

Worship Is a Classroom

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[0:00] Well, good morning. It's five past the hour, so we might get underway. I'll pray for us, and then our theme this morning is worship as a classroom.

My original draft was to call this worship is a dinner party, but I wondered whether Americans would hear the words dinner party in the same way that I might. I thought classroom was much less ambiguous, so we'll go with that today.

So let me pray for us. Our gracious Lord, we thank you so much that we can be together. We're safer when we're together than when we're apart. So we ask you this morning to help us, to bless us individually, that we might bless those sitting around us and those new people we'll meet.

And please give us a deep learning about how we might think of and participate in Sunday worship. May this be for us an enormous encouragement along the way.

For we ask it in Christ's strong name. Amen. Well, as I've done in the last few weeks, it's worth taking a few moments at the beginning of our time to summarise or reflect on the last few weeks together.

[1:20] As a teacher, I do this at the beginning of all my classes, just to be reminded how little they learnt last time. What have been your ongoing reflections or thoughts about these conversations on worship?

Every day, the notion is clearer and clearer. I know that something inside me always wants to sin. That law of sin that Paul talks about in Romans 7.

But I'm utterly, utterly, utterly dependent on His goodness and on His grace and on the knowledge that He gives me through the Spirit and His Word that points me to Christ.

I suffer from depression, really bad depression. And sometimes I just have to hang on and just repeat scriptures when I'm in bed under the sheets for 17 hours or, I mean, anywhere.

I'm watching TV or I'm bored or it's just that I'm utterly dependent. But that something inside says that there's a hope. You're suffering, you're suffering, you're suffering, but there's a hope.

[2:30] So, Royal's point is that we need to be reminded of our dependence on the Lord. Our dependence, which I think in the... The word faith, I think, in the end just means dependence.

And that's what we have to do. I suppose church, coming to church, worshipping at church, reminds us of our dependence or teaches us that dependence. Thank you. Can people remember what the actual metaphors, the topics were over the last two weeks?

Church is a party. Church is a party, which was... Worship is a party. Worship is a party, that's right. That was last week's topic. Worship is a compass. And worship is a compass was the first week, that's right.

And anything about those particular images that have resonated with you over the last few weeks? Yes. I've been thinking a lot about, in that first week, when you talked about how we come in response to God.

Yes. That's personal, we come in response. And just reflecting on how that's true in my personal relationship with Him, that I come in response, so I don't have to work to get His attention.

[3:50] Yes, sure. Yep, yep, yep. I have to be there to respond. Yep. It's already been said on that. That's been really helpful for me the past week. Yes, great. And I think when I visit lots of different churches, not just in the US but elsewhere, one of the things I notice is that more and more, and I think it's partly through the influence of the charismatic movement, I have a lot of regard for the charismatic movement, but at this point I'm less patient, where you come to church to get God's attention, or the intensity of your singing gets God's attention, or your intensity of experience more generally gets God's attention.

And I think it's just fundamentally wrong-headed that actually God's voice goes out. And the fact that you and I are in church this morning is because we're responding to the voice that already went out.

He was here in church before we are. He's the one who's calling us together, right? We don't bring down his presence. He's here waiting, right?

And I think that's a very fundamental kind of pattern that we need to be aware of and hold on to. Anything on the Trinity from last week's presentation?

I might remind you that one of my fundamental pitches last week was that the greatest danger to the church in America and beyond is that we're giving up on the doctrine of the Trinity.

[5:30] For good reasons, we think that we're being friendly to outsiders by talking down our understanding of God, the Holy Trinity, but actually in the end it will be the undoing of us.

We cannot relinquish our faith in the Trinity. After we talked about that, I realized, looking backward, how often I've heard and cooperated with, I guess, evangelists who say, oh joy, are you looking for joy?

Come, come, you'll find joy in Christ. Yes, yes. Oh, you're looking for security? Then, you know, you can look for Christ for security. Yes. Instead of saying, here is our God, behold our God.

Yes, yes. And then, eventually, by knowing Him and experiencing Him, you will know security. No, of course, and we place our trust in joy, or we place our trust in security, or, to be a little bit sharper, sometimes we place our trust in justification.

