

Worship Is a Party

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[0:00] Well, this is the diligent crew who remembered to turn their clocks forward last night. I had a panic as I went to bed thinking I just hope that my Australian phone obeys the local kind of impulses and kicks over the hour as I need to have a kick over.

Did it? It did. Both my iPad and my phone behave themselves. Friends, thanks for joining us again for this, our second part in Adult Sunday School on what is worship.

I thought we'd start today by a recap and then we'd pursue the picture, the big idea, that worship is not just a compass that we looked at last week, but that worship is also a party.

So let me pray for us and then I'll ask you for some of your thoughts and reflections from last week. Our dear God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we thank you so much for this opportunity to be together.

We're safer when we're together than when we're apart. We praise you that we can this morning talk and listen, learn and teach.

[1:16] And we do it in your name for your glory. And this we pray in Christ's strong name. Amen.

So, brothers and sisters, a recap. What do you recall from last week's episode? Nothing over here. Yes. Well, I wasn't here.

You were in the kitchen. You were listening in. I wasn't here, but I was listening. Sure, I got that. And worship is a compass. It brings us back to where we need to be.

It brings us back to where we need to be. So, if worship's a compass, then it's a recalibration every week. It's reminding us where our true north is. Yep, yep. I really love the idea that we're practicing to be a creature.

Practicing our future. Yes, thank you. In relation to God as a priest. Yeah, so the point was you don't have to do anything else in church other than learn again that you're a creature and not the creator, which is kind of liberating.

[2:23] We spend so much of our life pretending that we actually run the world. And then to occasionally recognize, perhaps even just once a week recognizing, that we're the creature and not the creator can actually be good for our soul.

Yeah. Father. I just happen to be doing the prayer of confession today. And so a special temptation that I feel and other leaders in worship might feel is, ah, it really does depend on us today.

Yes. But I'm just a creature. That's right. It doesn't really depend on me. Yeah, exactly right. And the fact that we turn up at church at all is because God first called out.

We're not here by the strength of our own initiative. We're here because God has taken initiative. His voice has gone out. We've heard it individually. And in hearing individually, we come together to its source.

So it's built on revelation. It's built on God's revelation, on his word of promise. That's correct. Well, if last week we thought of the question, what is worship?

[3:42] Worship is a compass. Then today I want to help us to think about what it might mean and why I say that worship is a party. You tell me, what do you think the greatest threat to the church in America is, or in the West, or in Australia?

It doesn't much matter at this point. Buying into a secular worldview. I think there's something deeper than that, but that's at least part of the problem. Thank you. Thank you.

That means we're transactionalists. We think that we offer something and we get something back. And that actually makes it really hard for us to pray as well, because we don't think we've got anything to give to God.

And so the whole relationship that prayer represents is kind of out of whack from the outset. What's the question? What's the threat to the church?

Yeah. I would say that the threat comes from within. The threat is that we preach that joy is to be found in God, but then do we have joy?

[5:25] We teach that peace, but then we have peace. And I think the greatest threat is that we are not what we say we have.

Yeah, that's right. There is a disjunction. Our outside life and our inside life, there's often a gap between them. And I listen to public radio here or at home, and the thing that never is the answer to our problems is something spiritual.

The answer is always economic, political, social, ideological, but never is it a spiritual solution.

It's not that the other solutions aren't necessary or important, but one kind of solution is ignored. Well, let me put it like this.

When I attend conferences on theology or on church here or in Australia, this is what people say to me. The great threat to the church in America or the church in Australia is our loss of the doctrine of the Trinity.

[6:42] Now, I have to say this kind of carefully and advisedly. This is the point that's being made, that the next wave of theological liberalism in the United States is not going to come from the mainline churches because they're defunct or all but defunct.

The great threat is going to come from mega churches that have so simplified the message to get people in, they've done it by reducing their picture of God to someone who is no longer Father, Son and Spirit.

