear lord and father of mankind forgive our foolish ways it's the top hymn the number one popular hymn in english churches year by year by year and if you know the tune you'll understand why but the first line is heretical dear lord that's all right and father of mankind the bible makes it very clear that god is our father only when we've responded with faith to the death of jesus for us he's not the father of mankind he's the father of those who've responded with faith adopted into his family we're children of god not by natural birth but by spiritual rebirth so to sing dear lord and father of mankind has got a universalism about people in the world being god's children that is not biblical it's wrong and we ought not to sing that line forgive our foolish ways is the next line that's all right but they're after the

hymn goes downhill into soppy victorian sentimentalism let me give a modern example there's a hymn song we sang one sunday night a few weeks ago about a month ago I guess it had in it the line something like jesus redemption's sacrifice now glorified now justified sounds all right doesn't it but what does it mean jesus yes his redemption sacrifice his death has brought us our redemption now glorified indeed he is he's risen from the dead and ascended to heaven glorified now justified well that's wrong it's heretical because to be justified is what a sinner needs to be we are justified when our sins are forgiven jesus never needs to be justified so the last time we sang the song warwick and i had a little council we decided we wouldn't sing that song again well then we slightly changed our view and we rewrote the line so the next time we sing it try and keep alert and see what we've changed it to there's a christmas carol that we sometimes sing man shall live forevermore because of christmas day i'm sure you know that line but it's wrong because man shall live forevermore because of good friday not because of christmas day now you might think well maybe i think our vicar's being a little bit pedantic here but it is actually important isn't it because they're all statements about who jesus is and what he's done for us and if we get it wrong then we're not responding to the mercy of god rightly and therefore we're not in fact worshipping god so the important criterion you see is that worship must be truthful it's not about atmosphere or music or tunes and so on primarily it's about truth being expressed as we respond to the mercy of god well that's the first point it's worship is a response to the mercy of god and i've drawn out some implications of that second point is that worship involves sacrifice therefore i urge you brothers in view of god's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices in the old testament part of the bible the bit of the bible that applies before jesus lived the people of god always were offering sacrifices some of them every day some of them more than once a day some of them who lived a long way from the temple perhaps less often but indeed the temple of the old testament was more like an abattoir rather than a cathedral i'm quite glad that the system's changed believe me i wouldn't like to clean up the blood up here every week there were various types of sacrifices some to atone for sin some for fellowship offerings some because people made vows or took oaths some for peace offerings and so on some of them were tithes offering a tenth of the animals and so on all of them were an acknowledgement of a holy god and a forgiving god and all of them were an acknowledgement of a relationship with god which god had initiated himself now of course we don't offer sacrifices like that because jesus died on the cross the one sacrifice for our sin for the sins of any person in any age no longer do we have to take a cow up to the jerusalem temple and sacrifice it and so on jesus is the sacrifice for our sins once and for all but without jesus death without jesus sacrifice for us we face death his sacrifice has brought us life it's redeemed us it's the price that was paid to bring us freedom to bring us life just like somebody who's hijacked on an aeroplane the hijackers issue a ransom price we want these people freed from a libyan jail or we want a million dollars being paid into this bank account or something jesus death is the price paid to free us from slavery to free us from being captured and in a sense [17:08] it brings a sense of ownership as well now our life where before we face death our life belongs to god he's bought it in a sense by the death of jesus on the cross for us so therefore in a sense our lives belong to god otherwise we face death forever worshipping in a sense is giving god what is his offering our lives to him which in a sense he's bought and paid for through jesus death that's why this verse talks about a living sacrifice for paul's readers that would have been a noticeable distinction they were probably used to offering dead sacrifices many of them but now he says we are to offer our lives as living sacrifices because jesus was the sacrifice of death for our life now in response to that we offer our lives to him now some of the implications of this firstly is that worship which is what this is talking about involves all of our life paul doesn't say i want you to offer an hour on a sunday once a week but i want you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices that is your whole life is a sacrifice to god seven days a week 24 hours a day etc we don't stop worshipping god when we leave the church building on a sunday evening or sunday morning we worship god when we work when we study when we have family rows around the dinner table when we go to bed when we're playing on the computer when we're going for a walk or reading the paper all of that is to be lived for the lord all of that is to be part of our worship of the lord without distinction there's another implication of this for our church services as well you see worship just isn't the singing bit worship is all that we do in church if it's all that we do in life it's certainly all that we do in church so our worship is our singing but it's also our hearing the bible read our listening to the sermon our praying our fellowship afterwards our confession of sins our greeting of peace our celebration of the lord's supper etc etc all of that is worship there's no part of a sunday service that is more worshipful

than any other part by its nature of what it is it is all worship or ought to be worship to god the third point and this qualifies what I've just said is that worship involves obedience

