

Serm. Series: "Worship that goes beyond 'the warm and fuzzy'" – Lord of Life Lutheran–5/6/2001

Title: "Living Worship"

Text: Romans 12: 1-2

Introduction: **Illus.: What is the church?**

Theme: Because Jesus has come into my life and transformed it by his resurrection power and if my life is to be living worship, I must constantly ask myself three daily questions in my faith walk. . .

### **Is my life given or lent to God?**

- "On account of God's mercy given you, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God." vs 1a
- Understanding that God has lent us our lives not the other way around
  1. The height of spiritual pride is think that you are doing God a favor by throwing him a bone of worship or service
  2. "Does the clay say to the potter, 'what are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands?'" Isaiah 45:9
  3. **ILLUS.: GOD HAS CHANGED THE RULES---OR HAS HE??**
  4. God takes great joy in redeeming and restoring our life and giving it back to us to take care of for Him
- Putting our life at his disposal
  1. Not to be burned out and used up but living offering to God (God no longer requires a "burnt offering")
    - a. Burned out/used up when expending it on other things and having no energy or time left for God
    - b. **ILLUS.: THE MOTOR HOME ILLUSION**
    - c. Learning to pace and focus our service to God in and out of the church so we do it with joy
  2. It is a clear choice to no longer live from and for a worldly motivation or perspective but from God's/His Will
    - a. "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." James 4: 4
    - b. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. John 15: 12-13

### **Is my life a work in progress?**

- It is God's work in progress
  1. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion in the day of Jesus Christ." Phil 1: 6
  2. God delights in constantly recalling, recharging, stretching, disciplining, encouraging your life toward maturity
- "Present you bodies . . . which is your spiritual worship/service. Vs 1b"
- It is a my work of a lived-out faith in progress
  1. That takes a lot of hard work
    - a. The word for worship = work/servitude
    - b. **ILLUS.: PEACE CORP SLOGAN--THE HARDEST JOB YOU'LL EVER LOVE**
    - c. It is working for One in whom you believe; whose cause you'll die for; whose promise you live for
  2. That takes a lot of commitment
    - a. In low/no commitments world, we look for happiness, run to next material promise, and find nothing lasting
    - b. **ILLUS.: THE STORY OF THE RICH YOUNG MAN AND JESUS**
    - c. Putting my life in an eternal perspective—as God sees it—rather than a temporal one—as the world sees it
    - d. It is sticking with Jesus through good time and bad; through persecution and praise; through life and death
  3. That takes a death to myself
    - a. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Mark 8: 34
    - b. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." Galatians 2: 20

### **Is my life conformed or transformed?**

- "And stop being conformed to pattern of this world; rather be transformed in that your mind has been renewed Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." v.2
- It all depends on who you respect/fear the most
  1. Much of our action/reaction is driven by fear of peer pressure—fear of what can lose or not gain
  2. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. 10: 28
- It is a transformational power outside of us that takes place on all levels of our existence
  1. **IN OUR CONDUCT** through our baptism (We were buried by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6: 4)
  2. **IN OUR THOUGHTS** through the word (You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. John 8:32)
  3. **IN OUR FUTURE PLANS** through the final resurrection (He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Phil 3: 21)

## **What is the Church?**

Three pastors got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had bat-infestation problems. "I got mad," said one, "I took a shotgun and fired at them. It made hole in the ceiling, but did nothing to the bats." "I tried trapping them alive," said the second. "Then I drove 50 miles before releasing them, but they beat me back to the church." "I haven't had any more problems," said the third. "What did you do?" asked the others, amazed. "I simply baptized and confirmed them," he replied. "I haven't seen them since." Reader's Digest, July, 1994, p. 64

## **Forgetting the Point of it All**

Max De Pree tells a wonderful story, and he swears that it's true, about those wonderful tomato growers in central California. More successful at tomato growing than the tomato growers of all human history, they grew more tomatoes per acre than anyone ever had. But they did have one problem. That was to get their tomatoes into the salad bowls of Chicago and the fruit baskets of the Bronx unbruised, because a magnificent bruised tomato, in the hands of the tomato squeezers of the world, is only a bruised tomato.

So they set agrotechnology to work and accomplished two marvelous things. First, they got a machine to pick the tomatoes while they were still yellow but very firm. Then they put the tomatoes on an assembly belt, passed them under a certain kind of light for seven seconds, and they came out a rosy red--a rosy pink, almost red. And then they devised a packaging such that you could put a bunch of tomatoes in a Styrofoam crate, and lift it twenty feet high above solid concrete, and also take a bumper from a Chevy pickup, lift it twenty feet high above solid concrete, drop them both, and the bumper would come off worse than any one of those tomatoes. Agrotechnology wins again.

But they had one problem: The tomato that the chef sliced into his salad in Chicago and the woman bought from the market in Boston didn't taste the way a tomato was supposed to taste. Enormous success at means, forgetting the point and purpose, the end of it all.

## **God Changes the Rules**

A while ago I was trying to fix our garage door. I came to that one screw I had to get loose, and the more I worked to loosen that screw the tighter it seemed to get. A neighbor came over and saw my plight. He looked for a moment or two and said, "Oh, this has a lefthanded thread. It's a reverse screw. You have to tighten or loosen it going in the opposite direction." It took me fifty years to find out how screws work, and now they change the rules.

There's a sense in which all the Bible is kind of a reverse screw. Everything in the culture that seems right, in the Bible comes out wrong. The way up is the way down. The way to spiritual wealth is to acknowledge your spiritual poverty. The way to live is to die. The way to rule is to serve. I mean the screw just doesn't work right. It's just incongruous.

But unless you understand the reverse nature of the screw, you never do anything. The more you try to work it according to the values of the culture, the tighter the screw gets and the less you accomplish.

The whole Bible is that way. Everything is upside down. When you come with the values of the culture and read the New Testament, it seems crazy. You spent fifty years learning how to play the game, Robinson, and now they change the rules. God's always doing that.

## **Motor Home Illusion**

The motor home has allowed us to put all the conveniences of home on wheels. A camper no longer needs to contend with sleeping in a sleeping bag, cooking over a fire, or hauling water from a stream. Now he can park a fully equipped home on a cement slab in the midst of a few pine trees and hook up to a water line, a sewer line, and electricity. Motor homes now have satellite dishes on top. No more bother with dirt, no more smoke from the fire, no more drudgery of walking to the stream. Now it is possible to go camping and never have to go outside. We buy a motor home with the hope of seeing new places, of getting out into the world. Yet, we deck it out with the same furnishings as in our living room. Thus, nothing really changes. We may drive to a new place, set ourselves in new surrounding, but the newness goes unnoticed, for we've only carried along our old setting. The adventure of new life in Christ begins when the comfortable patterns of the old life are left behind.

## **Romans 12: 1-2**

"On account of God's mercy given you, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship/service. And stop being conformed to pattern of this world; rather be transformed in that your mind has been renewed. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.