So the argument runs quite frequently that the next wave of liberalism, the next wave of acidic theology to attack the church will come out of what we actually presently know as evangelical churches because they've given up on the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now, as we shared a few minutes ago, there was nothing that was said that was wrong. So secularism is a great threat and the inside-outside gap is a great threat or the kind of consumerist mentality is a great threat.

But lying behind them is a very deep theological threat and going along with that a very deep worship threat, threat to our worship lives.

[8:10] When you say that, are you saying that we think that God is too small? Well, we want him to be small because it's easier to explain.

We figure that the problem with people coming to church is that it's too philosophical or theological or complicated, so we dumb down. And we effectively take out the doctrine of the Trinity from our church services.

Now, there's a couple of implications that we'll go on to explore in the course of the morning. Now, I want to assume that the doctrine of the Trinity is the great jewel in our crown.

We should be glorying in God, Father, Son and Spirit and enjoying Father, Son and Spirit. And actually, when we do, we'll discover the church is a party because we've been invited into the fellowship of Father, Son and Spirit and we just want to celebrate.

Now, listen to this paragraph from Matthew chapter 3 and the outline, of course, is on your sheet. This is Matthew 3 verse 13. Then he consented.

[9:43] Now, this relatively first thing, the beloved, that is, is that John consented.

This familiar paragraph is just a bonanza when we come to think about what worship is or how we might build our worship on the Trinity.

Because this passage does two things. This passage tells the story of Israel. Remember, Israel had left Egypt, had passed through the waters, both the waters of the Red Sea and the waters of the Jordan to enter the Promised Land.

Though in the Promised Land, the people of God didn't obey as they were supposed to. And when Jesus comes to be baptised in water, baptised in the Jordan, he is re-enacting the story of Israel.

He's pretending that he's like Israel. This time, he's going to obey. He's going to do it right. Last time, Israel didn't obey. They were cursed for it.

[11:11] But this time, the new Israel, the people of God who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, will have an obedient head. But secondly, when Jesus, in being baptised, tells the story of Israel again, we notice that as the Son is immersed, so the Spirit comes down and the Father speaks.

And the Father says, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. At this, in this very brief paragraph, we learn the story of Israel, or at least a little bit of it.

If you want more of the story of Israel re-enacted in the life of Jesus, you look at Matthew 2, and Matthew 3, and Matthew 4, and 5. Because all those chapters together are trying to tell the story of Israel through Jesus.

We learn here the story of Israel and the story of the Trinity. The Father speaks, the Spirit empowers, the Son obeys.

So when I speak of our Sunday worship, and worship being a party, what it really is doing is saying, we need to think about our place in God's story, our place in Israel's story.

[12:45] Because the big story of the Bible is something that we've been called into. The Father, Son, and Spirit are kind of a party.

And in this baptismal moment, God, Father, Son, and Spirit is showing how the story of Israel is really his story as well.

Now, I have a whole sermon on this paragraph, which I'm not going to kind of hop into this morning. But I do want to say that our worship services on Sundays should be telling the story of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and should be telling the story of Israel and the Church.

So if I had to sharpen things just a little bit, I'd say the reason why we come to church, the reason why we worship, is to celebrate deep connections.

We celebrate our deep connection with each other, and we celebrate our deep connection with the Lord. We celebrate our deep connection with each other, and we celebrate our deep connection with each other.

[14:09] You and I come from different places. Some people think I speak a different language. We have different kinds of family backgrounds. But there's something deep that we can all celebrate this morning, something deep that we all share.

And in fact, God, Father, Son, and Spirit, shares his own life with us as he invites us in.

We're unified with Christ. We're filled with the Spirit. Now, the way that that might express itself varies from place to place.

But if our goal in Sunday worship is to celebrate our deep connections with each other, and with the Lord, then of course it's a party.

We're enjoying being together. We're enjoying being his people. We're enjoying his dwelling in our midst. So from John 15, these words are also familiar, but they pick up something of what I've been trying to say.

[15:30] Jesus speaks. I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.

Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You've already been cleansed by the word that I've spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you.

That's the translation I'm using. Yours might say something slightly different. But abiding language is enjoying the deep connection we have.

