

A Call to True Worship

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[0 : 00] Let me invite you to please turn your Bible to Isaiah chapter 66.

And this morning, our attention will be directed to the first six verses. Last week, we considered Isaiah chapter 58.

And we considered what the Word of God says to us about true fasting. True and false fasting. And what we saw is that although fasting is a noble practice, it is possible to practice it in a way that displeases the Lord and that amounts to no value for us and no benefit before God.

But this passage that we have come to this morning in Isaiah 66, 1 through 6, is even more graphic than what we considered last week. In this passage, the Lord speaks to a greater concern than false fasting.

He addresses false worship. And what is it that caused the worship of Israel to be false? Well, it's the same thing that causes our worship to be false.

[1 : 41] And I want us to consider Isaiah 66, 1 through 6, to see why worship before God can be false.

Isaiah 66, beginning in verse 1. Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

What is the house that you would build for me? And what is the place of my rest?

All these things my hand has made. And so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man. He who sacrifices a lamb like one who breaks a dog's neck. He who presents a grain offering like one who offers pigs' blood.

[2 : 59] He who makes a memorial offering of frankincense like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways.

Their soul delights in their abominations. I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them. Because when I called, no one answered.

When I spoke, they did not listen. But they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight. Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word.

Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, let the Lord be glorified that we may see your joy. But it is they who shall be put to shame.

The sound of an uproar from the city, the sound from the temple, the sound of the Lord rendering recompense to His enemies.

[4 : 10] Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful this morning for the amazing privilege of being able to sit under the preaching of Your word.

Lord, You have watched over Your word. You have preserved Your word that it might come to us.

And I pray, Lord, that in this moment You would speak to our hearts. Lord, give us all ears to hear.

That we might hear what You require of us as we seek to worship You.

But the fact that we are all gathered in this place this morning is an outward indication of worship being practiced before You.

Lord, we don't want our worship to be false. So would You speak to our hearts and help us to understand the worship that is pleasing in Your sight.

[5 : 29] We ask and pray in Jesus' name. Amen. A number of years ago, I took an exam that I thought I absolutely killed.

I remember being in that exam and I was writing my head off. I was so pleased with what I was writing. I thought the examiner would be pleased with what I was writing and be very impressed with how knowledgeable I was on this subject.

I fully expected to get an A on that exam. I remember walking out of the exam and very eager to see my work colleagues because it was one of, it was a professional exam that I was doing and others were doing the exam as well.

And it wasn't long after the conversation started, I realized something very, very shocking. I misread the main question.

And very quickly, I moved from expecting an A to hoping for a pass just to get through that particular exam. And a few months later, the results came out and as expected, I did not make an A.

[6 : 49] But as hoped for, I did not also, I didn't make a C. I didn't, I didn't pass it. I got a big fat F. And that experience has stayed with me for a long, long time.

It taught me to be a very careful person more than I, I was, and I, I thought it was a pretty careful person. It helped me to be very mindful that I needed to pay close attention to what I was being asked to do.

But when you, hear me this morning that as disappointed as I was in that experience, God has used that for my good. And in the grand scheme of things, what I've learned is that not paying attention to what an examiner is expecting really is nothing.

It really is nothing. What is far more serious is failing to pay attention to what the God of the universe has revealed to us that we must adhere to if we're going to worship him in truth.

Not what we think he wants, but what he has called us to do. And I think you would, you would recognize that one is able to recover from failing some exam in this life, but one cannot recover from failing the exam of life when we get to the end of life and realize I failed in worshiping God as he has called me to do it.

[8 : 44] Because the result of that is final judgment with no recall. And when we consider this passage in Isaiah 66, what we see is the reason that God was displeased with the worship of Israel and angry at the way they were worshiping him, not all of them, but a vast majority of them is this.

Worship to God that's not accompanied by obedience to God is an abomination in his sight. We can have all the outward trappings.

We can have all the appearance of doing what God calls us to do. But brothers and sisters, if that is not accompanied by obedience in our lives, what God has called us to do, how he's called us to live, it is an abomination in his sight.

And that word is simply a big word for wicked. It is detestable, it is deplorable, it is something that God is not pleased with. And this was the situation with many in the nation of Israel.

They thought that all that mattered was they needed to perform some specific duties before God, slaughtering oxen, sacrificing lambs, presenting grain offerings, burning incense, and then they could live their lives as they pleased.