Actually, we should be placing our trust in Christ, who gives us joy, who gives us security, and who gives us justification, right? Well, this morning, perhaps the least kind of encouraging of the metaphors, worship is a classroom.

[6:59] Not all of us have had positive experiences of classrooms in our life, either from being a student or from being a teacher. But I think, nonetheless, it picks up some really important themes that we need to engage with.

For this is our challenge. The average Australian, and I suspect it's no different for the average American, watches six hours of advertisements on TV per week.

All right? And that's the average. So there'll be people who are watching a lot more of that. If you think every hour of television has about 20 minutes of ads, it only takes a few hours a day to add up to quite a substantial amount.

And what we're doing in church is we're trying to reshape people's loves and imagination and hearts and minds in 90 minutes a week.

90 at the best. Some churches only have 45, 50 hour-long services, right? So just think of that for a minute. There's six hours of ads shaping your head and your heart.

[8:09] And we try and combat it with 90 minutes of church. We don't have a lot of time to address those who are in church, their hearts and their minds and their souls and their spirit.

That 90 minutes of church here at Trinity, it's 90 minutes. That 90 minutes of church is just so important. We've got to do it so carefully and thoughtfully and well because the opposite kind of pressures are loud and strong.

What might be some other cultural pressures which church on Sundays is trying to combat? I think the lady here.

It's always the sports teams. Oh, yes, I see. Sure. On Sundays, you mean? Yeah. Yeah, sure. Literally, that time slot has competing priorities.

I can't even remember when it was just starting. Yes. Now it's everywhere. Yeah, yeah. And much more acceptable. So that's a really obvious time tabling challenge.

[9:26] Yep, yep. Our son is an oboe player and started missing school because that's when the classes were. And now he's in one of the greatest schools, got his master's at NEC.

He stopped going to church. You mentioned last week, I think. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Out there. Yep, so those are kind of time tabling pressures. What are some other cultural pressures, some things that make church look boring or make church look unattractive?

TV. So why TV? Rather? Yes. Oh, entertainment is, you know, maybe the, one of the greatest values in society.

Yep. This has struck me that in the colonial US, for a while the Massachusetts legislature, considering a law requiring all churches to have their midweek Bible study term meeting on the same night because they were concerned that some farmers were going out every night of the week to church and they wouldn't be, you know, energetic enough to do their work well because that was the entertainment.

Yes, yes. Church was the entertainment, which may have brought along a certain temptation to weakness. But whereas we had the corner on entertainment at one time.

[11:03] Yeah, sure. We don't. Yes, of course, in days gone by, churches where you got the political news that you shared and you got to hear a speaker who would be the most interesting presentation that week.

You didn't have much news from outside or you didn't have people who were educated who were speaking to you. So all those kind of things. But now entertainment is excellent and everywhere.

So sometimes it can make church look a bit dull, right? Well, I was reading one guy this week who said, in the MTV generation, where you have visual clips that last perhaps for two seconds or three seconds and you go to the next frame or the next shot and how can that kind of editing, that kind of stimulating presentation compete with one guy standing up the front without different visual takes for half an hour?

No wonder church seems boring for people, right? And I think this image that worship is a classroom can make it worse for us. If you say church is a classroom, people, oh, I don't do classrooms.

Or if you go to some classrooms today, actually, they're hyper-stimulated environments. So I'm nervous about using the language of classroom because it can have negative connotations.

[12:28] The flip side of it is I think we can't theologically get away from the fact that church is for words. Church is for learning, right?

So whatever we do, these 90 minutes have to be well thought through because we've got a massive opposing agenda that we need to be confronting at some level somehow.

Now, of course, we have Bible study groups or prayer meetings or other kinds of fellowship in the week. So I'm exaggerating slightly to say it all builds around these 90 minutes. But I think you can probably see my educational point, right?

A lot rides on how we teach on Sundays. Well, let me read to us from Psalm 95 because I think it has an important lesson for us in our conversation this morning.

O come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving.

[13:38] Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth.

The heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed to the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on the day at Massa in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

For forty years I loathed that generation and said, they are a people who go astray in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. Therefore I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.

Well, this is a familiar hymn, a familiar psalm to many. It's been turned into a hymn frequently. But basically it has just one or two major points.

[14:52] The first half describes worship as singing and praise. Worship as us speaking.

And it gives a reason in verses three, four, and five. We worship, we praise, we sing, because God is a creator. But in the second half, our worship is not speaking.

Our worship is listening. Let us worship and bow down, verse six. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker. He is our God. We are the people of his past, the sheep of his hand.

So it's not just that we're created, not just that we're creatures, but we're redeemed creatures. We are the sheep of his hand. And what does sheep do?

Well, actually, better than that. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as at Meribah. So the first half of the psalm is, you worship by singing or praising.

[15:58] And the second half of the psalm is, you worship by listening. Because sheep should listen. Obviously, on occasions they don't. Sheep should listen to the voice of the shepherd.

And John 10 points this out as well. But basically, Psalm 95 said, worship is about words. Either we speak words or we hear words.

And certainly when I use this psalm with my students, they're a bit shocked to think that you can be worshipping by shutting up and listening, right?

Because we're so now shaped by the idea that worship is us, singing actually, was actually here in Psalm 95.

To worship is to sing, to speak, and it is to listen as well. If you want to worship in Sundays, we need to speak and we need to listen. Worship on Sundays is a classroom, right?

[17:05] Someone's speaking, someone's listening, most of the time. And I think our daily worship, our daily God-focused living, God-centred living, as well as our Sunday God-centred living, is about words.

Okay, Romans 12 tells us that we worship God with all our body, as our living sacrifice, of course. And next week we'll talk a little bit more about that.

But at least we can't get away from the fact that our basic relationship with the Lord involves words. How does man and wife make a marriage?

Well, they give words of promise. How does God make a covenant of people? Well, he gives them a covenant, which is words of promise and words of threat.

How do we exercise our faith in the Lord? Well, Calvin says, the chief way you know you've got faith is by praying, by using words, expressing our dependence.

[18:28] You can't get away from words, though some people try to, right? And assume that worship is about silence. I have no problem with silence, as long as in worship, our silence is about us listening to the Lord.

There was a chaplain, a very liberal chaplain at my university when I was an undergraduate, and he didn't believe that words were so important. In fact, he used to, it was very strange, he used to not use the word God.

He used to just talk about G-O-D, because he thought that was kind of getting closer to not using words. But it always sounded to me like there's a little kid present, and he was wanting to swear, wanting to curse.

So he'd spell out the curse word, right? Because he was very embarrassed about using the word itself. I just thought it was very weird. But that was his trajectory, that worship was about using fewer and fewer words, and trembling in silence.

Okay, so let's talk about our experiences of Sunday worship. What are things that have helped your learning, and what are things that have hindered your learning?

[19:48] And if worship is a classroom, then teaching and learning are essential elements, right? Our speaking and listening. What are things that have helped that process of speaking and listening, and what are things that have hindered that process?

James? I'm just thinking that I've not ever been a very good Bible memorizer, but I'm a pretty good hymn text memorizer. Oh, yes, yes. So I think hymns are really important in teaching and that's why it's important to have real spiritual content in hymns.

Yep, sure. So the medium of versified songs is really important because it takes thoughtful writing to create theology that's memorable, right?

And it's very important, yeah, yeah. I went and saw, I was in Chicago this week, and I went and saw Hamilton, and I've had, because it's just such brilliant writing, and I've had the raps going through my head all week.

I haven't been able to shake them. I think somehow having the truth taught and proclaimed from various perspectives is really comforting.

[21:12] I love that we have three pastors. Oh, yes, I see. Wonderful. So we hear the truth, those words that are in a different line.

Interesting. Of different trajectory. Yeah, sure. And so you get, you know, much fuller appreciation. That's a good point. And even if a church doesn't have a pastoral team like Trinity, having different voices can actually be of great help in our learning, right?

Different, and it's true, isn't it? People have their own style, and I warm to that person. I warm less to that person. That person uses images, which I relate to. That person uses sporting images, which I just don't even understand or begin to pretend I understand.

