

**Becoming Like Christ in Worship**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley**  
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We're in a sermon series entitled The Praise Life of Jesus Christ. So far, we've learned how to become like Christ in thanksgiving, and in praise. Today I'm preaching on Becoming Like Christ in Worship.

We're coming into the Christmas season and we find that the birth of Christ was filled with worship. Shepherds worshipped. Wise men worshipped. Angels worshipped. The heavens opened up and we get a glimpse of what's going on in heaven: praise and worship.

In previous sermons, we defined thanksgiving as giving thanks to God for what He has done. Praise is giving glory to God for who He is. But what is worship? Is praise what we do during the fast songs and worship what we do during the slow songs?

True worship starts with thanksgiving. Psalm 100:4 says:

*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.*

Thanksgiving is the entryway. If you don't become thankful, you will never worship! But we move past the entryway and into God's presence with praise.

Psalm 22:3 says that God inhabits the praises of His people. So, praise gets us into God's presence and worship is our response to His presence. How should we respond to the presence of God?

#### **1- We learn how to worship from biblical examples of worship**

I could use many examples of worship from the New Testament, but since this is Christmas time, let's look at some keys to praise and worship in the lives of the wise men who sought out the baby Jesus. Matthew 2:2 gives us the reason they sought Jesus:

*We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.*

The wise men were seeking Jesus so that they could worship Him. Verses 10-11 say:

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

When they got close – they rejoiced.  
When they got in His presence – they worshipped.

Let's talk about rejoicing for a moment.  
Their rejoicing was not small or hidden – it was big and observable.  
They didn't just rejoice.  
They didn't just rejoice with joy.  
They didn't just rejoice with great joy.  
They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

But they didn't stop there – they moved on in to God's presence. When the wise men finally found the Christ, the Bible says they worshipped Him. It also tells us how they worshipped: they fell down and they gave gifts to Him. You'll find that all the way through the Bible- when people worship they fall down and they give! It's happening in heaven right now! Revelation 4:9-11 says:

*Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."*

You see there's a time for singing – shouting – dancing and clapping. But there's a time when the only appropriate response is to fall at the feet of Jesus and worship Him. Why fall down? Because true worship acknowledges that Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He is worthy of our obedience and submission. That's why Psalm 95:6 tells us:

*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*

The Biblical words for worship mean to fall down, to bow down in reverence, humble yourself, to adore. Worship requires reverence, humility and adoration.

Not only did the wise men fall down, but they also gave Jesus gifts. They did not give small trinkets; the Bible said they gave their treasure. They gave their best. They gave to Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold represents wealth. Frankincense is incense that represents worship. Myrrh was used to make the anointing oil that was poured out on the feet of Jesus just a week before His death.

What about us, when we come to Christ what do we give Him?  
What can we give to the One who saved us?  
We can give Him our gold – our wealth.  
We can give Him our frankincense – our worship.  
We can give Him our myrrh – our whole lives.

Christmas is all about giving. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. That's who God is; He is a giver. And since we were created in His image, we were created to give.

Please understand that the essence of worship is giving.

- Thanksgiving is giving thanks for what God has done.
- Praise is giving God glory for who He is.
- Worship is totally giving yourself to God.

This is why self-centered people have a hard time worshipping. Worship requires us to get our focus off ourselves and onto God. This is why stingy people have a hard time worshipping. There is a cost to worship.

You cannot truly worship without giving, without sacrifice. You see – the word sacrifice literally means to give up something – for someone else. True worship requires humility and sacrifice. Romans 12:1 says:

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

I want to point out two things:

First, worship is our response to God's love. God made the first move. He created us. He saved us. He forgave us. He blesses us. He protects us. Then because of all these things, we worship Him. How do we do that? We "offer." We give.

Worship is giving back to God. Whenever you give anything to God, that's called worship. If you go back to the origins of the tithe, you will find it was an act of worship. That's why at offering time we say we're continuing our worship by giving. God wants the same thing from all of us – everything! God wants to be in the same place in all our lives – first place!

