

Expressions of Worship 5-11-03

Romans 12:1; Psalm 28:2; 33:3; 46:10

Before we begin the message for today, I found a little ode to mothers on the Internet:

Everything that you've needed to know, somewhere along the line a mom probably taught you. Let's revisit some of those lessons:

My Mother taught me LOGIC: "If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the store with me," as well as, "If everyone else jumped off a cliff would you do it too?"

My Mother taught me MEDICINE: "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way."

My Mother taught me TO THINK AHEAD: "If you don't pass your spelling test, you'll never get a good job!"

My Mother taught me TO MEET A CHALLENGE: "What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you... Don't talk back to me!"

My Mother taught me HUMOR: "When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

My Mother taught me how to BECOME AN ADULT: "If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."

My mother taught me about GENETICS: "You are just like your father!"

My mother taught me about my ROOTS: "Do you think you were born in a barn?"

My mother taught me about the WISDOM of AGE: "When you get to be my age, you will understand," or, "I will explain it all when you get older."

My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION: "Just wait until your father gets home."

My mother taught me about RECEIVING: "You are going to get it when I get you home."

And the all time favorite thing my mother taught me, JUSTICE: "One day you will have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you. Then you'll see what it's like! I can't wait!" From a sermon by Paul Decker

May the Lord bless our mothers – without their patience and unconditional love, none of us would be here! That's because they would have killed us long ago.

This is that last in a series on worshipping God. Worshipping God is an issue of the heart but also becomes an expression in our lives. In both original languages of the Bible, the word that is translated 'worship' has two different sources. One speaks of the heart in submitted respect (*hawah, proskuneo*). The other is the physical action that results from the heart attitude (*abad, latreuo*). We sometimes use the word 'service'. A number of physical expressions are described in Scripture. We can't truly worship God without the affect of that worship expressing itself in some physical way in our life. This morning we will

look at some of the cultural expressions of worship in Biblical times. This will be an interactive service. Don't feel you have to, but I'll be inviting you to participate, we'll all do things together. You won't fall asleep in this service! Please don't feel intimidated but joyfully try out some of these expressions in Scripture.

Posture speaks as loudly as words. Sometimes it speaks even louder. Last week we saw how the very word 'worship' included the posture of kneeling and placing the head to the floor. We can worship without entering into that posture, but in Israel the two went so hand in hand that one described the other. Once upon a time, parents kneeled with their children beside their beds to pray with them. We lost something very precious when that tradition was discarded. Some of you were here when all who were able knelt one Sunday. I had a lot of comments that Sunday on how it affected you. It affects our attitude to have a posture of humility. If someone kneels before you, you drop your defenses. I guess that is why guys kneel when they propose. If you were really desperate you could kneel and put your head to the ground. Scripture encourages us to take this posture of humility before the Lord. One day, everyone will kneel. (Philippians 2:9-11)

⁶*Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;* Psalms 95:6 (NIV)

The Apostle Paul took this posture.

¹²*In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.* ¹³*I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.* ¹⁴*For this reason I kneel before the Father,* ¹⁵*from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.* Ephesians 3:12-15 (NIV)

I recall one time when I was speaking at one of Cornerstone Christian Academy's chapel service. As they sang in worship, the words of the song we sang earlier, Shout to the Lord, spoke to my heart so clearly I sensed the presence of the Lord. I was impressed to get on my knees. Pastors are just like anyone else. We wonder what people are going to think of us. Will they think I'm trying to impress them? Will they think I'm weird? Then I realized they already knew that. But the sense of the Lord's presence was so powerful that I got to the point that I didn't care what anyone thought. On my knees, I wept for the joy of knowing that the great God who made the heavens loves me. You don't have to wait for an especially moving moment. You can kneel before the Lord at anytime, just to remind yourself that you are His servant and He is the Master. It will help you to humble yourself before Him. Posture can help still our minds to focus on prayer.

Another posture mentioned in Scripture is the lifting of the hands. The Jewish people of Jesus' day usually lifted their hands to the heavens when they prayed.

²*Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.* Psalms 28:2 (NIV)

²*Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.* Psalms 134:2 (NIV)
Hands were lifted in a prayer of lament.

Commented [notes1]: ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Phil. 2:9-11 (NIV)

⁴¹*Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven, La. 3:41 (NIV)*

And even in the New Testament the tradition continued.

⁸*I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. 1 Timothy 2:8 (NIV)*

In our contemporary church culture many have labeled this as a Pentecostal tradition, but as you can see, it is a Biblical tradition. It is a posture of surrender. Any Western movie lovers out there? God doesn't have to hold a gun on us. Let's raise our hands in surrender and sing the chorus of *I Surrender All*.

