

Second Sunday after Easter

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: 23 April 2023

Preacher: Rev. Daniel Avitan

[0 : 0 0] to be human is to worship we can't get away from it human beings have been worshipping beings over time over geography across ethnicity across language the most ardent atheists and skeptics and and secularists they're worshipping people we cannot not worship as human beings simply put to be human is to worship but there is worship and then there is true worship we have this impetus for worship but not all the worship that we do is edifying to us or pleasing to god ezra as we continue in our series from uh post it's post easter to the beginning of summer we enter into uh this section ezra chapter 3 susan read one to verses one to six but we'll be covering all of chapter three and a little bit into chapter four but as a bit of a background the exiles that are in persia are sent back by king cyrus to jerusalem to rebuild the temple to re-establish worship in jerusalem once again really the temple as we looked at last week it's more than just brick and mortar it represents the presence of god amongst his people not that god is confined to a house god makes that very clear but that it is a representation of god's presence there amongst his people and ezra the israelites uh we'll see today's zerubbabel these figures have come back to jerusalem and they are rebuilding the temple and re-establishing worship but a very specific kind of worship according to god's word it's very instructive for us because it's going to teach us in a sense what true worship looks like the priorities we must have as we come before god in worship so three things this will be a shorter sermon i'll try to pack it uh pretty tightly we want to have as much time for our missionaries to share but we're going to look at three things from chapter three and a bit into chapter four this text will teach us that true worship begins and ends with god's word first and foremost it begins and ends with god's word the second is that true worship is orderly and structured we'll unpack that a little bit and then the last bit true worship is joyful and faith-filled it begins and ends with god's word it's orderly and structured and true worship is joyful and faith-filled before we jump in let me ask the lord's blessing on uh on the reading um of his word lord thank you that we can uh gather and hear your word lord may only truth be heard this morning lord and only truth be said we ask that your holy spirit would be at work as we open your word in jesus name amen let us jump right into uh into the first point that true worship begins and ends with god's word look with me uh ezra 3 1 to 6 i'm not going to read the section over again but notice that uh throughout ezra chapter 3 verses 1 to 6 we uh repeatedly see as it was written as it was written according to moises there's always references to the scriptures that came before they are setting up the temple not in a haphazard way but according to god's word and this is a very important thing because the israelites were in exile precisely because they didn't follow god's word they didn't worship according to god's design and god's instructions yeah they still worship god here and there but they

also worshiped baal and asherah and molek these false gods that were in the region that god expressly told them do not worship them very very clear god wants us to worship according to his word so the re-establishing of the temple and the worship that will take place in jerusalem it was integral that as they re-establish it it is according to god's word and god has consistently given had consistently given israel very clear instructions from abraham uh to the israelites at mount sinai the giving of the law everything that defined israel was defined by god's proclamation god was the one who spoke in a sense israel together brought them together with his words so important was it that in deuteronomy chapter 4 god makes it very clear to moses who's supposed to say to the people you shall not add to the word that i command you nor take from it that you may keep the commandments of the lord your god that i command you you see uh how it was so vital for the building of the the altar the various offerings that were offered the keeping of the feast is all according to god's word even the timing of the rebuild the building of the altar it's all connected with the scriptural commands we won't dive into it but there's allusions to abraham coming from uh mesopotamia or to uh the promised land there's allusions to it that moses or sorry that uh abraham he erects an altar the first thing he does when he comes into the promised land so too when the israelites come out of exile what do they do they establish first and foremost an altar again that's according to god's word they build the temple in the same month and in the same way using the same materials as solomon from first kings uh chapter six and on it's a wonder like it's it's a wonderful chapter to read that whole section of solomon building the temple but we see so much of that it's like it was a cut and paste right into our text again according to god's word and keeping the high holidays as to recall god's word and his deliverance everything that they have done is according to god's word the rebuilding of the temple is saturated in scripture and carefully follows god's design and why is this important why is it important that we that we worship according to god's word because uh when like i mentioned when israel deviated from god's ways it's not just that they were they were jettisoned into exile because god told them something to do and they didn't do it and god you know he got frustrated he he you didn't listen to me he i'm a petty god i'm gonna kick you out no because god designs worship in such a way to glorify him but also for our benefit our flourishing is involved with that so it's not just that the israelites worship these false gods the baals the asherahs the moleks but with that false worship came the the disintegration of their society rape and mutilation the sacrificing of children it's a horrible horrible thing it's not again that god was petty you didn't follow my rules you're out but the land itself becomes polluted when god's word when god's worship isn't according to his word it's not exclusive to him and we decide to to make up the rules ourselves it's a big problem it's a it's a huge problem after god speaks of moses in deuteronomy chapter 4 we read verse 2 but he continues on and then he

