

Sermon Series: "Worship that moves beyond the 'warm and fuzzy'"—Lord of Life Lutheran—4/29/2001

Title: "Heart Worship"

Text: Hosea 6: 6

Introduction: *Illus.:* "We exhaust Thee"

Theme: Worship is more than the sum of the acts that we perform for God. Worship is about the heart. When God has our heart, He truly has our worship.

Consistent Worship

- There is a big debate among Bible scholars whether the word used in the translation should be *mercy* or *loyalty*
 1. *I want your loyalty, not your sacrifices. . . (God's Word translation)*
 2. *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice. . . (New International Version translation)*
 3. It comes from the Hebrew word *chesed* = a covenant/contract cut between God and his people—based on mercy—but also a loyalty by God and his people to relationship established by the covenant
- Worship in God's mind is our **CONSISTENT IMITATION** of his mercy to us
 1. Like the ancient Israelites we do not show much mercy and grace to each other--which grieves God
 - **ILLUS.: THE STORY OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT**
 2. The shedding of the blood of the lamb sacrifice in Israelite worship was a reminder to the worshiper of God's mercy
 3. *"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Luke 6:36*
 4. **ILLUS.: PARABLE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE**
 5. We carry worship of God out into our lives when we practice and imitate the unconditional mercy of God to others
 6. *"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians. 5:1-2*
- Worship in God's mind, likewise, is about **CONSISTENT LOYALTY**
 1. God's consistent loyalty to us in Christ
 - **ILLUS.: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON LOYALTY**
 - God *consistently* comes back to us each week and invites us to his presence, his table, his forgiveness, his power, his joy—even though we from all objective standards are a pretty bad investment
 - *"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Malachi 3:6*
 2. Our consistent loyalty to him in response
 - Consistency in our *regularity* because **"we get it"**
 - a. *"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25*
 - Consistency in our *attitude* because **"we believe it"**
 - a. *Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6*
 - Consistency in our *unconditional participation* because **"we love it"**
 - a. *I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Psalm 122:1*

Personal Worship

- **Worship is about a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ**
 1. It is about knowing God rather than knowing about God (*I want you to know me, not to give me burnt offerings. vs. 6b*)
 - **ILL.: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING JOY OF FISHING AND KNOWING ABOUT FISHING**
 - We can only truly know God through Jesus as our Savior
 - *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. J17:3*
 - When we have come to know Jesus in a personally forgiven way, we come to the Father with confidence and joy
 2. It is about knowing God's will and loving him so much that you want to do it to please him
 - *And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Col. 1:10*
 - Then our time of corporate worship will be pleasing to him because it comes from heart fully given to him in faith
- **Worship is about devotion not duty**
 1. Often we check off the "minimally superb" requirements in our relationship with God
 - **ILLUS.: Don't Forget Devotion**
 - At the time of Hosea the Israelite people were religious purists but morally bankrupt
 - We too can play church and pretend religion but be "whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones" on the inside
 2. God is not looking for the action but the heart of devotion behind the action– *humble--obedient--expectant spirit*

We exhaust Thee

The praise chorus "We Exalt Thee" took on a whole new meaning when I heard my three-year-old daughter singing her version: "We exhaust thee. We exhaust thee, O Lord."

Parable of Christ's Sacrifice

The mother of a nine-year-old boy named Mark received a phone call in the middle of the afternoon. It was the teacher from her son's school. "Mrs. Smith, something unusual happened today in your son's third grade class. Your son did something that surprised me so much that I thought you should know about it immediately." The mother began to grow worried. The teacher continued, "Nothing like this has happened in all my years of teaching. This morning I was teaching a lesson on creative writing. And as I always do, I tell the story of the ant and the grasshopper: "The ant works hard all summer and stores up plenty of food. But the grasshopper plays all summer and does no work. "Then winter comes. The grasshopper begins to starve because he has no food. So he begins to beg, 'Please Mr. Ant, you have much food. Please let me eat, too.'" Then I said, "Boys and girls, your job is to write the ending to the story." "Your son, Mark, raised his hand. 'Teacher, may I draw a picture?' "Well, yes, Mark, if you like, you may draw a picture. But first you must write the ending to the story.' "As in all the years past, most of the students said the ant shared his food through the winter, and both the ant and the grasshopper lived. A few children wrote, 'No, Mr. Grasshopper. You should have worked in the summer. Now, I have just enough food for myself.' So the ant lived and the grasshopper died. "But your son ended the story in a way different from any other child, ever. He wrote, 'So the ant gave all of his food to the grasshopper; the grasshopper lived through the winter. But the ant died.' "And the picture? At the bottom of the page, Mark had drawn three crosses."

A Different Perspective on Loyalty

An elderly man lay in a hospital with his wife of 55 years sitting at his bedside. "Is that you, Ethel, at my side again?" he whispered. "Yes, dear," she answered.

He softly said to her, "Remember years ago when I was in the Veteran's Hospital? You were with me then. You were with me when we lost everything in a fire. And Ethel, when we were poor—you stuck with me then too." The man sighed and said, "I tell you, Ethel, you are bad luck."

Don't Forget Devotion

Beware of anything that competes with loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service for him.

Citation: Oswald Chambers

Hosea 6:6

I want your merciful loyalty, not your sacrifices. I want you to know me, not to give me burnt offerings.[GW]