[10 : 11] But through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said to them, and by extension, he is saying to us, these acts of worship alone are not enough to truly serve him.

These acts of worship must be accompanied by obedience to his word and to his ways. And so in our remaining time this morning, I want to consider from these words what God would say to us about worship and obedience, and I want to do so under two simple headings, and they are number one, true worship, and number two, false worship.

And the big question I want us to be thinking about this morning as we listen to this sermon is how do we guard our worship from being or becoming false? And I think to properly answer that question, we need to really begin with what is true worship?

As a matter of fact, we should really begin with what is worship. What is worship? Here's how the new dictionary of biblical theology answers the question, what is worship?

Nowhere in scripture is worship actually defined. worship is but when key biblical terms for worship are examined in a variety of contexts, it's clear that the central concepts of homage, service, and reverence, it is clear that the central concepts are homage, service, and reverence.

[11 : 56] In the Old Testament, ideally, worship is focused on the sanctuary appointed by God. It follows the rituals laid down by God and is facilitated by the priesthood he has ordained.

But this cultic or this system of worship, this cultic activity, is not honoring to the Lord unless, listen, it leads to obedience and praise in every sphere of life.

Now, this is confined here to Sunday morning. Now, this is confined to some compartment of our lives, but it leads to obedience and praise in every sphere of life.

The definition continues. In the New Testament, the same terminology of worship is used in a transformed way to portray the work of Christ and the response that pleases God. Jesus, as Son of God and High Priest of the New Covenant, fulfills and replaces the whole system of approach to God that was at the heart of the Old Covenant.

[13:16] His incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension make possible an engagement with God in spirit and truth, which culminates in the unceasing worship of the new creation.

So what we see here is when we come to the New Testament, the same terminology of worship is used in a transformed way to portray the work of Christ.

Christ has fulfilled the whole Old Testament approach to God. And for those of us who have put our faith in Christ, that is to lead to obedience and praise in all of life, and is to culminate when Christ returns in unceasing worship and praise in the new creation.

So I think the bottom line is this. The bottom line is that in all of scripture, true worship of God will lead to obedience and praise in all of life.

That's the biblical revelation. The biblical revelation is not found in a succinct definition, but it is found in the witness of scripture, what we see in all of scripture, and when we put it together, it says this, true worship of God will lead to obedience and praise in all of life, in everything that we do.

[14:48] In other words, worship doesn't end when we leave this place today. Worship continues. It will continue in our homes, it will continue in our jobs tomorrow, it will continue because we seek to worship God and glorify God in all that we do.

Now where does true worship begin? What is its genesis? true worship begins with the revelation of God.

It begins with God as he has revealed himself and God has revealed himself in scripture. And this is why when we study theology, the first thing we study is not God, we study scripture because that is where God has revealed himself.

and what does it say about God's self-revelation here in Isaiah 66?

Look at verses 1 and 2 again. Thus says the Lord, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

[16:03] What is the house that you would build for me? And what is the place of my rest? all these things my hand has made and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord.

Here the self-revelation of God is that he is the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth. He says heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool.

These are language of a ruler, one who sits on a throne. And this is not just any ruler, this is an exceedingly great ruler because he says the heavens, the vast heavens, that's where I sit.

And this earth, this vast earth that you see, that's where I put my foot. That's the place where I rest my feet. I'm an exceedingly great king.

I am the king of the universe. I am the king over all things. king over the king over and then he says, so where is the place of my rest?

[17:20] What are you going to build for me, Israel? Certainly not the temple that you come and bring these sacrifices in. That can't contain me. I'm exceedingly great king.

I'm a sovereign king. I sit on the heavens. My feet are placed on the earth as a footstool. What place are you going to build for me?

And the Lord is reminding Israel that even though he told them to build that temple where he promised that he would put his presence, he's saying, I don't really dwell there. I don't live there. I'm greater than that.

I'm not like an idol God who you can contain to a temple. I am transcendent. I'm exceedingly great. This is the God that you're called to worship.

But the Lord shows himself not only as the sovereign ruler of all the earth, he shows himself as the sovereign creator as well. Notice what he says in verse 2. All these things my hand has made.

[18:28] And so all these things came to be. He's the sovereign creator of heaven and earth. Everything that we see, God is the one who is the source of it.

