

Kingdom Worship
Pastor Joe Oakley – GFC – 4-13-25

On Easter morning, 1799, the people of Feldkirch, Austria, were terrified. They believed this Easter would probably be the last day of their lives. Outside the gates stood an army led by one of Napoleon's generals and they wanted in. The citizens were ready to raise the white flag of surrender to another king and another kingdom.

But the bishop of the church had another idea. He told the townspeople: "This is Easter Sunday. This is the day of our Lord's resurrection. We must have one moment of triumph. Let us at least ring all the bells of Easter, have our service and leave the matter in God's hands. We see only our weakness, but what about the power of God to defend us?"

Fearfully, the people agreed. Soon the sound of church bells ringing out a celebration of victory filled the air. Napoleon's army was astounded. What could it mean? They concluded that the only possible explanation for such celebration was that the Austrian army had arrived to help defend the town. The bells had not yet stopped ringing when the French army ran away.

This battle was won by a celebration of praise. Not one shot was fired. The people who knew their weakness now knew the power of God. They learned what we need to learn - **Worship is warfare!**

We are in a sermon series entitled Seize the Kingdom of God. The title of my sermon today is Kingdom Worship.

God's first purpose for His kingdom is worship!
All throughout the Bible worship is a central theme.
The highest and continual occupation of heaven is praise and worship.
We see worship in heaven before the creation of earth and there will be
worship in heaven after the end of the earth.

Worship is the highest and greatest activity on earth. **God created us to worship and because of that, everyone worships! The question is not: Do you worship? The question is: Who or what do we worship?**

If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute. **How do we know what we worship?** Since the essence of praise and worship is giving, you know what you worship by what you value, what you give yourself to – what you pursue with all your heart and strength: That could be a job, money, possessions, time, power, position, pleasure, a person (friend, spouse, child), entertainment, sports, yourself.

Not only did God create us to worship, but God calls us to worship.

1 Peter 2:9 says:

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

We all have different callings and we all have the same calling. We all do different things, but we all do the same thing. **Our main calling is to love, serve and worship God.** We are called to be a kingdom of priests who worship God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

God created us to worship, calls us to worship, and He also commands us to worship. Jesus said in Matthew 4:10

For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.'

Since worship is commanded – that means it is not optional. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says:

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Worship is the will of God for you! Because of that, the will of Satan is for you to not worship God. The devil wants to steal your praise. The moment you stop praising is the moment you get defeated. Satan would rather we do anything other than worship!

Satan is not too worried about us when we are living for ourselves – but when we start putting God first – worshipping Him in spirit and in truth – seeking the presence of God – Satan fights it with everything he's got.

Most of us know that all Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare. But, did you know that **the ultimate battle of the ages is over worship**? That battle began in heaven. A description of Lucifer is found in Ezekiel 28:13-17:

You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.

The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned.

So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on

account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

Lucifer was the anointed cherub who covers or guards God's presence. Also - musical instruments were created for him.

Many believe that Lucifer was the worship leader in heaven. He lived in the presence of God and saw all the worship going to God and he wanted it for himself. When that sin entered his heart – God cast him from heaven. Isaiah 14:12-15 says:

***How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!
For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.***

A third of the angels fell with Satan and ever since then – Satan has been trying to turn people from the true and living God. He doesn't care what you turn to as long as you turn from God.

Anything you turn to and live for other than God is an idol and ultimately Satan is at the receiving end of that worship. He'll do anything to get that worship.

If he can't get our worship – he'll attack our worship.

We see that in the life of Christ during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before He was crucified. That day was called Palm Sunday because the crowd waved palm branches and shouted Hosanna to the King. Luke 19:37-40 says:

Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: "'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

As Jesus rode into the city the people waved Palm branches and shouted, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." By this they were saying, "You're the one God has sent." Matthew tells us, they were shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David." Hosanna literally means to "save us now." So in essence they were shouting "You're the one God has sent to save us now."

But in the midst this praise were those who wanted to silence the praise. What we see here is a conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. In verse 39 the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples.

One of the reasons they did this was because Jesus didn't do what they expected the Messiah to do. You see, they expected the Messiah to overthrow the Roman Empire and set up His kingdom on earth.

- **But Jesus did not come to set up an earthly kingdom; He came to establish a spiritual kingdom.**
- **Jesus did not come to destroy Rome; He came to destroy sin.**
- **Jesus did not come to overthrow worldly powers. He came to overthrow Satan and demonic powers.**

Many people wanted Jesus to ride in on a horse... a symbol of war. But Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey... a symbol of peace. They wanted a "Prince of War" but Jesus is the "Prince of Peace."

Worship can be the biggest area of dissension in churches. Believe me there is no shortage in any church of complaints and criticism about worship. Why? Because worship is the battleground of the ages. If Satan can't get our worship – he'll get us fighting over worship rather than worshipping. But we must win the worship war over the enemy!

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of how to win that war. After He was baptized, Jesus went into the desert and was tempted by the devil. Matthew 4 tells that Satan tempted Jesus 3 times and every time Jesus defeated him by speaking the Word of God. Verses 8-11 say

The devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give You," he said, "if You will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from Me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him.

I want you to see that the main issue here was worship. Satan had authority over all kingdoms of the world but he wanted something more! Satan wanted worship. He told Jesus "I will give up everything if you will just worship me."