Abide in me as I abide in you, as Jesus lives in us. It's a restful word. Yeah, it is. And it's not one we use much anymore.

What are other translations that your Bible might have? Do they all use abide? I've got abide. This is King James. Yeah, right. So that's where it's from. Some of them say remain.

[16:33] Remain in me. That's right. As I remain in you. Correct. Yeah, yeah. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine. You are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them. You see the mutuality. You see the mutuality. We're abiding in Christ and Christ is abiding in us. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing.

Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers. Such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

My Father is glorified by this that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.

Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

[17:44] Reading John is often like walking up a spiral staircase. He says the same thing three or four times, but every time it's from a slightly different perspective. And you see the big point here is that the deep connection the Father has with the Son has some expression in the deep connection we have with the Son and with the Father.

And of course, if we read on in John 15, the Spirit would get a look in as well. Or to put it in more sharp theological language in Ephesians 2, Ephesians 2.18.

I'll read from 17. He came to proclaim peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near. For through him, that means through Christ, both of us, Jews and Gentiles, have access in one spirit to the Father.

Through Christ, in the Spirit, we have access, Jews and Gentiles, to the Father. Can you see there's both a horizontal dimension that God has made Jews and Gentiles one people?

And together, that deep connection that all human beings share is expressed through our vertical relationship to the Father in the Son and by the Spirit.

[19:15] It's Isaiah 19. Oh, tell me how it's Isaiah 19. Where God was saying that the Assyrians and Egyptians and the Jews would be one people.

Yep, sure. And there's plenty of Old Testament pointers, aren't there, to God's plans being not just for the Jewish race, but for the Jewish race so that blessings will spill over to others as well.

They're all together. They must have freaked the Jews out, though. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So can you see my basic theological point?

Though we'll unpack this now a little bit more practically. My basic theological point is that the great threat to the church in the West is that we lose the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the great jewel in our crown.

We do it perhaps for good reasons. We want to simplify things because we're aware of the importance of evangelism in church services. But we can throw the baby out with the bathwater.

[20:18] You can so invite non-Christians into church that you lose the thing that you want to offer them in the first place, right? And if we do believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, that means that our lives are all about a story, the story of Israel and the church and the story of God.

And indeed, our Sunday meetings celebrate the deep connections we have with each other and with the Lord, that worship is a party.

So this is what I want to ask you now. How do we, in our Sunday worship, speak about or allude to, point to the doctrine of the Trinity?

How might we do it differently or better? How do we do it differently or better? And I'm not just talking about the actual words we use, but the implications for the structure of the service as well.

Okay, this is heavy lifting for a Sunday morning, right? The doctrine of the Trinity expressed in church services, but we can do it. In fact, in a few weeks' time, this is going to be the time of our church service, right?

[21:39] Nine o'clock won't be the warm-up moment anymore. Thank you. Well, you mentioned a little bit of a prayer profession.

And then how can we approach the Father and ask for the name of it? Correct. Yep. Wonderful. That's lovely. That's exactly the kind of thing I'm looking for, Susan, that there'll be certain prayers where we almost can't help ourselves.

Though, I go to church services in Melbourne where, in praying, there's very little mention of Father, Son and Spirit. So it's, Dear God, thank you, Amen.

So even in our prayers, it doesn't happen at Trinity, thankfully, but even in our prayers, it could happen that we lose Trinitarian references.

I can see you have a hymn for a moment. Many of our hymns are dealing with Trinitarian. Yeah. It sort of goes through Father, Son, and Spirit. Yep. So I think that probably happened more in the past than today, but you're right.

[23:00] In the songs we sing at Trinity, there might be a verse that tells something about the Father, a verse that reflects on the life of the Son, a verse that speaks of the power of the Spirit, and that's wonderful, and that's a great way of doing it.

Though I was sitting in church a couple of years ago at home. I go to an Anglican church, but it meets in a cinema. It's pretty unlike an Anglican church that you might be familiar with.

And the guy was sitting next to me, and I didn't know him. I spoke to him afterwards, and he said, I'm a Christadelphian. Christadelphians, of course, don't believe that the Son is divine. And I said, oh, why did he come here?