And so the picture here is a sovereign ruler, a sovereign creator, ruling over everything, who created everything, including the temple that you've built, including the sacrifices that you bring. So in essence, he's saying to them, you bring me nothing. I own everything. You bring me nothing. So true worship is not about that.

True worship begins in recognizing me for who I am. the sovereign ruler, the sovereign creator of all things.

Brothers, this is where true worship begins. It begins with a biblical revelation of God. And if God is truly the sovereign ruler, if he is truly the sovereign creator, then he deserves and commands our worship just because of that, not because of anything that he does.

[19 : 48] God needs to do nothing to deserve our worship. Think of it this way. Scripture calls children to honor their parents.

Children honor their parents because they are their parents, not because of what their parents do for them. What their parents do for them would be more reasons to honor their parents as they make sacrifices in all kinds of ways for their children's good.

Those are more reasons but those are not the reason. God has been abundantly good to us. He is good to all. The Bible says he provides for all that he has made.

He makes the sun to shine on the just and the unjust. But that's not why we worship him. We worship him because he is this God who is revealed in scripture.

The God of heaven and earth. The creator of all things including the very people who are called to worship him.

[20 : 57] This, brothers and sisters, is the foundation of true worship. When we get this wrong, we get worship wrong. If we miss this God, we create our own God and then we worship the God of our own creation.

And what we worship in essence is an idol. It is a Christian idol that we have created when we miss the revelation of this God who is too transcendent to dwell and be contained in some temple.

Who is too self-sufficient to be appeased by any sacrifice that we can bring to him. and fundamentally we worship God because God is God.

He's the sovereign ruler, the sovereign creator of heaven and earth. Now the latter part of verse 2, this sovereign ruler and creator tells us about the kind of person who he pays attention to, who he regards, who he esteems as the NIV says it.

He says the person that I pay attention to, the person that this God who truthfully our minds cannot fully comprehend the vastness and the greatness of this God who is described here, who says the heavens are my throne and the earth is my footstool.

[22 : 44] Our minds cannot fully and perfectly grab a picture of this God because he's infinite. He is beyond our full apprehension.

We cannot fully apprehend and comprehend who this God is. This God says I'll pay attention to this person. It's the kind of person I pay attention to.

He's humble. He's contrite in spirit. He trembles at my word. I think it's important for us to see that though these are distinct qualities, these are connected qualities.

You cannot say, well, I'm humble but I just don't have that contrite spirit quality. Or I have the contrite spirit quality and I really tremble at God's word.

I take his word seriously. But that humility thing, that's not me. No, these are all connected. These are all connected.

[24 : 03] It is not to say that we have these working in our lives perfectly. No. We never will on this side of heaven but we can have them working in our lives truly. Not in a perfect sense but in a true sense.

Every single person who truly belongs to the Lord has to some degree or another some measure of these qualities in them.

Some measure of humility, some measure of contrition of heart and obedience to God's word.

Being humble speaks to having an honest view of ourselves before God and towards others.

And when we see God as he has revealed himself, when we see God as he has revealed himself here, certainly in all the scripture but in particular in the part that we are looking at this morning, how do you turn around and be proud in the face of that God who has revealed himself?

The only proper response to a God who reveals himself in that way is to fall to our faces, fall on our knees, and humble ourselves.

[25 : 22] But if we truly grab a revelation of God as he is, we don't turn around and also turn out to be proud towards other people. We cannot say that we have seen some revelation of God in who he is and then be proud people, be arrogant people.

The only way that we do that is when we have bought into pop Christianity that gives us a view of a God who needs us, gives us a view of a God who sent his son to die for us because he couldn't live without us, gives us a view of a God who sits in the heavens waiting for every beck and call that we would send out to him.

That kind of thinking doesn't lead to humility, it leads to pride. It leads to making us think more highly of ourselves than we should. God. The kind of thinking causes us to think that we are special, and even that we are better than others.

The true humility calls us to esteem ourselves less than others, and to put others before ourselves. brothers and sisters, we cannot truly humble ourselves before God and be proud towards other people. And pride has a variety of expressions.

[27 : 11] Pride is not confined in one way. One of the ways that we exhibit pride is being self-willed, insisting on our own way.