Paul goes on to say that we're to offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to god it's not just whatever we do however we do it that is worship but rather whatever we do is to be holy and pleasing to god perhaps the first point I said or the second point I said worship involves sacrifice is talking about quantity that is all of our life is worship to god but now the point is quality as well it's to be both it's to be all of our life but all of our life is to have the quality of holiness and acceptability to god and again it's a gospel concern because that's why jesus died not just to bring us forgiveness so that we can carry on living our lives as we like and have done in the past but so that we may be forgiven and live our lives as holy people living as god wants us to live in this world we're saved by jesus not just to be forgiven for past failure but we are saved to become holy and blameless in god's sight so if we're to respond to god's mercy in jesus appropriately it must be by living holy lives and that is part of our worship and that again is what the book letter to the romans is about the first eleven chapters giving us details of what god has done for us in the past in christ is all the basis for how we respond with holy living in the future let me give you an example the letter goes on later in chapter 12 to talk about putting other people first talks about living appropriate lives and so on chapters 12 to 16 detail what it means to live holy lives perhaps we can summarise it by two statements worship is about transformed lives we are to live lives that are changed by god's mercy paul goes on in the next verse to say do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of god what is good acceptable and perfect worship is about transformation and change our minds as we consider the mercy of god will be transformed to consider what are good things and therefore to behave appropriately very often in modern life we downplay the importance of the mind we forget that what we think affects how we live there was an article

I think in the paper or on tv just a few days or a couple of weeks ago about the former chief censor in Australia that is the person who views films to give them their ratings especially this was to do with R rated and X rated films the chief censor who gave up this job two three four years ago if i remember rightly i don't remember his name or the details has now made a pornographic film that was an interesting thought why have all those years of being the chief censor and seeing pornographic films and giving them ratings led to his mind being distorted now so that he himself goes to make a pornographic film but the opposite the opposite is that exposure to exposure to the truth transforms our minds transforms our minds positively into godly thinking and so on so worship is about transformed lives transformed minds that as we think on and meditate on the truths of god's mercy extended to us in jesus christ so will our lives flow out in obedience and therefore in worship therefore in worship but a second thing about this worship being acceptable to god in our lives is that worship is about love if there is no love there is no worship because what these remaining chapters of the letter to the romans show that is chapters 12 to 16 show is that wholly acceptable lives which is your spiritual worship as this verse tells us mean that we love each other not just christians even but our enemies as well indeed all people so we put others first as the second half of chapter 12 says we respond with harmony in our lives with other people we have a relationship to the world's authorities in chapter 13 the second half of chapter 13 urges us to love one another chapter 14 tells us that we are to not judge each other to love each other live in harmony with each other and especially to care for and love the weaker brethren christian people chapter 15 urges us to be other centered in our lives what this is saying is that worship is not something that happens within me but something that happens within us worship appropriately is a corporate affair that we together worship god as we love each other and exhort each other to live godly christian lives and yet so often in our modern thinking worship is just individualistic what i like compared to what you like worship you see is about obedience to god holiness if you like acceptability to god living the lives that he wants us to be but if we walk out of here and go and live immoral and ungodly lives then what we've done in here is wrong as well the bible and the old testament in particular are very keen to see for us to see that so in the prophet amos for example their corruption and immorality in their life means that they're gathering together the equivalent of our church services they're not acceptable to god at all doesn't matter what they sing so let's remember that our worship is acceptable to god if our lives are godly and moral well let me conclude modern christians so often use the word worship in a very loose narrow even selfish way it's to do with music often atmosphere moods emotions it's about feeling good but this verse has

told us otherwise real worship is god-centred god-motivated it's based on the truth of the gospel which is the mercy of god for us in christ it is accompanied by faith in christ it is about all of our life not just the church bit but every bit and not just the music bit within the church bit you will never forget to go in public theeli will never learn around you can diferente the■ if your you can on you can please test on 19 this is can you can