He said, I love it here because I can sing all the songs. And then I thought, okay, I'm going to count up how many songs we sing that actually speak of the divinity of the Son, the majesty of the Son.

And you know what? We had eight songs in a row over two weeks that never mentioned Christ. Now, they were good songs. They were all basically Psalms, right?

[24:06] And Psalms won't mention Christ explicitly. So they were scripturally based songs. They were perhaps a bit repetitive for my liking, but that's another story.

But it was interesting, wasn't it, that he, in an evangelical church, quite a large one in Melbourne, that he had come along because we weren't singing about the Son, which absolutely horrified me, right?

And I passed quickly the message on to the pastors. Find an old hymn that kind of has verse by verse, Father, Son, and Spirit described. But that's, but the Christ is not mentioned, but he's assumed through all scripture.

Sure. So we have to then choose songs that have one of the ones that's based on a psalm and then the next one that's based on Abide With Me, whatever, on John 15, right?

So we have to choose songs carefully so that we have a balance. Or, I mean, that would be the, I don't want to throw out those wonderful songs based on psalms, right? Yeah, we went to an RP church in Cambridge, which was the Psalter a cappella.

[25:17] No instruments, not like here or anything like that. And it was a Trinitarian church. I mean, we didn't lose any of our theology. Sure. So, but what happens in those kind of congregations is that the pastors know how to make sure in other ways that the doctrine of the Trinity is being owned and celebrated and so on.

So they might have said, you know, the Athanasian Creed or something from time to time, which is quite challenging these days, but it's one way of doing it, right? Yeah. Brother.

I have a question, though. I mean, it's evident that Jesus said that a few times ask the Father, nothing in my name. And now I'm asking my name. So we know how we ought to pray.

Yep. And to Him we ought to pray. Yep. He also accepted worship, did this? My Lord and my God. Yep. Did not correct Him. He accepted that.

Sure, sure. There is, the fact that God is a Trinity is obvious because He is love. In order to be love, He had to have someone to love and they had a union prior to the existence of man and age.

[26:27] Otherwise, it would be love. So we know that that's true, that the Trinity exists, simply for that fact alone. Yeah, so I'm not doubting that we shouldn't believe in the Trinity.

I'm just saying, despite that, there are some churches that give it up. Yeah. My whole thing is, so, I mean, where am I called to worship the Trinity? That would be speaking.

Yep, yep, sure. That's good. Yep, yep. So, so far we've named prayers or the way we address or end our prayers. Songs.

Hymns. Brother. Hey, so you mentioned about verses praying in the Spirit, the power of the Spirit.

Where can I find that? Well, at the end of Ephesians 6, after Paul has prayed, putting on the armour of God, praying in the Spirit at all times.

[27:23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. This is one of the things that Anglicans do, which I think is quite useful.

Or, before Anglicans, Calvin actually suggested it. That the first third of a church service should be focused on the Father, and the middle third of a church service should be focused on the Son, and the last third of a church service focused on the Spirit.

So, you begin your worship, and we praise God the Creator, we praise the Father from whom all mercies flow. Then we have a scripture reading, or scripture readings, and the sermon will then speak of Christ, whom we meet in all the scriptures.

And then, at the end of the service, as we prepare for our life outside of our meeting, we are reminded that we need to go out in the power of the Spirit, that the Spirit animates our mission, and empowers our living.

So, that's one way as well. You might never see it in kind of tight phrases, but you can also think of the whole package of a church service as kind of the Father part, and the Son part, and the Spirit part.

[28:45] Or, in some churches, you might say, the Ten Commandments, to begin the service. And then you say, a creed, or you have a Bible reading from the Gospel in the middle of the service.

Take the communion before you're sent out into the world to serve God in the power of the Spirit. So, there are different ways of doing it, and that's kind of a bit more subtle, right? But, those patterns, even if they're not in tight words, those patterns can educate us and train us as well, right?

Are there any other thoughts about how we use, or how we think of the doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in a worship service?