What sacrifices can we offer to God? We do not sacrifice in order to be made right with God. Jesus did that on the cross. So what sacrifices are we to make? Hebrews 13:15-16 tells us:

*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

The sacrifice of praise includes the fruit of our lips giving praise and the fruit of our lives giving to others. They go together – worship and giving – because they are both an expression of the heart.

What do you value so much that you give yourself to it?

That first place in your life belongs to God and no one else. We worship when we put God first in our lives.

If you don't worship God, believe me, you're going to find a substitute really quick, even if it is just yourself. It's pretty amazing the things people worship. I told you that when we were in Thailand we saw people worshipping idols, statues and trees. Strange, but true. As I said – it's amazing what people worship. Idols, statues and trees have no power and should not be worshipped.

We must worship God as He is revealed in the Bible; anything else is idolatry. You can't just create your own image of God and worship that.

Let me ask you, what are you worshipping? I'll tell you what it is. It is whatever you're giving your primary attention to, whatever you're giving your primary affection to, and whatever you're giving your primary abilities to. Now, in that case, some people worship their career. Some people worship money. Some people worship another person who they allow to dominate their life.

The point is that everybody worships something, and if you don't want to end up worshipping a tree – you'd better worship as Jesus taught us.

## **2- We learn how to worship from Jesus**

In John 4:20-24 – Jesus got into a discussion with a Samaritan woman about worship. She tried to debate Jesus on the best time, place, and style for worship. Jesus replied that these external issues are irrelevant; what matters is your heart. She said,

*"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

Let me give you a little background here. This woman was a Samaritan. Samaritans were the offspring of Jews who intermarried with pagans. Their faith was a mixture of truth and error. Jews and Samaritans did not even agree on where worship should take place. Jesus said Samaritans really didn't know how to worship. He said where you worship is not as important as how, why and who you worship.

Jesus said that God is seeking true worship from true worshippers. This flies in the face of those who say, "It really doesn't matter how you worship." God is looking for a certain kind of worship.

God is not looking for people worshipping their own truth – He's looking for people who will offer true worship in spirit and in truth. What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth?

Let's look first at what it means to worship in spirit. Is the spirit talked about here the Holy Spirit or the spirit of man? I believe it is both. Worship in spirit is our spirit being led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus says true worship flows out of our hearts.

What does it mean to worship in truth? First of all, true worship is real, not fake. You can go through the motions of worship and not be worshipping. You can sing songs or lift your hands or dance in the aisles - you can do those things and not worship. Matthew 15:8 says:

*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*

True worship flows out of a heart that is dead to self and alive to God. Worship is to feel in the heart and to express in some appropriate manner. Spirit and truth!

Secondly, worship in truth is worship based on God's word. The Bible reveals how God wants to be worshipped. How do you think the early church worshipped? In Acts 24:14 Paul said,

*I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*

What Paul is saying is that New Testament worship was based on the way God revealed He wanted to be worshipped in the Bible. For the early church – all they had was the Old Testament.

Thirdly, not only is God's word truth, but Jesus Christ is truth. True worship will be Christ-centered. It must be based on the Word of God and centered on Jesus Christ.

Worship in spirit and in truth is worshipping as God wants it, not as we want it. I realize different people are comfortable with different worship styles. But I also know that the word of God reveals ways He wants to be worshipped. Biblical worship involves our entire being, including: singing, shouting, lifting hands, clapping, standing, bowing, dancing.

Some people say, "That type of praise and worship is not for me." But let me remind you, the way we worship is determined by God, not by us. He tells us how He wants to be worshipped and He tells us who He wants to worship Him in that way. Psalm 117:1 says:

*Praise the Lord, all you nations. Praise Him, all you people of the earth.*  
In other words, praise is for everyone everywhere, including you.

Psalm 47:1 says:

*Clap your hands, all you people. Shout to God with the voice of triumph!*  
God wants all people to clap and shout. All includes you.