One of the key things we see here with those whom God was not pleased with is they didn't listen. They wouldn't heed the voice of God.

This person is not only humble, but he's also contrite in spirit. being contrite in spirit means being mindful of and being remorseful for our sin.

The person who is contrite in spirit is aware of his or her brokenness, is aware of his or her sinfulness, is aware of how many ways and to great degrees to which they fall short.

And brothers and sisters, this is a reality. In the face of a holy God, we cannot help but be contrite for sin. This was Isaiah's experience.

[28 : 27] Here's a man who is a prophet. He's a prophet to the nations. He gets a revelation of God in Isaiah 6, and he says, woe is me, I'm a man who's undone, I'm a man of unclean lips, because my eyes have seen the glory of the Lord.

God, the only way that we will not be mindful of how far we fall short, and be reminded of our need for repentance, our need to turn to God, is when we don't have God in view.

That's the only time, but when we keep God in view, when we get this revelation of this amazingly great God, who's in need of nothing, we begin to see our need for ongoing mercy and grace from God, and we begin to see repentance not as a past thing, but as a way of life.

We become people who keep short accounts. We become people who are broken by sin, not hardened by our sin. One of the saddest things to watch is one who professes Christ to be steeped in sin, and proud about it, to exhibit attitudes that are foreign to what it means to follow Christ, and to be resolutely proud of such attitudes.

That's not being contrite in spirit. That's not the one to whom God looks. Not only is this person humble and contrite in spirit, the Lord says, the one to whom I look, the one I, the transcendent, sovereign, ruler and creator of the universe, I esteem this one, I look to this one, one who trembles at my word.

[30 : 27] One who trembles at my word. And so when you think about this, it is impossible to get this revelation of God and be flippant with his word.

You only do that with the God of pop culture. You do that with the God is my boyfriend God, God is my Santa God, not the holy God who has revealed himself as God over all and creator of all. when he speaks, we tremble at his word. When he speaks, we take his word seriously.

And this doesn't speak about literally shaking in our boots, but what it speaks about is a holy fear and a commitment to take seriously the word of God, the word of the sovereign king and creator who has all power.

to disobey a person is to disregard that person and to disrespect that person. We cannot respect whom we disobey.

[31 : 49] We cannot regard whom we disobey. And the Lord is saying that those who he pays attention to are those who take his word seriously.

The word here in Isaiah 66 that the Lord would have been referring to would have been that part of the Old Testament that would have been written at the time, the written word of God that they had, but it was also the spoken word of God that he was speaking through the prophets.

prophets. That was the word that they had. That was the revelation of God, written revelation of God, spoken revelation of God that they had at that point.

For us today, this is God's word. This is the full revelation of God that we can have certainty about. The full revelation of God that we can stake our lives on.

God is saying to us, if you're going to be a people, if you're going to be a person who I esteem, who I look to, who I regard for, you need to take this word seriously.

[33 : 12] You turn your back on it, you've turned your back on me. you turn your back on it, it shows you're not a humble person.

It shows you're not a contrite person, you're not a broken person. It shows that you're arrogant, that you're set in your own way, and you are doing your own thing, and you, in essence, are setting yourself up against the Lord.

Now, it's interesting when we compare the two kinds of worship that we see in this passage, because in a short while we look at the false worship that begins in verse 3, when we compare the two, we will notice that as it relates to true worship that the Lord is revealing to us in verses 1 and 2, no sacrifices are mentioned.

The sacrifices are going to look at shortly in verses 2, sorry, verses 3 and 4, these are sacrifices that God commanded. He told them to bring these sacrifices.

But when we consider the one to whom he esteems, the one to whom he looks, there's no mention of these sacrifices. Why is that? Well, the reason is, those who truly tremble at his word will do these things.

[34 : 43] If we truly tremble at God's word, if we truly take God's word seriously, we will do and perform what he calls us to do. So it's a given that they were doing these sacrifices.

It's a given that they were bringing the ox and they were sacrificing the lamb and they were presenting the grain offerings and they were burning the incense as the Lord called them to because that was a part of his word to them and because they were those who took his word seriously, they were doing that.

I believe that one faithful way to summarize the one to whom God looks is to say he or she fears the Lord.

He or she fears the Lord. And I think we all know that we only fear what we know.