And of course that's going to happen, and that's a good point. Thank you. I think also, as Susan started talking, I was thinking of different perspectives, as in within one service, when I'm able to make connections between, say, a hymn, the scripture reading, the sermon text, like across the service, there's varying ways, and it's the same truth that's expressed, or different angles.

Yeah, sure. The facets of the same. Yeah, and I think that's really important, and I think the folk at Trinity do this really well, that I think if you've got this 90 minutes, and we want to make it count, and we want to make it an effective learning unit, then I think every part needs to somehow bear a connection to every other part, and so that each part becomes mutually strengthening, and so you've got one big teaching aim that's expressed through the songs, or through the prayers, or through the reading, through the sermon, through the testimony, whatever it might be, and I think that's really, really important.

[23:08] So I actually, this is giving away my biases, but I think it's really useful that there's one mind behind a Sunday service. In many contemporary churches, contemporary worship-styled services, they have a mind that's put together the bracket of songs, and a mind that prepares the sermon, and a mind that might have some other responsibilities in the service for communion or something else.

I think that can mean that one part is kind of knocking up against another part, and there's not necessarily a helpful connection between all three.

So I run the daily chapel service at Ridley College where I teach, and my students find this very odd because they're so used now to having different minds behind different parts of the service.

There's one person who puts the service together. There's one mind behind it. Okay, that mind might not be the person who's leading. It might be. That's a subsequent question.

But to have a unified educational educational or pedagogical unit, I think is very important. But picking up Susan's point about different voices, well, something that it's useful to do, even if you've got the same preacher, is when you have Bible readings to have two or three people speaking the Bible reading.

[24:31] It especially works well if you've got an Old Testament narrative where you've got King David and you've got Absalom and you've got Abigail or something. I don't know if they ever appear in the same passage. I just made that up. But if you've got three different voices or gospel narratives where you've got Jesus speaking with different people and a narrator and having some different voices can freshen the Bible readings as well because you've got a woman speaking the woman's part or something and you've got an excellent narrator speaking that part and so on.

They're not big things, but those little things can make enormous difference in lifting the mood of the service. Sister, I think you had your hand up there, did you?

Well, for me, I think it's metaphor and similar that I seem to learn from the most. Like, I'll listen to all the words and take notes and then I get home and don't remember the specifics.

Right. I will remember a metaphor that the pastor has used. Yes, I see. Or a simile or something very sharp.

Yes, and you might have a mind that kind of is readily engaged with kind of pictorial kind of presentations. Yeah, yeah. I really like the portion of the service about confession and prayer, like the movement through both the reading of the word and then the assurance of our pardon in that time.

[26:04] That's when Nick and I were first married. We were in a Presbyterian church that passed the peace. Yes, yes. And for a newly married couple passing the peace every Sunday, this idea of not letting our hearts get hardened.

Oh, interesting. Yeah, right. That clause before hearing the sermon Yes. To have a soft heart, I think, is really that assurance. Yes, and at least in Australia, Baptists rarely do that moment of confession.

I love it when we do it. Yeah, yeah. And it's a moment that uses words importantly as we try and engage the whole congregation and their recognition of their own sin and give some very strong words of assurance.

It's a very, it's a profoundly gospel moment in the service, and it's also an importantly wordy part. I mean that positively. In the Old Testament, I don't know where, but it says that we suffer because we forget.

And it's not that, it's because we forget words. Words from the pastor, words from his book. We suffer because we forget. We forget his words and we turn away from them.

[27:14] Yep, sure. And Moses reminded the people before they entered the promised land that they were likely to forget when they got prosperous and that they had to remember. And Keller, I just want to go to Redeemer, one thing he said was that there aren't any wild sheep in the wilderness.

They die. They need a shepherd. You might see a wild wolf, bison, but never a wild sheep. Ah, I see. Yeah, sure, sure. Sure. Not out there. They die. We're safer when we're together than when we're apart.

That's true. That's true. Any other hindrances, I can't even say the word, hindrances or helps that you would want to share about your worship?