Psalm 150 tells us to praise with music and dancing. Then it ends by telling us who should praise like this in verse 6.

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*

Here's the way to know if praise is for you - Are you breathing?  
If the answer is yes, then you praise the Lord.

Some people say, "Well, all of that is Old Testament." Well, let's look at the New Testament. How about this? Romans 15:11 says:

*Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to Him, all you people.*

There's all again, and all includes you. 1 Timothy 2:8 says:

*I want men everywhere to pray with holy hands lifted up to God.*

There's a New Testament verse telling everyone everywhere to lift their hands. You can find this type of teaching all through the New Testament. Worship is for everyone. And if you don't worship, it doesn't just affect you, but everyone else.

There is a legend about an ancient village in Spain. The villagers learned that for the first time in their history, the king would pay a visit. So, the villagers all agreed to have a big celebration.

But, it was a poor village, and there weren't many resources fit for a king. Then someone came up with a classic idea. Since this was wine country and most of the villagers made their own wines, the idea was for everyone in the village to bring a cup of their best wine to pour into a large vat and offer it to the king. They believed that when the king drew wine to drink, it would be the very best he ever tasted.

On the day of king's arrival, hundreds of people lined up to make their offering to the king. They all poured their gift into a vat until it was full. The King arrived, was escorted to the square with much fanfare, given a silver cup and was told to draw some wine, which represented the best the villagers had. He placed the cup under the spigot, turned the handle, and then drank the wine. The king got a very puzzled expression on his face and said, "This wine tastes exactly like water." You know why? It was!

You see, every villager had the same thought, "I'm poor and cannot afford to give the king my best. I'll withhold my wine and substitute water. With so many cups of wine in the vat, the king will never know the difference!"

The problem was, everyone thought the same thing, and the offering to the king ended up being a disappointing watered-down version. That's what happens when we come to church expecting others to do the praising and giving – it waters down our worship. If all of us wait for someone else to do the praising, no one will do the praising and our King will not be honored!

I don't know about you, but I refuse to offer God watered down worship. I refuse to disrespect God by giving an offering that is not a sacrifice. I will give my God the sacrifice of praise.

- That means that if no one else is praising, I will still praise.
- If everyone thinks I'm crazy for rejoicing, I will still rejoice.
- When my accountant says I'm foolish for giving God 10% of my income, I will still give my tithe to the Lord.
- When my doctor tries to take the credit for my healing, I will give God all the glory.
- When people say I'm lucky in life, I will refuse to give luck any credit – I'll give all the praise to God who blesses me.
- When the devil tries to lie to me and get me to complain rather than praise, I will choose to bless the Lord instead.
- Even when I don't feel like praising, I will overcome my excuses and I worship my God in spirit and in truth!

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth! I was thinking about different times we can praise the Lord and I concluded that anytime is the right time to Praise Him!

So, in the good times and in the bad times... Praise Him!

In fact, in the best of times or the worst of times... Praise Him!

In busy times and in slow times... Praise Him!

From opening time until closing time... Praise Him!

Whether you're ahead of the times or behind the times... Praise Him!

Whether time is flying by or time is standing still... Praise Him!

Whether you're working full-time, part-time or none of the time... Praise Him!

Whether you are big time or small time... Praise Him!

Whether time is running out or you've got too much time on your hands...

When you're having the time of your life... Praise Him!

When nobody will give you the time of day... Praise Him!

Even if you're doing time, serving time or living on borrowed time...

Whether time's a wastin' or the times they are a' changing... Praise Him!

Whether you're passing time, marking time or killing time... Praise Him!

Whether it's not your time yet or time has passed you by... Praise Him!

Even if nobody has no time for you... Praise Him!

Time keeps on slipping, slipping, slipping into the future, but all the way to the end of time... I'll be praising! And in eternity – when time is no more - I'll still be praising the Lord my God forever and ever!

Any time is the right time to praise! The time to praise is always now!