We do not fear what we don't know. We don't fear what we don't understand. And so, for example, this is why children, young children, a lot of them, play with matches.

[35 : 58] They play with matches because it just fascinates them, but they don't know the danger of fire. They don't know the damage that fire can bring, the harm it can bring to them and bring to others.

But when we learn the harm that fire can produce, we begin to fear fire. And we don't play with matches, we handle matches, and we handle matches very, very carefully.

Brothers and sisters, it's the same with the Lord. it is only when we truly know God that we will truly fear God. If we don't know God as he has revealed himself as the self-sustaining sovereign ruler and creator of all things, we will be more inclined to think of ourselves more highly than we should. We will be less likely to be contrite in heart, we will be less likely to be repentant about sin because we don't know the holy God who's perfect in all of his ways.

See this idea of I have secret sins, I can walk out of here and I can do things that I would not be comfortable doing out of the open.

[37 : 25] that attitude doesn't recognize this God. He's a God who knows all and sees all.

There's no secret before him. Nothing is hid before him. He knows us better than we know ourselves. And it's only when we truly know him will truly fear him.

And again, we will never truly know him perfectly, but we can truly know him truly. And truly, we cannot fear God the way we should fear the Lord.

But we can fear him truly. And when we fear him truly, it will be seen in how we live life before him and toward one another.

In Hebrews 12, 28 through 29, the writer to the Hebrews says, therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

[38 : 43] Here's why. For our God is a consuming fire. And so this morning, I want to ask you a really up close question, a very personal question.

Do these words describe you? Do these words, one who is humble, one who is contrite in heart, one who trembles at God's word, do those words describe you?

Or are you proud and hard-hearted and unrepentant about sin?

And at best, see God's word is optional. Brothers and sisters, our attitude is anything less than holy reverence, and humble obedience, we don't know God.

We do not know God. We are worshiping an idol of our own creation. We're worshiping a popular God who is foreign to Scripture.

[40 : 10] Scripture. If we don't do God's word, we don't tremble. True worship is based on a revelation of who God is, and as a result, it will be accompanied by obedience to his word.

And we will seek to live for him in all of life, and we will seek to please him in all that we do. And I have a burden this morning.

My burden for us is I don't want us to be like so many who are worshiping a God who's not this God. And they're so confident, just like these people bringing the oxen, bringing the lamb, bringing the grain, burning the incense, and they're lost.

lost. And they're lost. And they're lost. And they're lost. And I don't want us to be in that category. I have a burden for you this morning.

[41 : 48] I have a burden for this church that we would not be busy worshiping a God who's not the God of the Bible. have an awareness this morning that I would stand before God and I would give an account for the God that I've sought to proclaim to you.

And my burden is that I would have been faithful to help you to see this is no idol God.

This is no God who can be tamed or bribed. This is the self revealing, all sufficient, transcendent, sovereign God and creator of all.

And the only proper response to him is to be humble, to be contrite in heart and to take his words seriously.

But that's true worship. Let's now consider false worship, which is my second and final point. False worship is described in verses 3 and 4.

[43 : 08] And in a nutshell, it is having a form of godliness and denying the power of godliness.

Look at what it says in verse 3. He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man. He who sacrifices a lamb like one who breaks a dog's neck.

He who presents a grain offering like one who offers pig's blood. He who makes a memorial offering of frankincense like one who blesses an idol.

Those are graphic words to communicate God's view of false worship. people. They were bringing a man and bringing him to the temple.

They weren't bringing pig's blood. They weren't offering some burning incense to idols.

[44 : 26] They weren't doing that. but the Lord says even though they were doing what he had called them to do, he says it's like they were bringing these abominable things and doing these abominable things that he had never called them to do.

And so what's the issue? What's the issue with them bringing these sacrifices?

And if you were able to see it, those who were offering true worship and those who were offering false worship, they all showed up to the temple with their sacrifices. The false worshipers brought the oxen as the true worshipers brought the oxen.

The true worshipers brought the lambs as the false worshipers brought their lambs and they brought their grains, they brought their frankincense, they all brought it. But what made it false? What made the other one true? Fundamentally it was based on the revelation of who God is and responding to God based on that revelation.

[45 : 35] But look at what the Lord says to the latter part of verse three. They have chosen their own ways and their soul delights in their abominations.