goes on into this this um this teaching god teaches moises to teach the people about idolatry and and how it will it will be a bane it will be a horrible horrible nightmare for them if they engage in it this is why it is so important to worship god according to his law for the israelites but how about for us why is this an important important aspect to our worship why why do we learn from ezra here that worship has to be a part of of god's word i think it's the same thing because we're worshipping people if we don't worship god according to his ways we will worship something according to that way or our way it will result not in flourishing and in life and in health and in justice it will result in injustice it will result in a disintegration of families and self and the self focus will will will crumble our souls we will not be able to to stand up under the weight of false gods it's a very interesting thing that in the hope that we could be free from religion and free from worship and free from the constraints of god's word we become slaves to our passions and to evils and to all sorts of things that whatever the the the winds of change blow we become a slave to it and it's not freedom interesting in uh in morning prayer there's the the collect for um i think it's it's one of the second last collects we pray but anyways in the end i think it's a call call it for peace or call it concord and every day you pray it and it says service to you is perfect freedom how on earth is service or bond slavery to god perfect freedom and yet it is uh this past week um george sinclair he's the the lead pastor of church of the messiah downtown and also here as well bringing leadership and he's a a terrific mentor he was in kigali rwanda for gafcon 4 gafcon is a mouthful it's called the global anglican futures conference like needs to be a better name it's been i don't know it's been like 16 years got to figure out a better name but it is um a conference every five years this past week it was in rwanda five years ago it was in jerusalem the year the last one before that was in kenya and the first one was in jerusalem so it's kind of jerusalem back and forth back and forth but it's a gathering of 85 percent of the world's over 80 million anglicans are represented in this conference this conference exists because the anglican church in the west which had its solid foundation in the word of god deviated and decided that they were going to follow another way and absorb and and accommodate the winds of change the progress and the world uh has not benefited from that but instead the church has been polluted and here we are in i mean gafcon's a it's it's always a plan b you always want to call people back to repentance but gafcon's a plan b but that's exactly what it what what it resulted in why because god's word was no longer the foundation for worship specifically within this anglican tradition so god's word dictating to us what true godly worship is worship that pleases god and this will bring us to our next point so when we read this ordering um and the structures of worship within the text we must we we have to avoid thinking that orderly worship is stiff worship stuffy worship i mean it can be

but also free wonderful extemporaneous worship can also be terribly stuffy and not according to god's word as well but nevertheless god desires order in his worship orderly worship is a gift from god for our life and our worship so look with me verses two to three of ezra chapter three then arose jeshua the son of joseph joshua is a priest it's also the aramaic name for jesus not that this person is specifically jesus jesus was a common name but this is this is the name jeshua or yeshua then arose jeshua the son of joseph with his fellow priests and zerubbabel the son of sheltiel with his kinsmen and they built the altar of the god of israel to offer burnt offerings on it as it was written in the law of mooses the man of god there it is again they set the altar in its place i'll pause really quickly there uh if you were to build a home from scratch i know of one couple here that have built a home from scratch uh you don't start with the kitchen you don't just plop a kitchen down i mean the kitchen is in my opinion the heart of the home um not the rec room it's the kitchen uh but you don't start with the kitchen uh you you level the ground you set a foundation if you have to dig it takes time it's it's laborsome nothing looks wonderful nothing looks good uh you you do framing you do electrical plumber plumbing blah blah the last thing you do is maybe the kitchen the last finishings you make it look nice new counters whatever whatever it's beautiful what's interesting here is that the altar is built before anything else the altar in some senses is the heart of the temple it is the place where sacrifices are made to god for atonement for thanksgiving um as as as a way of just saying to god uh we worship you it's a free will offering it's it's the altar is a very important place like the heartbeat of the temple it's the first thing that's built here it's hard to see because chapter one we're in persia chapter two is just a list of names of the people that are coming chapter three opens up how does this open up in verse one when the seventh month came and the children of israel were in the towns like it's just a fast forward like cut scene we don't see people traveling from persia to to jerusalem and we don't see or feel the desolation of jerusalem jerusalem jerusalem is laid waste it's it's it's a it's a mess the assyrians the babylonians who knows what happened in the interim time jerusalem isn't jerusalem the temple's destroyed it's it's a ruin and yet the first thing that is built upon the ruins of the temple is the altar it's very it's it's a it's a remarkable thing and it would have been something that looked very out of place except that the altar was it's it's in terms of worship and right ordering it is the the right thing to construct first why because we come before god and what do we do we repent we come in humility we come asking god for his grace because we truly are sinners how do we come to god uh i'll just say this we come to god because of what jesus has done and we there is this um familiarity and this father child son or daughter relationship and that is a wonderful beautiful thing but make no mistake god is god and he is our king and he is creator over everything he created us we have no standing in front of him apart from what he gives us so we come before god with reverence