The sacraments. Yeah. It's very obvious. Yeah. Baptism, blatantly obvious. Yeah, yeah. That's wonderful, isn't it? Yeah, sure.

And, actually, it's been wonderful in the last few months since I've been back at Trinity how many, both baptisms and testimonies, we've enjoyed, as more people have come into membership.

[29:59] And often, the testimonies, perhaps unintentionally, but the testimonies might speak about meeting Christ or being empowered for living by the Spirit.

But, of course, Karen, you're right that baptism, if you're drawing down from Romans chapter 6 to understand what baptism's about, it's being baptised into Christ.

It's being raised in the power of the Spirit. That the Lord's Supper is a sacrament in which we understand Christ's sacrifice and his present empowerment as well.

At my church, I'm giving away all the secrets. I don't think we prepare people very well for baptism. Let me tell you a story. A guy gets up, he has to be baptised, and the guy who's interviewing him, it wasn't so much a monologue testimony, it was kind of an interview before his baptism.

The guy who was interviewing him said, so tell me why you want to be baptised. And he said, oh, my life is a lot like the life of our pastor. I did drugs, I did girls at school, I went away from the Lord in the teenage years, I've come back in my mid-twenties, and I know that's the life story of our pastor as well.

[31:21] So the guy who's doing the interview kind of is panicking on the inside, right? And says, so tell me why else you want to be baptised. And he could not name Christ.

Now, I don't begrudge him a close relationship with the pastor or having felt encouraged that his story paralleled to some degree the story of our pastor. But come on, baptism in the end is, you're not being baptised into the pastor, you're being baptised into Christ.

It disappointed me greatly. Well, I've printed out two hymns for you. One, the Isaac Watts hymn, When I Survey.

And the second one, the hymn of St. Patrick. And given that today, New Haven is celebrating St. Patrick's Day, I thought it was entirely appropriate that we have a look at this hymn. The first is probably more familiar than the second, though some of us might have sung the second from time to time or at least a verse or at least a part of it.

What do you notice in that wonderful song by Isaac Watts about how he describes or explains the Trinity or how he describes our relationship to the Trinity?

[32 : 44] Well, he's very clear about the divinity of Christ.

Yeah, that is true. There's no doubt about the divinity of Christ here, right? Christ my God, that's glory. And saving the death of Christ my God. Yep, yep. So we're not doubting his Trinitarian credentials.

Although, I don't know that the Father's named or the Spirit's named, but that's okay. I can manage that. My biggest concern with this hymn is that Christ is over there, a long way away from me, and I have to survey him.

I have to kind of squint and see him on the hill dying for me. There's not much sense here that I'm dying with Christ or that I'm connected to him in his death.

For when he died, I died. The danger with this hymn is that it appears that Christ is a long way away from us.

[34 : 02] That's okay. I love singing this hymn. I love Isaac Watts, but we just have to remember then that if we choose this hymn in a service, we choose another hymn that will not speak of Christ being far away, but deeply connected to me now.

which is the advantage of the other hymn. On the other side, I'm not going to sing it because it's way too difficult, but I will say it.

Notice the way that our connection to Christ is presented. I bind this day to me forever by power of faith, Christ's incarnation, his baptism in the Jordan River, his death on the cross for my salvation, his bursting from the spice of tomb, his writing up the heavenly way, his coming at the day of doom, I bind unto myself today.

I bind unto myself today the power of God to hold and to lead, his eye to watch, his might to stay, his ear to hearken to my need, the wisdom of my God to teach, his hand to guide, his shield to ward, the word of God to give me speech, his heavenly host to be my guard.

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

[35 : 38] I bind unto myself the name, the strong name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same, the three in one and one in three, of whom all nature has creation. Eternal Father, Spirit Word, praise the Lord of my salvation.

Salvation is of Christ the Lord. I heard everyone. Sorry? Has Father, Spirit Word. Yeah, sure. It actually says Father, Spirit, Word. Often, in contemporary songs as well, it's not Father, Son, Spirit, but Father, Spirit, Son, because more words rhyme with Son than with Spirit, so it often happens.