That's why what they offered to God was considered by him to be detestable and abominable because they have chosen their own ways and their souls delight in their abomination.

salvation. What an indictment on people who were coming to the temple going through the motions and offering sacrifices.

sacrifices. They were treating the true and living God as if he were some idol. Some idol that you bring a sacrifice to appease. They were treating the Lord the way the pagan nations related to their idols.

When they wanted a good harvest or when they wanted fertility or whatever they wanted, they appeased their God with their sacrifices. He says, I'm not that God. Just like the pagans who went out offering their sacrifices and did their own thing, these people were doing the same.

[46 : 57] And the question is, how do you have a revelation of God as he has revealed himself in these earlier verses and verses 1 and 2 and then turn around and relate to him as an idol?

Turn around, offer your sacrifices and choose your own ways and delight in your abominations. Have your soul filled with what pleases you.

They ignored that revelation and they ignored God's word and they did their own thing. As as sisters, false worship is worship that is not based on the revelation that God is the sovereign ruler and creator of the universe and it is based on a disobedience and a disregard for his word. It is based on an ignorance of God's word. It's based on believing. What displeases him is what pleases him.

One of the greatest tragedies to observe today among many people who profess to know the Lord is to see hordes of them in search of a prophetic word while they neglect the written word of God.

[48 : 26] They go to great lengths, great sacrifices to attend this meeting, this prophet is in town, this prophet is in town. And someone promises if you come you're going to hear a word from the Lord.

they leave God's word and run to hear some word. And all that happens is they get what their itching ears want to hear.

It's an itching tongue speaking to an itching ear. And brothers and sisters, it's no different from what we see here in Isaiah 66. 66. And so what's the Lord's response to all of this?

Well, his response is in verse 4. I will choose harsh treatment for them. I bring the affairs upon them. Because when I called, no one answered.

When I spoke, they did not listen. but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.

[49 : 40] The implication is that in their approach to God and how they worship God, the same way the pagans would have fears about this or that and not having a good crop or not being able to have children or having some disaster, they'd offer these sacrifices as appeasements to their gods because they had these fears, the Lord says.

That's how they're treating me, the very fears that they have. The very concerns they have as they relate to me as an idol, I will bring those fears upon them.

And again, the reason is in the latter part of verse 4. When I called, no one answered.

When I spoke, they did not listen, but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.

Brothers and sisters, these are not idle words. This is God's revelation to us.

[50 : 55] It's God's revelation to you and to me. What place does this have in our lives? How do we relate to this on a daily basis?

Do we know it? And when I say know it, not perfectly, but sufficiently, Scripture says, he has shown you, oh man, what is good, what does the Lord require of you?

God has shown it to us. God has to us. But how can we truly be saying that we are serving the living God and ignoring his word?

If we ignore God's word, we don't have a chance of fulfilling his word, knowing what he calls us to do. I've been, many of you have heard me confess how I could be a news junkie and just reading news, reading the same news, hearing the same news a couple times a day, and I'm slowly getting something in my head.

Every bit of information is not essential information. Every bit of news is not essential. There's some things I should choose to be ignorant about.

[52 : 20] There's some things I don't need to clutter my mind with. I need to make some decisions so that they don't crowd out this word, this essential word that I need to know.

And brothers and sisters, we need to take stock of our lives, we need to consider what place does God's word have in our lives. This is where God reveals himself. This is where we will get to know God.

And as we're looking at a new year, I just want to encourage us, by the grace of God, let us finish this year being able to look back with gratitude in our hearts and thanks to God that we know him better through his word.

God will be here. We need to pray, but you know what? The things that we're hearing in prayer and we sense in prayer will be confirmed by this word.

They're not detached somewhere in some special category. We must be standing squarely on this word as we live the Christian life. If we don't, we run the risk of being these people in Israel referred to in Isaiah 66 who thought they were pleasing God, but they were displeasing him because they rejected his word.

[53 : 49] In verses 5 and 6, the Lord encourages the obedient and he announces judgment for the disobedient.

notice what he says. Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word. Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, let the Lord be glorified.

They're making sport of them. They're making fun of them. That we may see your joy. The Lord says, but they're the ones who are going to be put to shame. Oftentimes those who engage in false worship they ridicule and they make sport of those who seek to faithfully serve the Lord.

