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Passionate Worship

Psalm 100:1-5

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A small boy sat beside his mother in church. Like most small children, and some adults, his attention was neither easily captured nor readily held. So much of what was happening in the service seemed uninteresting, unrelated, unimportant. Quite frankly, he was bored stiff. Suddenly his wandering eyes noticed a bronze plaque prominently placed upon the side wall. There he saw stars, letters, and the outline of an American flag. Nudging his mother and pointing to the plaque, he asked, *“What’s that?”* Graciously his mother replied, *“Those are the names of people from our church who died in the service.”* There was a long pause. The boy was bothered by her answer. Suddenly, with a sense of concern bordering on panic, he asked, *“Mom, was that the 8:30 or the 11:00 service?”*

Why do we find this story humorous? Probably because we relate to the not-so-subtle implication that worship services can be dull and lifeless. Though Christians gather to celebrate a living God of resurrection power, the experience may lack energy, excitement, vitality, and a sense of God’s presence. Author Robert G. Rayburn wrote, *“There remains among sincere believers...a woeful ignorance concerning the significance of true worship and the means of attaining the blessing of rich, rewarding corporate worship.”* I would like to talk with you this morning about Passionate Worship. Before I do that, however, I’d like to show you a video clip that portrays worship, and I would like your help in identifying evidence of passionate worship and radical hospitality or the lack thereof.

(For those of you reading the sermon online only, in worship we watched a video clip of Mr. Bean going to worship in which the man he sat next to extended no help or welcome, Mr. Bean falls asleep during the service, and he doesn’t know when to sit or when to stand and no one helps him, and his neighbor in the pew doesn’t share his hymnal with him).

Dr Perry Buffington reported that research psychologists have found there are at least three situations when we are not ourselves. First, the average person puts on airs when he visits the lobby of a fancy hotel. Next, the average person will try to hide her emotions and bamboozle the salesman when she enters a new car showroom. And finally, as we take our seat in church or synagogue, we try to fake out the Almighty that we've really been good all week.<sup>1</sup>

We can't fake out God, but when we worship together, there are temptations to use worship as a time to impress other people, or to treat worship as a time when we don't expect anything to happen to us and we don't expect God's presence and power to touch us or change us as we worship.

When we turn to the Bible we realize that passionately worshipping God is a priority. Psalm 84 begins, *"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! **My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.**"*

C.S. Lewis said, *"The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same delight in God which made David dance."*

One of the most familiar and best known Psalms is Psalm 100, which is about worship. Psalm 100:1-5

***"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.***

<sup>2</sup> ***Worship the Lord with gladness;***  
*come into his presence **with singing.***

<sup>3</sup> ***Know that the Lord is God.***  
*It is he that made us, and **we are his,**<sup>a</sup>*  
***we are his*** people, and the sheep of his pasture.

<sup>4</sup> *Enter his gates **with thanksgiving,***  
*and his courts **with praise.***  
***Give thanks to him, bless his name.***

<sup>5</sup> *For **the Lord is good;***  
***his steadfast love*** endures forever,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Perry Buffington, "Playing Charades," Universal Press Syndicate, September 26, 1999.

<sup>a</sup> Another reading is *and not we ourselves*

*and his faithfulness to all generations.”*

**Psalm 100 very simply relates the Who, What, Why, and How of Passionate Worship.** First it answers **Who is to be worshiped – the Lord. Who is to worship – all the earth.** That means everybody and everything. In the Book of Revelation we're told that in heaven there will be people from every tribe, language, people, and nation worshiping God.

**What** attitude should we bring to worship? We are to worship the Lord with **gladness**. Let me tell you what that means in the Hebrew and other ancient languages and translations...it means we are to worship the Lord with gladness. One of the things I feel good about is that I think there are a fair amount of people at BBC who would say like another psalm says, *“I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.”* Would people observing us say we were glad to be going to worship? I have encountered the attitude or belief in some people that almost seems like the more serious and sadder you look the holier you are. I am not saying we deny the hurt, hardship or heartache in our life when we worship God. However, we are glad in the midst of it, when we can go to worship. It pleases God when we take delight and pleasure in worshiping the Lord. Worshiping the Lord with gladness presupposes a relationship that makes you want to be there.