So those same two weeks when the Christ of Delphine was singing X-Million Church, we did break the eight-song cycle without mentioning Christ, with the song that has in the chorus, Father, Spirit, Son, make us one, one, Father, Spirit, Son.

So we did get the Trinity in there, but I think in the end it was basically to give us something to rhyme with, make us one, make us one. and I'll take it anyway. What do you notice about this hymn of St. Patrick in terms of the deep connections we might share?

That word, the word bind, that's a connection.

[37 : 03] Yeah, of course. It's almost like a connection that you can't unbreak, isn't it? Yeah, yeah. For good or for bad, there might be some downsides to this song as well, I think there are.

On an upside, Yes, please. I think it, you know, sets the expectation for encountering Christ and experiencing God's Spirit in our life.

So you think of this in church on Sunday, but of course if you bound him to yourself on Sunday, he'll still be bound to you on Monday. It's kind of like a permanent connection.

I should say, I don't... I was thinking of the third verse where he seems in a scapegoat, you know, in a good sense. Yeah, sure, sure, yeah, that's right. Yeah.

There are lots of people, of course, who believe that you go to church to charge your battery, and by next Sunday, you'll be down to zero charge, and then you come to church again because you need to, it's basically a recharge station, right?

[38 : 28] As if in the week you cease being connected to Father, Son, and Spirit, and you go in on Sundays to plug in. I just think that's an awful kind of spirituality, where your connection only happens because you're feeling run down.

No, there's never a moment in our lives where we're not connected to Father, Son, and Spirit, right? That's the deal. That's why we're a Christian, because we're united with Christ forever. We're indwelt by the Spirit forever, but that recharge happens continually, not just on Sundays.

I think, too, in that third verse, when he says, Christ in the hearts of all that love me, Christ in the mouth of a friend and a stranger, then as you go forth, if you're looking for that, if you're aware that Christ is, he may speak through this person, he may be present in this person, that if you're aware of that, you're more likely to see it?

Yes, he's sensitised to it, right? Yeah, that's right. Yep, yep. And in terms of the prepositions he uses in that third verse, I don't think there's one that he hasn't used. It's pretty thorough.

It's almost, it's almost too thorough, right? It's kind of going, I'm not sure that I can sing this every week in church, at least. I think one of the great advantages, as we've said, is that it celebrates deep connection.

[39 : 54] One of the disadvantages, I think, is that it's a little bit individualistic. There's not much reference to community, though that was the case as well in the Isaac Watts hymn. It always seems a bit funny to me that we come to church and sing about I, even though we're here all together, deliberately so.

That's another thing to watch in our choice of songs, I think, that we have a selection of me songs and we songs. And I think the we songs are best at the beginning and the end of the service, and the me songs are best in the middle of the service.

It seems to be a bit pointless. We gather together, and the first thing we do is think about me. Why don't we just for a moment think about us, given that we've all just arrived in the room at the same time. And then perhaps we can think about me in five minutes' time.

Well, because out there, it's the me generation. Yeah, of course. And we bring it in. And we need to learn how to think of worship as a party, where we are in it together.

We are celebrating deep connections. We recognize our eternal destiny in the Lord Jesus. Well, on that note, what do we lose if we fail to see worship as a party or celebration?

[41 : 12] What's the cost? Okay, we might lose the doctrine of the Trinity in kind of operational ways, but how does that then in turn impact our experience of worship on the Sunday?

It'll be doldrums. It'll be more a sense of duty. Not a loss of hope.

But I think the duty thing is pretty important. We end up thinking of church as our plug-in time.

The only reason you go, right, is just to plug in. That's a pretty kind of desperate, mechanical reason for being here. Yeah. I think you can also quickly see it as optional.

Interesting. If you are, if you're not coming to be part of a community, part of the party, then most of what we do at church can be done by listening to a podcast or, you know, video.

[42 : 29] That's right. Do people at the back of the room hear that? No. So it becomes, then Sunday worship becomes optional because if you just see it about me, most of the elements of a service you could probably do somewhere else, somehow else.