Maybe just hindrances, sorry, as far as my mind wandering. Yes. So I'm just trying to remain focused.

Yes. Do you have some tips for us? When I feel myself wandering, come on, back. Yes, yes. Can I talk to you? Yeah, sure, sure. I suppose that means, from my perspective, because worship is a classroom, our Sunday service is a classroom, that it really means I need to get a good night's sleep on Saturday night, because I would do that if I were attending classes myself on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday.

[28:46] Why would I then think that a late night on Saturday night is the appropriate way to go if I'm going to turn up to a classroom or something? Well, I think if it's a classroom, we need energy to learn, right? That's just the way it is.

I know that Mr Willow Creek, whose name escapes me, Bill Hyvel, thank you, would never go out on Saturday nights. It was a prayer meeting for him.

Any social engagements he'd say no to, because he'd say, I've got to make sure that the night before Sunday, I'm rested and I've prayed. And while I don't agree with him on all his thinking about church, I really think that's just so commendable.

I mean, he probably had a big day on Sunday as well, right, with 75 services and 2.5 trillion people turning up. I have a similar thing with mind-wandering, but one of the words that comes to mind for me is I need this, this is for me, you know, that reminder that in our corporate gathering, this word is for my heart.

Yep, yep, yep. Yep. Yes, a little bit of wrap yourself over the knuckles. I beg your pardon? You have the right to take so taking notice is huge. Yeah, it is, isn't it?

[29:59] And most weeks, I think, at Trinity, there's some blank space, isn't there, in the pew sheet for taking notes. You might have your own journal otherwise. Are you saying then that there's no place for emotion or perhaps you've talked about I wasn't here the other two weeks about emotion in worship?

So no, I'm thinking emotion is a big part, but it's responsive. The word always comes before our reaction. And I think one of the most fundamental lessons of worship is that it's responsive.

The God speaks first and that's why we gather, that's why we learn, that's how we build each other up. No, I'm more than happy for worship to be an emotional experience.

I think actually the range of emotions in church these days is so narrow we ought to broaden the band. So before Christmas the staff asked me to preach the lament service here on the Sunday before Christmas and I made this point that actually the band of emotions these days has got smaller and smaller and smaller in church.

You're only allowed to be happy. I have nothing against happiness. I enjoy it most of the time. But it's okay too to include other emotions, right? In fact, the Psalms give me a third of the Psalms are laments and they give me permission to be sad in church as well.

[31 : 29] Isn't that part of what we're being taught? It's a classroom. Yes. The Psalms teach us how to express. Yes, that's right. That's right. The rest of the world isn't doing that much better than the church and not, the rest of the world doesn't really want you to be anything but happy either.

Yeah, that's true. That's true actually. That's probably one of the ways that there are cultural pressures that we've given into. Yeah, yeah. I'm thinking of James' point before about repetition or memorisation of verses which is kind of a struggle for some of us.

What do you think is the value in church of doing things repeatedly? It sinks in. It sinks in, sure. Yeah. Like a cow chewing the cud.

It just sinks in. That image is going to stay with me all day. Yeah. So he does all day. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, in preparation is this kind of inculcation? Yep, yep.

It's always been a methodology especially because we've grown up with so many beliefs and grievances that we think within ourselves that to go ahead and replace them or like John Baptist put it you know, he must increase that I may decrease.

[32 : 40] Why am I going to do that? Well, by continually to study and show myself a truth. So by inculcation and learning. Yep, yep. I'm with you. It's a pretty hard sell in many churches to say we're going to do the same thing every week because we want it to be fresh we think repetition is inauthentic we want it to be spontaneous so it's actually a hard gig teaching people the value of repetition unless you're a parent and you know that you've got to tell your kid 17 times a day to say please and thank you, right?

we kind of but we don't take it the next step and say presumably therefore even adults have to be taught to say please and thank you in church kind of regularly or at least weekly.

Michael Horton says that the problem is that people don't know what to do when they're bored and that boredom is a bad thing and most of life is full of rote rhythmic you know we do the same thing every day and you know to look for excitement around every corner it's not a good thing.