They say you need to loosen up. You're too tight. You need to get with it. That's old fashioned. and they make sport and they seek to put them to shame. But the Lord says to those who tremble at his word, those who take his word seriously because they know it's the word of the great God and creator of the universe.

[55 : 21] He says they're going to be put to shame. And then in prophetic language you read in verse 6 of the coming judgment of the Lord. The sound of an uproar from the city.

A sound from the temple. The sound of the Lord rendering recompense not to his people, to his enemies.

That's the way God views those who do not worship him based on his self-revelation but they worship him in accordance with their own ways and whatever pleases them.

Brothers and sisters, no adjustment in our lives, no sacrifice that we could make is too great to better position us to know this God and serve this God.

And so I encourage us this morning, I encourage us this morning to be sobered by this reality that we could be side by side with other people, doing the same thing.

[56 : 43] And yet the Lord says, your sacrifice is abominable to me because you're living your life, you're doing your own thing and your sacrifice, your worship of me doesn't lead to worship in all of life and obedience in all of life.

God is but there's not total despair in this passage as we consider it for those who find themselves worshipping a God who is of their own making.

all of this false worship is part of the reason that Jesus Christ came to enable us to worship God through him.

Jesus came as the perfect sacrifice. He came as the one who perfectly obeyed God. He came as the one who perfectly pleased God. He died on the cross for sinners so that those who put their trust in him would be saved.

And Christ ultimately is our only hope for perfect worship before God. And I say this this morning because you see it's easy for us to think okay what I'm going to do is I'm going to leave here I'm going to make huge adjustments in my life I'm going to get in God's word and I'm going to get in God's face and I'm going to really serve the Lord.

[58 : 30] Brothers and sisters if we do that we're going to fall on our faces because in our own wisdom and in our own strength and with our best motives we still fall short of what a holy perfect God requires.

It is only when our serving of God is mediated through the perfect life of Christ that we can satisfy this God of scripture.

Our humility our contrition of heart our obedience to God's word will never please God. You see because if we could do 99.99% well in those areas we still failed in God's sight because God is a perfect God and if he overlooks the smallest effect that's reflection on his holiness.

So he can't overlook the smallest effect and so the only way that we are able to please this God is as we seek to please him as we seek to live in accordance with what he has revealed in his word we do so with an awareness like we sang this morning Lord I need you we need the Lord Jesus to make our living acceptable before God because what God does is he doesn't look at our faithfulness he looks at Christ faithfulness and he credits that to us and that's the only way that he can accept!

us!! And again that doesn't excuse laziness that doesn't say well you make no effort because you can't please God anyway no we are to make grace motivated effort knowing that we're not relying

on those efforts we ultimately rely on the efforts and the mercy of Christ brothers and sisters God's word is our only authoritative guide in this process of true worship and Jesus Christ is the only certainty that at the end of this day at the end of this life we will be accepted before God and so when we stand before God if

[61 : 06] God were to ask us the question why should I let you into heaven you heard that sermon what was your worship like why should I let you into heaven based on your worship we should say to God the right answer would be you shouldn't you shouldn't because my worship fell short though I tried as hard as I could though I did everything I knew to do it falls short but you said if I put my trust in Jesus you'd receive me and Jesus perfectly worshipped you Jesus perfectly obeyed you Jesus perfectly detested sin and it's on that basis that you should accept me that's the only reason brothers and sisters that any of us this morning would have any hope of making heaven because we can clench our fists and grit our teeth and we can do this we can't we need the mercy of God that's our only hope this morning if we are going to offer true worship to the living

God let's pray I won't take questions this morning I just feel we should reflect on what God is saying to our hearts we're going to sing in a moment let's just pause and consider what we've heard this morning Father we pray that you would help us to offer true worship to you worship that is acceptable because it's offered through Jesus Christ worship that is acceptable because we seek to be humble we seek to be contrite we seek to truly tremble at your word but Lord we do so with no illusion we do so with the full and frank awareness that our best efforts will not ultimately please you you have shown that you are pleased with your son he is the one with whom you are well pleased and you have called us to put our trust in him and that you will accept us through him Lord help us this morning to bring our feeble worship and lay them at the feet of Jesus knowing that his perfect worship will be credited on our behalf but work in our hearts this morning do the work that only you can do Lord we need you to work more than we can will or commit to true worship help us we pray this morning in Jesus name amen