with humility not with a boldness and a thumping of the chest of pride that comes up so it's interesting that the altar is the first thing that is built why because sacrifices are made on it for the atonement of sins there's a picture of humility coming into god's presence with humility recognizing who he is in his perfection and how it is an incredible gift of grace that we could even know god let alone come into his presence the altar is built first and in many ways this is how we ought to worship coming before god in humility confessing our sins i mean that's in a sense what the call for purity is but later on we'll truly like as a congregation confess our sins together before holy communion because who are we to come before god thinking that our merit the things that we've done this week the rays i just got you know my kids are healthy you know things are looking great anything before god as if we have standing before him humility atonement recognizing that we need to repent from our sins this is this is a picture of what godly worship looks like it also helps us to remember that we are frail humans in need of aid there is at one point this week upcoming week my guess is you will have a delusion that you are potentially without blemish that that actually you don't have skin you're made of teflon like there's nothing wrong with you nothing can stop you we have these delusions that we are invincible and yet what does repentance do it helps remind us that without god we are miserable offenders we are frail we are broken people we are deeply in need of grace we are one injury away from poverty we are one accident away god forbid from dying our lives are frail nothing we can do in our own strength is going to somehow keep us and help us to endure to the end of time in the end we will all die it helps us to avoid narcissism and entitlement in a in an egotistic heart so we can only truly worship and serve god when we know that the heinous nature of our sin because only then will we know how wonderful and how sweet his grace and love is towards us you don't know god's grace and love if you're proud but only when you know the brokenness and the sinfulness and yet he still will forgive and invite you into his presence the structure then moves on to include celebrations and remembrances this is what the feast of tabernacles is to remember god sustaining israel through the desert into the promised land over 40 years all of the feasts point to god's deliverance and it helps the israelites to remember there's also free will offerings and all and then finally praise with with song and with instrument but notice it it begins with repentance the repeated usage also in verses one to six of the covenant name of the lord yahweh in in our translations it's all capital I-o-r-d the original language it is yahweh it is the covenant name of god god's self-disclosure the people that use god's name like this know god's love they are in relationship with him god has made a covenant with them and he is keeping a covenant with them and we see it time and time and time again in verses one to six that covenant keeping god here this is this is what the people of god are

[20 : 11] proclaiming so song breaks out joy ensues and this will lead us to our third um our third point here that true worship is joyful and faith-filled look with me in verses 10 to 13 and when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the lord the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets and the levites the sons of asaph with symbols to praise the lord according to the directions of david king of israel another reference to god's word and they sang responsibly praising and giving thanks to the lord for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever towards israel and all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the lord because the foundation of the house of the lord was laid i'll get to verses 12 and 13 if you read ahead it's bizarre people are actually crying in the midst of this we'll get there but notice how true worship culminates what uh culminates in what joy and and in faith filled worship what do i mean by the faith-filled part i mean the joy aspect is there it's very clear but what do i mean by faith-filled israel has gathered it's a remarkable journey but again i mean i can't stress it enough israel is desolate jerusalem is in ruins all that's there is an altar and in a foundation the walls aren't built the temple isn't built in fact the temple we'll see in a moment won't be construction will halt for 20 years there's nothing and yet these people proclaim for god is good he is good his steadfast loves love endures forever toward israel this praise is 100 the right way to do it it's proclaiming that god has done something but more importantly that he will do something in the future and it will be wonderful and we're going to put our faith in that we don't see what's going to come we don't see what is what is in the future what is to come but we trust that this god who has rescued us in the past who's rescued us right now will do something magnificent in the future they don't wait for the temple to be rebuilt before they praise god that would be the more fitting thing the temple's made then they say god how faithful are you and yet it's it's still in ruins i mentioned uh life being fragile uh we ought not to wait for life to be really good before we praise god for his faithfulness and it's not a mantra like a serenity now where i'm speaking something into existence it is a recognition that god does not change and he is always good and that he is all-powerful and that the promise he that the promises that he makes will come to completion in the midst of suffering you know christine and i were talking about this um this morning uh we haven't had such an intense stretch in our marriage since this church launched a year and a half ago our marriage is good i should that sounded like the marriage was bad what i meant is things have been tough from from the services but also i mean and it's happened to a bunch of families here bouts of sickness christine has gone through terrible time after time just dental issues um and it's all it all kind of piles up as many of you know i went through a loss a couple weeks ago my father passed away and it got messy this past week was