A couple shared with me that when they drove to visit their parents their young child who was still in a car seat, would say when pulling into their grandparents driveway and seeing their house, *“I want to get out! I want to get out!”* He said this because he wanted to get out of the car as quickly as possible to get into the presence of people he knows love him and are good to him. Often we may think, *“I want to get out, I want get out,”* **during** a worship service, not when we pull into the parking lot. How might our experience of worship be different if when we pulled into the parking lot on Sunday morning, everyone in the car said, *“I want to get out! I want to get out!”* because you were so glad to worship the Lord you couldn't wait to get into the presence of God who loves you and is good to you. I bet you would smile and maybe even laugh and you would be on your way to worshiping the Lord with gladness.

**Who is to worship?** All the earth.

**What attitude do we bring to worship?** Gladness.

**Why are we to worship God?** Because we belong to God who is good, loving, and faithful. God made us. We didn't make ourselves. There is no such thing as a self-made man or woman, though claiming to be may absolve God of some responsibility. Why do we worship – because we are made in the image of God in order to worship and serve the Lord. Revelation 5 says we were made to be “a kingdom of priests serving our God.” We are the sheep of God's pasture. The Lord is our Shepherd and we can trust and depend upon the Shepherd. We worship because of God's character of unfailing love and faithfulness.

The reason “*why*” we worship is that we recognize that the Lord is God and no one and nothing else is. That God made us, we belong to the Lord, we are God's people, God is our shepherd & we are sheep. Our response to God's gift of life and of personal relationship is joyful, glad worship. It is praise and singing and thanksgiving that in the brevity, fragility, and transitory nature of life – we can depend upon God's goodness, steadfast love, & faithfulness. Worship means “*to ascribe worth to,*” in Revelation 5, two of the three songs sing the worth of Christ who lived a life of sacrificial love.

When we are feeling overwhelmed, lost, turned around not knowing what we should do or what to think or where to go – we can restore our sanity and our hope by worshiping the Lord. A woman bought a new car loaded with high-tech options. The first time she drove the car in the rain, she turned a knob she thought would start the windshield wipers. Instead a message flashed across the dash: “*Drive car in 360 degrees.*” She had no idea what that meant, and so when she got home she read the car manual. While trying to turn on the windshield wipers, she had inadvertently turned off the internal compass, and the car had lost its sense of direction. To correct the problem, the car had to be driven in a full circle, pointed north, and then the compass had to be reset.

Each time we gather to worship, both privately and publicly, we are resetting our internal compass. We establish “true north” in our soul, remembering who God is and what God's word proclaims.

Finally, the **How of Worship** is we are to worship the Lord with joyful noise, with singing, thanksgiving, and praise, blessing God's name. Worship is a verb, it is an action word. When we come here on Sunday morning we shouldn't say we are going to church. Going to church means we're going to a place. Going to worship means we're going **to do something**. Worship in heaven is going to feature singing, movement, and praise around God who is the audience and everyone else in existence is a worshipper. A Christian author noted his concern that two of the primary ways that people speak about worship are self-focused. People say they come to be fed, but if you think about it, about the only times someone else feeds us is when we are a baby or we are physically incapacitated and unable to feed ourselves. Neither of these is the healthiest picture of mature worship. The other thing the writer noted is "brassiere theology." This is when people say they come to worship to be "uplifted." I don't say this to be critical of those who have used these phrases, when we properly worship God we do benefit, but we are always to remember that worship is first for God and not ourselves. Graham Kendrick, who wrote many songs we sing at our early service said,

*"Worship is first and foremost for God's benefit, not ours, though it is marvelous to discover that in giving God pleasure, we ourselves enter into what can become our richest and most wholesome experience in life."*

Worship that is focused on exalting God is inspiring and transforming. Worship that is focused on God gives us something to think about, moves our heart and emotions, and challenges us to keep moving forward on the adventure of discipleship even and most especially in times of anxiety and uncertainty. There is no mention in John's vision of worship in heaven of individual moods or preferences or circumstances. The focus of worship is Holy, Almighty God who has created all things and who is worthy to receive all glory, honor, and power. John reminds us that our worship here at BBC takes place in the larger context of worship around the world and in heaven.

**Who** is to be worshiped? The Lord alone. **Who** is to worship? All the earth.

**What** attitude do we bring to worship? Gladness.

**Why** are we to worship? Because we belong to God who is good, loving, and faithful.

**How** are we to worship? Passionately, with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and every ounce of our being.

So what are you going to say when you pull into the parking lot next Sunday?

**I want to get out!**