You could probably listen to music at home or read the Bible at home or listen to a podcast at home or say your prayers at home. It's, it's, I think we've, we lose very easily the nature of worship as corporate.

And I think it was, Jeff, your question last week, what do you lose if you don't think of worship in terms of a kind of a corporate recalibration? And I suggest it was maturity.

You can't be mature alone. That's the way God has set up his people. We're mature. We, we achieve maturity together.

You might not like it, right? That's okay. That's not my problem. Take it to the Lord. But that, that, that's just the, the way he's organized for our benefit.

[43 : 40] And we, I don't think so much as what you lose, but what sixty-five suffer, the first place.

Yes. See what I'm saying? Yeah, sure. I don't have that relationship thing with first the Father, the Sunderland Holy Spirit, and then with the rest of the presence. And how could I know what it is that I'm worshipping?

How could I experience that or want to do that? Where is my drive? I haven't even experienced this. I don't have to be part of the body. I don't get losing it by failing to see worship as part of it.

I just failed to see it. I failed to see worship as part because I haven't experienced the relationship part yet.

Yeah, so it's kind of a chicken and egg argument, isn't it? You might not turn up because you don't see what you're missing or you haven't understood theologically what God wants to offer you or how he wants to reshape you.

[44 : 56] Yeah, yeah. It's interesting that we don't usually celebrate all alone. Yes.

So if you don't see worship coming together as an occasion of joy in the presence of God and celebrating the relationship we have with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you're not going to do that better on your own.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Joy is something you want to share, right? And so we're just going to miss out on that as a gift. It's a gift that God wants to give us. Yeah, yeah. The joy of celebrating together.

Yeah. I actually think that lots of people don't actually believe that at church they're meeting with the Lord. I think they believe that they'll get something from the Lord, kind of like at arm's length, but that you're actually meeting with...

When I say to people, I go to church to meet with the Lord, people look at me like I'm strange. What do you mean meeting with the Lord? You can meet with the Lord anywhere. You can meet with the Lord on a mountaintop or by yourself.

[45 : 58] Yes. Why then can't I also meet with the Lord in church? And secondly, isn't it better if I meet with the Lord and you're there at the start of the service as well?

And I can learn from my brothers and sisters how to worship and why to worship. Yes. And I'm with Christians. Yes. Spurring each other on to love and good deeds, right?

We're all with... I learn from them. I learn from people that are married. I look at them and how they interact. I see kids, everything. How do pastors interact? I learn everything in church on how to be a Christian.

From his word, from the preaching, from talking to brothers and sisters, from seeking advice. Yes. You know, confessing my sins. We need each other. Yes.

And the world is only going to get more tough for Christians. And so we don't need each other less. We need each other more. Yes. And we need to take seriously, I think, our Sunday experience of worship and not be kind of slack and negligent about it.

[47 : 00] It's very important. I know every Saturday or even Sunday morning, we always say it.

And it's not just to say it. It's just, I can't wait to go to worship. Oh, how wonderful. We can't wait. Yeah. And when we miss a Lord's Day, it's like, oh, we just can't stand it.

Yeah, right. Right. I think you might be in the minority there, brother. I think there are lots of people who yawn a bit and think, I don't know why I'm doing this again. And I'm with you.

Sometimes I'm scared that if I stopped being a Christian, I'd probably keep going to church anyway because I like it so much. Which is also a bit worrying for another reason, but I'm probably prone to hypocrisy.

Friends, our time is out. So thank you so much for being with us. I'm going to say a prayer and you can get ready not only for worship as a company or as a party, but in anticipation of next week as a classroom.

[48 : 02] So let me pray. Please, our Heavenly Father, give to us as we don't deserve this morning. Please bless us so that we might bless others. Thank you so much for these hours together at Sunday school that we might learn how to understand theologically our deep connections, that we might know better how to invite people to church, how to expect things of you in church, how to prepare for church, how to receive all the gifts you want to give.

Please do that this morning. We ask for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen.