

WORSHIP  
James 4:1-10  
Dr. Jerry Nelson

Don't ever preach unless God makes you do it.

Preaching is a terrible task.

I am using the primary definition of "Terrible" which means causing fear or alarm.

Preaching causes me a great deal of fear and even alarm.

For usually God deals with me personally so clearly, and forcefully that it is very painful.

I elected some months ago to do a short series this Fall on the subject of WORSHIP.

These past few weeks I have rued the day that I made that decision.

Because I may know a great deal about worship but I don't know much by way of the experience of worship.

And as I began to prepare for these messages on worship that became painfully obvious.

How could I stand before this congregation and exhort them to worship when it comes with such difficulty for me.

Several times what I wanted more than anything else was to be freed of the obligation to preach.

Oh, how much easier to just not deal with the issue.

Though it is unflattering of many of us let me describe what I am afraid is going on in too many of us when it comes to worship:

There are many of us who come Sunday after Sunday to what we call worship services but we seldom if ever worship.

Oh, we sing,

we bow our heads when someone prays  
and we listen attentively and sometimes even appreciatively when someone sings, reads or speaks well.

But worship? No.

We come to enjoy the music  
to see each other or  
to maybe hear a provocative sermon or lesson.  
or for some of us, to do our jobs.

But when we show up consistently late,  
participate only half-heartedly,  
can't keep our minds on the subject,  
and can't wait to get on with "our" day,  
I don't think we have worshipped.

When we continually judge a worship service as effective or ineffective by whether:

we got something out of it  
we were encouraged  
we felt better afterward  
we were emotionally affected,  
I don't think we understand worship.

When we give barely anything for the work of God's kingdom or give only what won't seriously hinder our lifestyle and plans and call it an "offering" to the Lord - that is blasphemous -not worship.

WORSHIP is the humble adoration of a person  
WORSHIP is ascribing value and worth to another person.

To worship God is to fix our attention on Him  
It is to look with our hearts at him and esteem him.  
It is to express how much we value Him,  
It is to sincerely ponder the worth of our God.  
And though it is founded on reason it is to move beyond reason into an  
adoration from the heart.

I'm afraid there are some of us who don't know anything about worship - we don't truly worship BECAUSE  
we've never fully worshipped anyone but ourselves.

We spend our lives caring mainly for ourselves.  
Many don't even love their spouses -

they simply find the services convenient.

I even wonder whether they love their children:  
children are o.k. as long as they don't embarrass us or  
get in the way,  
and maybe we are even proud of them when they achieve something  
because it reflects on us as their parent.  
but love them?

We are so worried about making certain that others appreciate us that we don't have time to truly appreciate anyone else or much less express any appreciation that isn't gauged to make us more appreciated.

No wonder we don't adore Jesus - we don't adore anyone but ourselves.

So many of us go through all the motions of worship on Sundays but truthfully we hardly even think of God through the rest of the week.

Oh, we may even read a passage from the Bible each day

BUT

business decisions

spending decisions

entertainment decisions

and relationship decisions

are all made not on the basis of God's desires

but our own.

No wonder we don't worship God on Sunday,  
we don't consider God to be of enough worth to pay Him any attention  
all week long!

I've just issued quite an indictment!

I thank God that there are some of you whom this description doesn't fit.

But if it fits you as it does me (whether in whole or even in part), and you care to change it, listen carefully to where God tells us to begin.

A change starts with REPENTANCE.

We normally think of repentance as a word for non-Christians - they must repent to be saved - BUT repentance is often in order for God's people as well.

If we are going to enter into true worship of God it won't start with:  
better orders of service,  
with more professionally done music,  
or even more interesting sermons,  
It will start with God's people getting down on their knees before God in humility, repentance and dependence on Him.

Please look with me at very heavy but also hope-filled passage of Scripture in the Book of James.

Look first at 2:14-26

In this passage James makes it clear that where there is a right relationship with God there will be conduct consistent with that relationship.

Genuine faith results in good conduct.

Look next at chapter 3.

In this passage James makes it clear that where there is a right relationship with God there will be right relationships with others.  
READ vs. 17-18

Now look to our text for today: 4:1-10

In this passage James makes it clear that the reason your relationships and your life in general aren't o.k. is that your relationship to God is not o.k.

The heart, the dynamic, the life of the Christian is his/her relationship to God. That relationship may rightly be described as "Worship".

READ 4:1-2

Your life is not what you want it to be AND your relationships are often strained, sometimes even hostile.

Isn't it true that the trouble isn't with others but in you?

You think that you will secure pleasure and happiness for yourself by overthrowing everything that thwarts your efforts.

But even when you do get what you think you want it doesn't satisfy.

You don't have what you truly need because you don't ask - you don't even consult God in your daily dealings and decisions.

Oh, you may show up for worship services, but you don't worship God.

#### READ 4:3

When you do ask, your prayers are simply expressions of your selfishness.

You don't want what will honor God, you simply want what will give you, what Francis Schaffer called, "personal peace and affluence".

You pray mostly for personal success by your standards rather than for the kingdom of God.

You may pray in church but it is not worship of God.

#### READ 4:4-5

Here is the great indictment: "You adulterous people."  
You give God your leftovers,  
while you retain the best affections for yourself.

You don't adore God, you "adore" the world.  
you adore personal comfort,  
a life of relative ease,  
sufficient money to do what you want,  
an ability to buy what the world says you "need",  
and the ability to spend your time as you choose.

James said that this is a "choice" that we make.

A deliberate choice.

We "determine" to be friends with worldly values.

I suspect that we don't do that all at once  
but a little at a time.

We make little decisions to serve ourselves instead of God and over  
time it becomes a way of life - by choice.

And the result is that we become an enemy of God.

We become an opponent of the kingdom of God.

It is not neutral or harmless - it is opposition.

And James goes on in verse 5 to indicate that such a selfish, greedy,  
envious spirit has been part of our very nature from the very beginning.  
It was God's judgment upon us from the Garden of Eden.

Can such a person honestly say he/she worships God?

Look at the first half of the proverb in verse 6:

"God opposes the proud"

God sets Himself against the proud.

The PROUD are those who resist:

the truth about God (living as if it won't matter)

the laws of God (living as if they are optional)

and the providence of God in their lives (certain they can take better  
care of themselves than God can).

"THE PROUD" - what a description!

And therein lies the problem with our worship:

We worship ourselves.

Now look at verse 6-10 READ

BUT God gives grace to the HUMBLE.  
Pride may be the problem with our worship  
BUT "humble repentance" is the solution.

Look at God's description of it in the following verses:

v.7 "Submit yourself to God"  
Come under his rule,  
decide to allow his will to rule in your life.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"  
Satan will try to get us to believe that:  
submitting to God will expose us to some  
kind of misery.  
submitting to God will mean hardship and poverty.

But you must resist, resolve not to yield to his  
tempting of our envious pride.  
And when you do resist, God says that you slam the  
door on Satan.

v.8 "Come near to God"  
The heart that has been living in rebellion must be brought to the foot  
of God

Our spirit that has been distant and estranged from communion with  
God and affection for God must come to Him.

And how do we come?

v.8 "Wash your hands" - confess your sin of self-centeredness  
and disregard of God.

"purify your hearts you double minded" -  
A pure heart is a sincere heart -  
you have been wanting what God offers and  
also what the world offers -

repent of such double-mindedness and

sincerely rely upon God for what is best in your life.

v.9 "Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom."

This is a description of REPENTANCE.

Let your heart and mind feel the seriousness of your proud self-centeredness"

If you aren't already so dissatisfied with your emptiness in life that you grieve what is happening, THEN act now to turn from your careless "everything's alright" attitude and understand how serious this is.

Instead of pursuing happiness and ease all of the time - take time to mourn your condition.

v.10 "Humble yourselves before the Lord"

The first step in restoration to God is REPENTANCE.

The first step in true worship is REPENTANCE.

That Repentance starts with confession:

God, I confess that I have adored myself more than you.

God, I confess that my worship has usually been hollow, thoughtless, unworthy of who you are.

Holy God, I loathe my prideful self-centeredness.

I ask your forgiveness for my adulterous love-affair with worldly values.

Forgive me for caring more about "my" day than "yours".

And that repentance continues with us "drawing near to God".

Come to him today not demanding something BUT simply to come into his presence in humility.

No, I am not offering today some quick-fix for what ails us in our worship.

Yes, there is more to worship than repentance BUT that is for another time -

TODAY we simply humbly come into the presence of God in repentance and dependence on him.

AND LOOK AT WHAT GOD WILL DO:

VS. 10 "He will lift you up"

v. 8 "He will come near to you"

Yes, there is hope in these verses and we must rely on the grace of God but don't jump too quickly to relief. The pathway to honor is humility. Let God "worry" about lifting you up - you "worry" about bowing down in humble repentance.

I can't tell you what that experience of repentance will look or feel like for you but I can tell you that when God says He will "lift us up" and "draw near to us" it can't be anything but good - we must trust Him.

Oh, God break through our hard hearts and lead us to repentance.

Hymn of Commitment: verses 1,3, and 4 of "Cleanse Me"