And we see how Jesus fought back – He spoke the word. God has given us armor and weapons to fight the enemy with. That includes the word of God, the blood of Jesus, the name of Jesus and the keys of the kingdom to use in prayer. But spiritual warfare is also waged in worship!

Here's some other biblical examples of worship warfare.

In Joshua 6 at the battle of Jericho, God used the sound of trumpets and shouting of his people to tear down the walls of the enemy.

In 1 Samuel 16 David's worship on the harp caused the tormenting spirit that plagued King Saul to depart.

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas prayed and praised God in prison and God sent an earthquake that set them free.

In 2 Chronicles 20 God told Jehoshaphat to appoint singers to sing to the Lord and praise Him as they went out before the army. When they began to worship, God caused the enemy's armies to destroy each other.

Think about this kingdom worship. The leading element of their attack formation was the worship team. Their God-given strategy was praise and worship. And God defeated the enemy for them. It would seem a little foolish to send a choir against an army! But in God's kingdom a song can defeat a sword! Thanks can defeat tanks! Worship is warfare! Praise is powerful!

**So God will sometimes lead us to do the same things in spiritual warfare.
Our shouts can tear down walls the enemy builds.
Our singing can cause our enemies to turn on each other.
Our worship can cause our enemy to depart.
Our praise can set us free from the enemy's captivity.**

So when you make the choice to rejoice God is deployed and the enemy is destroyed! Psalm 149:6 tells us how we overcome.

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand.

The combination of worship and the Word is powerful! Our praise Glorifies God - Edifies the believers - Evangelizes unbelievers - And our praise Terrorizes the enemy! That's because he knows that God inhabits the praises of His people.
And God and Satan cannot inhabit the same territory at the same time!

So, praise is one of the ways we submit to God and resist Satan. And when we do - Satan must flee! Psalm 18:3 says:

I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.

In other words, when I praise God, He saves me from my enemies. When we praise God, it releases the supernatural power of God in our lives. When we praise God, it expresses our faith in the victory of Jesus Christ! I said earlier that the moment you stop praising is the moment you get defeated.

The opposite is also true – the moment you start worshipping is the moment you start overcoming! If you can stand in the middle of a mess or a disappointment in life and praise God anyway – you’ve already won the battle!

Yet when difficulties come in life, some people choose not to praise - but to doubt and worry and complain, and when they do they forfeit the power of praise. That’s because Praise = Power! Where do I get that? During His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus quoted Psalm 8:2.

From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

That’s the NIV. But every other translation says something like this:

Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

One says out of the mouth of babes God ordained praise; the others say out of the mouth of babes God ordained strength. So – which is it? Praise or strength? Well, both.

The word in the original Hebrew is *ʾoz* (oze); which means force, security, majesty, praise, boldness, loudness, might, power, strength. Do you see how words for praise and words for strength are both in that definition? God has ordained that praise coming out of our mouths will have power to silence the enemy.

Satan and all his demons hate it when we praise God. That’s because praise ushers in the presence of God. And all of us have areas in our lives where we need the presence and power of God to invade.

When it comes to defeating the enemy, you may think, “I don’t feel like an overcomer. I feel weak.” That’s the beautiful thing about what Jesus quoted in Psalm 8:2 -

From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

He did not say, out of the mouths of mature Christians, strong believers, or wise leaders I have ordained praise. Where does the power of praise come from? From the mouths of babes and nursing infants. Now babies are totally helpless and without strength.

Jesus said – it’s out of that kind of weakness and helplessness that I have ordained praise that silences the enemy. **It’s not our strength that defeats the enemy. In fact, it’s not about us at all. It’s about Jesus – who already defeated the enemy.**

Through praise we enforce the victory that Christ already won. That's why God is looking for praisers. Jesus said it in John 4:23

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.

We talk about seeking God – but this verse says God is a seeker. God is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit in truth. Whenever you need God in a situation, you need to begin to praise Him. That gets His attention.

What do you do when you're beat up and bound up in life? What do you do when facing a difficult circumstance? Do you turn to God or from God? When circumstances have you surrounded, if you want to release the power of God into your situation, begin to praise Him. THAT'S WHERE THE VICTORY IS WON!

I know it takes faith. But, if we believe that God dwells in our praises and that praise releases His power, then we can silence the enemy and change our circumstances. And even if praise does not immediately change our circumstances, it will change us! So – God delivers us from our enemy or He delivers us from ourselves. Either way – WE WIN!

It happened for Jehoshaphat in the Old Testament. It happened for the people of Feldkirch Austria in 1799. And it can happen for us today.

If you need the power of God in your life today, don't wait for the victory before you praise, but praise during the battle, start today. Praise Him for who He is and for what He's promised and you will experience the power of kingdom worship!

When God's people gather to sing His praises, proclaim His Word, and partake of His sacraments, they are assaulting the gates of hell. When believers gather, they join their voices with the angelic hosts in heaven, declaring the glory of God and advancing His kingdom.

Every Sunday gathering of the church is a catapult flinging a rock at the enemies' gates.

Each song we sing is a flaming arrow we shoot at the enemy.

Each sermon preached is a battering ram against the gates of hell.

In each baptism and Lord's Supper we take up arms to defeat the enemy.

Kingdom Worship is the key that turns the tides of evil around us. Worship is the key. So when you don't join in worship with God's people you are giving up an important spiritual weapon that defeats our enemy.

But if you do engage in worship, then take courage that the Lord uses his people humbling themselves before Him to destroy His enemies. Kingdom Worship is Warfare!