No, that's right and lots of our kids are overstimulated, right? My niece is like always on her I mean she doesn't even talk to me anymore. Yeah, sure, sure.

Yes, please. Just the fact that I think in our culture we so worship technology and entertainment we've lost connection to the rhythms of life you know the tide comes in the tide comes out the night follows day and there's a certain goodness in tune with those rhythms that God has given us and we're just cut off from it.

[34 : 25] Well the modern world has been all about disconnecting from the patterns of nature, right? So we can use electricity and stay up at night rather than going to bed when the sun goes down and all those kind of things yeah, sure, sure.

I think the more potent argument against repetition is that things become rote and then we disconnect from them. You know, I think I've been in churches where we say creeds we say our Father maker of heaven and earth Jesus Christ his Son we say very important profound things that are not boring at all but we say them in the same way in the same fashion at the same time and we all get up and it becomes almost like a chant like ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba and then sort of on to the next thing.

Yes, yes. I mean an example for us here would be communion because that's obviously a thing we repeat regularly and it's very similar in its forms and I think the bottom line is do we collectively as a church recognize the problem of human nature and the fact that we need these constant reminders of ultimate reality and I think you know if you take communion in particular that's a big part of what's going on in communion and you're right the danger of repetition is that it becomes we think it becomes inauthentic we're just going through the motions we're just we're just going through the the process but actually getting rid of the regularity or saying the Lord's Prayer in church or having communion however often it might be doesn't mean that my mind is necessarily engaged either that is I've been in in churches that are very lively without any sense that there should be repetition or liturgy but my mind has wandered and I've seen other people scrolling through

YouTube and kind of doing their doing their thing in church and I think well losing repetition doesn't necessarily mean that I'm going to be more engaged it could be it could be that some things repeated actually helps my engagement I was actually going to say just push on that a little bit because I grew up in a church that had more liturgy like that and I some of those turns of phrases or some of the things that we said frequently come back to my head as like a little promise and again it's sort of you know not trying to excuse that I should memorize more scripture but these hymns these liturgies these things that we've done do are easier to call to mind because they were placed so deeply that's right I remember being I was just saying that's the critique against them not that I agree I'm actually very pro I actually heard a really great sermon podcast not at a church that was about the

Lord's Prayer and it really convinced me that it's not a cop out to say that daily and frequently I was at the bedside of a man who was dying and his face looked like it had lost all affect and so I said to him Jim let me pray with you and so I knew that he'd learnt the Lord's Prayer he'd been in church all his life and in the old King James version so I started praying our Father which art in heaven and his eyes popped open and his lips started moving and he was able to pray with me the Lord's Prayer and then at the end there was just no affect left in his face at all it was so deep in his soul that even in his dying breaths he knew how to kind of express his thankfulness and his dependence on the Lord it was just wonderful so I'm a big fan of repetition in church done kind of well and carefully of course but the idea that church should be totally different every week is just an extraordinary burden on the pastoral team as well as educationally not necessarily very wise when your kids are in five or six presumably they're going to learn their we say times tables is that what you say and they just have to repeat and repeat and repeat and repeat and that's the way you learn now point six

[38:55] I'm going to leave on your sheet the relationship between the Bible reading and the sermon that is probably more relevant in some other churches where there are very little sermon and a lot of Bible readings but we might skip that and turn over the page what I've been saying this morning is that worship is like a classroom given the cues from Psalm 95 that it's about words God's words to us our words in response or God's words to us and listening to his words as a kind of worship as well but this idea that worship is a classroom has not been a dominant idea in Christian history and I thought for the architects amongst us this morning I'd put in some pictures just to keep them on board in the Middle Ages church was understood as a fort and I've given you a small picture and Matt's helpfully included them in colour a fort where there's very few windows very close to the ground very thick walls because the world is evil and you need to be in a fort for God to hold back the evil empire but then as the church grew more confident and powerful more and more the church was seen not as a fort for God but as a palace for God with high walls lots of glass architecturally the walls could stand up because they'd invented flying buttresses or small stone pillars outside that enabled walls that were load bearing to have lots of glass in it and this was a kind of church when the chief goal was to help you understand that Christ is king not a bad goal but certainly not designed around hearing and speaking then after the reformation church became a theatre especially amongst Roman

