

Brief Summary of Sunday Sermon of ZGM of March 1, 2015

Preached by Rev Ramylal Fernando

APPROACHING GOD AS A PEOPLE IN WORSHIP

This is the first of a four part sermon on Worship. One of the emphases of our new Mission Statement and direction of the church is to Exalt Christ. Here are the first four sermons that will be preached on each of the Sundays in March.

- Approaching as a People of God in Worship
- Touching the Presence of God in Worship
- Experiencing the Power of God in Worship
- Capturing the Purpose of God in Worship

Zephaniah 3:17: “The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

God takes delight in his people. He even sings and rejoices over us. Worship is a reflection of the delight God takes in us. What then do we keep in mind as we approach God as a people of God in worship?

1. WORSHIP IS GIVEN TO GOD

Psalms 150:6, at the end of 150 songs of praise, states an important fact. “Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord.” The command to praise is for everyone.

Psalms 16:11 is a reflection that in God’s presence there is fullness of joy. So, when we praise with all our breath, there is fullness of joy in our hearts as we spend time in God’s presence.

We use the words praise and worship. Are they the same? Is there any difference? I believe that anyone can praise God but only a believer can properly worship God.

Even one of the most evil kings of all time, is recorded to have praised God. Nebuchadnezzar, when confronted with God’s greatness said: “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble (Daniel 4:37). Anyone who realises the greatness and awesomeness of God can praise Him by uttering words of honour.

But worship is different. Psalm 29:2 reminds us that we need to worship the Lord in the splendour, beauty of holiness. Worship can be given from a state of holiness and purity in the presence of God.

So, if you wish to offer worship it must be given from a state of holiness to God. It must be expressed and offered to God.

Do you consider worship something that you give to God? What is it that you can give God in your worship?

2. WORSHIP IS GOING TO GOD

In John chapter 4, Jesus travels through Samaria. He gets talking to the woman at the well she keeps changing the topic. At one point, she points out that unlike the Jews, the Samaritans have been worshipping on Mt Gerizim. The Jews on the other hand worshipped atop the mountain at Jerusalem.

In reply, Jesus says that the time is coming that people will worship God differently. He said in John 4:24, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." He was making a clear and important distinction. Worship "in" as against worship "on."

The Hebrew people worshipped God in the Tabernacle and then later in the temple. Both structures had an outer courtyard where everyone could gather to worship God. Then the priests could move to the holy space. Normal people could not go there. Then in the inner sanctum of the holy place was the most holy place where the Lord's presence lived. There was a clear movement in worship in the temple and the tabernacle.

Worship is a movement. We need to move into the inner presence of the Lord. When Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple at Jerusalem tore from the top. God was responsible for the tearing. The most holy place of the temple was opened up due to that. That is a symbolical act to show that now we have movement and access to the holy presence of God in worship.

Psalm 100:4-6, is a reminder of this movement of going to God. Psalm 22:3 states that the Lord inhabits the praises of his people. This means that when we approach the Lord in worship, he approaches us. We meet him through worship.

Do you move to God and meet him in his inner sanctuary through worship?

3. WORSHIP IS GLORIFYING ONLY GOD

In Matthew 4 we see the temptation of Jesus. The devil approached Jesus and promised to give him all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would simply worship him. If worship is a movement into God, then wrong worship is a movement into Satan. He wants to rob us of worshipping the Lord almighty.

The temptations of the world usually occupy the place God would otherwise occupy. We spend time on those temptations. We worship things of the world more than we worship God.

Do you succumb to giving your worship to unhealthy things?

So, in this sermon we examined three key elements of worship. It is given to God, it is going to God and it is glorifying God and him alone.