it was a headache and it seems like it's just time after time when when things like get a bit of momentum something happens a flat proverbially things things don't go well and yet what are we called to do god you are good your steadfast love endures forever that you will help me in this because you are the god of miracles and of salvation and death has already been defeated that plagues me right now the issues that are are feeling like the weight of the world on my shoulders whatever it may be if you're if you've had a great week again fantastic i'm not wishing bad but this is the the reality of life you have defeated everything lord and i am putting my faith in you and it's not about squinting our eyes and balling up our fists it's about having faith in the only person even if it's just this this much baby little baby faith okay who's our faith in that's what matters that's what matters more than the the degree and the strength of our faith it's the object of our faith the person that we are putting our faith in as jesus christ so friends worship god with joy and with faith in difficult times it's not a mind over matter it is it will be bomb to your soul it'll be fuel in your tank just do it we'll do it together and learn how to do it together but also do it as individuals friends we must feast on the faithfulness of god especially especially when times are bleak and times are trying and what is the result it will be joy faith-filled and joyful worship will follow us not every minute of every day but it will become it will become a main state in our lives instead of um being downcast and sullen and giving into depression which is very real instead we will choose to trust in the lord and that he will meet us in our brokenness so what about verses 12 and 13 let me read them but many of the priests and levites and heads of father's houses old men who had seen the first house that's the first temple solomon's temple wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid though many shouted aloud for joy so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shouts from the sounds of the people's weeping for the people shouted with a great shout and the sound was heard far away it's very if it seems like it doesn't fit so what is going on with verses 12 and 13 um we are given no specific reason we we don't have an insight into the thoughts of of the old guard so to speak the older contingent um but it would make sense to think that this older contingent look back at the grandeur of solomon's temple again read first kings and see how ornate it would have been with the gold and the cedars and everything inlaid and it said in that time in solomon's day silver was like nothing i'm sure it wasn't nothing the idea is everything but there's so much bounty and and grandeur and beauty that that silver what's silver and they were thinking back at what was lost and looking at the foundation and an altar and thinking what is this what is this i remember what the first temple looked like and this is not it

and i don't think this other temple is going to get built it's a bit of a problem i mean there is a nostalgia and there is a time for for lament but it would seem that this is not a faith-filled lament here but rather a desire to go back to the glory days but god was not going to do that god wasn't just going to set up the temple and have solomon's temple 2.0 and that's the way it was going to be it wasn't going to be this you know return to uh should have seen what life was like in the 70s like it was awesome it wasn't like that god was going to do something new and better and you know the people here i mean i'll just reference verses one to five of of chapter four the people here are worshiping the lord the temple is about to be built the people of the land come and they're they're pluralistic they're worshiping yahweh but probably worshiping molek and asherah and and baal and other gods and the people freak out because there's a bit of a a campaign against them to to thwart their plans and the temple gets put on pause for 20 years you all of a sudden these old people you think older people i should say they're thinking i told you i told you this was this is not solomon's temple i told you but what god was doing was he was building anticipation i mean even when the temple is built we'll see in a couple weeks the ark of the covenant is not in the temple as it was in solomon's temple in solomon's temple when it's built the glory cloud god's heavy presence comes into the temple so bizarre but beautiful scene that does not happen in this story it is not solomon's temple 2.0 but what it is is uh a longing that god creates in his people that will not be realized or or or seen for for generations that god he would rebuild the temple but only insofar as that temple pointed to the ultimate temple that was to come and what is that ultimate temple who is that ultimate temple it is jesus christ he's the true and perfect temple the temple is the place where god meets his people where god's presence resides then jesus fully god and fully man is the perfect manifestation the perfect picture of what that is is that jesus comes to live amongst us to die on our behalf and to rise again to new life that jesus is the ultimate temple and that all the other temples point to him he was a sacrifice to end all sacrifice he turns the crucifix into an altar so to speak making atonement once and for all for our sins so that we trust in jesus what he has done we repent of our sins knowing that the penalty for our wrongdoings for our evil for our delusions are gone it's paid it's it's we can we can have access to god now forever jesus dies according to god's word we have our faith in him and and and and through that we offer to god our lives but not as a sacrifice for atonement but for a sacrifice of thanksgiving then our lives in a sense become a sacrifice to god in a spiritual way and we get to reside with god in part here but always our worship points to the age to come where we will worship god in full in jesus's presence for eternity with his people so you see what the people are building is in the ultimate temple but the temple that's a sign for the ultimate temple to come

i would say to you think about that as we worship that we are proclaiming the age to come where we will dwell with god in his midst forever and ever and we get a taste of that this morning let us pray lord god we thank you so much that we have this opportunity to be your people um to worship you but lord help us to be people that worship you according to truth and in an orderly god-honoring way and in a way that is joy-filled not fake but joy-filled because we are putting our trust and our faith in you that our worship will also be faith-filled or let us be real about our shortcomings so we can see the fullness of your grace and we pray these things in christ's mighty name amen so you you you you you you you