Catholics who were trying to reassert the centrality of the mass and so the interior of a church became more and more ornate and full of dramatic imagery a good place in which to celebrate the drama of the mass but then in the 17th century and forward Protestants especially have seen church as a classroom that is built around listening not around seeing the mass performed and acoustically designed such that people could hear not with a sung voice but with a spoken voice in each part of the building and I think this has become more or less standard amongst many Protestants except in the last perhaps I don't know 30-40 years where we're taking our cues for building churches not around the church being a classroom but an entertainment space so we're taking our cues for some modern church architecture from the concert hall or from the rock stadium not so much as a place for teaching and learning or for words to be transacted so this worries me to be quite frank so churches that have the lights so dim in the congregation that even if you had a bible when you get to my age you can't really read it or you can't take notes as our sister at the back said because you can't see to write or you have to turn on your phone and shine it down on your piece of paper and that distracts people around you

I don't mind there being a band on the platform I have no problem with bands with various kinds of instruments I'm not saying we have to have organs but I want the architecture to somehow say that the word is important here and having a pulpit or having a communion table which is God speaking his word through bread and wine seems to me really important ways of reminding ourselves that church is a classroom not just an entertainment space now I get the fact that our world feels comfortable in entertainment spaces and so we build buildings that are going to be comfortable for people but I'm not sure their primary goal is helping people to feel comfortable because if we are in church to enjoy the presence of the Lord well there's going to be moments that are slightly less comfortable right and making architectural space for the word to be highlighted and our learning to be enabled seems to me to be of extraordinary importance we've got a couple of minutes until 10-2 so you might have some comments or reactions in talking about repetition one thing that I thought a lot about is how you just mentioned you mentioned the story of the man who was dying and how for a generation for generations that was the

Bible and that's what we heard anywhere it didn't matter where you went you read the King James and you read the King James and you know that was fading as I got into my mind but there's a value in that in having the same translation that I've just really come to find very important that I told my read the same translation that is being preached from a single translation it is quite a significant thing isn't it when many of us in the room will have different Bible translations and so on I went to my aunt's funeral I don't mean to be talking lots about funerals this moment I don't know why this is happening but I went to my aunt's funeral and it was a civil service she wasn't a Christian there was a civil celebrant and there was a little handout with the order of service which was fine and then this woman who was she was probably in her 60s I think who was leading the service went off script and said now we're going to say the

Lord's Prayer together and everyone there at the funeral who was over 50 knew the Lord's Prayer in the King James Version and everyone under 50 had no idea what was going on I was asked to read Psalm 23 and this guy who was about 40 came up to me afterwards and said mate that was a great poem you read and I said yeah it's a poem like in the Bible there's a whole book of poems called Psalms he goes well I don't even know what that is and I thought what happened those over 50 all knew how to recite the Lord's Prayer the guy under 50 didn't even know what the Bible was I think the answer is the 1960s and 1970s actually but yeah but it just shows you that in days past that was part of people's learning now they the people who said the Lord's Prayer probably most of them weren't Christians that they'd learnt it from school or Sunday school whatever it might have been but still it was quite dramatic contrast yeah that's right yeah that's right brother make this last comment when you were talking about how it became the entertainment actor that becomes the people that ends up happening is that because it addresses the flesh more than it does the spirit it separates even further and the adversary's goal from the very beginning is to buy and conquer and doing it since the beginning and if we're all lost in the dim lighting and they got lasers they got the lighting just like a rock concert it's all nailed to the flesh and praising

[47 : 12] God at whatever level is wonderful except for the fact that what ends up losing what gets lost is the cohesiveness of the body because there's no interaction it's loud it's so it becomes a very individualistic experience yeah what I think those folk would say in those churches is accountability comes through small groups and so they've radically changed the balance where accountability lies from the Sunday meeting to the midweek meeting and I mean that that has some value but I still think there's a loss okay thank you brothers and sisters next week worship is a gym so if you're feeling like getting your getting your fitness on then join us at nine o'clock