Is the person that kneels or raises their hands more spiritual than those that don't? Let us consider the next posture to answer that question. Being still is a worship posture. We are so busy and active that to still ourselves requires great concentration. We have to let go of the busyness in our minds to focus on stillness.

⁴*Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah Psalms 4:4 (NKJV)*

¹⁰*"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalms 46:10 (NIV)*

Some of us have a tendency toward the contemplative type of worship. We need long pauses of silence in which to meditate on an expression. Others are more demonstrative. We would rather clap, jump and shout to express our joy in the Lord. Is one more spiritual than another? Of course not. One may be more suited to our natural inclination. In that case, we have to make an effort to express the other, but we should never imply that our natural tendency is the more spiritual way. That which humbles us is probably the more spiritual way.

Being still is a rare item in today's fast paced world. It is more of a need in our day than ever before. We have to take time to shut off all the noise and just get alone at Jesus' feet and hear what He would say to us. There is always something waiting to be done. Martha is always in the kitchen needing help. (Luke 10:38-42) If you wait till all is done, you will never be still. Just do it! The more you have to do, the more you need to take that still time, you might hear the best way to go about your busy day. God will set your priorities aright in the stillness. It shows that you believe God knows best. It shows that you believe that it is not by might or power but by His Spirit. (Zechariah 4:6) It is the last thing we want to do, but the most helpful thing we can do. Be still and know that He is God! Let us take a minute to be still. The Lord may have something to speak to your heart in this stillness.

The next expressions of worship are not so much posture as they are an expressive action. Clapping can be an expression of worship. We usually think of it as praise or adulation for a job well done. God always does a good job. We can praise and give Him adulation at anytime through clapping. Some traditions call it a clap offering. We can applaud God. We can clap with a song to express praise with our hands as well as with our voices.

¹*Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. Ps. 47:1 (NIV)*

Commented [notes2]: 38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zech. 4:6 (NIV)

Has God been wonderful in your life? Let's give God a standing ovation! He deserves it more than any performer or sports team!

That verse brings us to the next expression, a shout! I could sometimes hear my friend George as he drove through Oak Creek Canyon. "HALLELUJAH!" he'd shout as he drove by, index finger pointed to the sky. He was crazy or overflowing with the joy of the Lord, or a little bit of both. The Bible does call us peculiar people. (Titus 2:14) Look at how many times the Bible tells us to lift up a shout!

¹ *Shout with joy to God, all the earth!* Psalms 66:1 (NIV)

¹ *Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob!* Psalms 81:1 (NIV)

⁶ *Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.* Isaiah 12:6 (NIV)

¹¹ *And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.* Ezra 3:11b (NIV)

There are six more times in the KJV. Let's get real radical and try this one. If you have a reason in God to be joyful, let's give a shout of Hallelujah! Shall we? 1-2-3 Quiet is no more reverent than a shout of praise. It is just a different expression of praise.

One of the most common expressions of worship in Scripture is song.

⁹ *May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy.* Psalms 132:9 (NIV)

Over and over we are encouraged in Scripture to sing to the LORD and to sing for joy. (Psalms 9:11; 13:6; 30:4, 12; 66:2; 68:4, 32) Song is almost exclusively a form of worship in Christianity and Judaism. Other religions have chants and a very limited number of historical songs but nothing in comparison with the volume of songs written to and about Christ. We sing praise because of God's goodness in our lives, because of His perfections. We sing to one another about our great Savior. We sing to Him.

¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.* Col. 3:16 (NIV)

Christianity is inseparable from song. The angels sang at creation. (Job 38:7) We are to sing in joy and praise always.

¹⁹ *Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,* Eph. 5:19 (NIV)

Notice this passage says to make music in your heart. In at least six different passages we are told to sing to the LORD a new song. (Psalms 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10) The only way you can sing a new song is to write one. The old songs are wonderful, but what has put you in awe of God today? What new revelation have you had of His wonderful character? What new revelation of His grace and mercy have you seen? Sing about it. If your voice isn't up to it, you can do it in your heart. Can I give you a little homework

Commented [notes4]: 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:14 (KJV)

Commented [notes5]: ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done. Psalms 9:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 6 I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me. Psalms 13:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 4 Sing to the LORD, you saints of his; praise his holy name. Psalms 30:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 12 that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever. Psalms 30:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 2 Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious! Psalms 66:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ⁴ Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds-- his name is the LORD-- and rejoice before him. Psalms 68:4 (NIV) ... [1]

Commented [notes11]: 32 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, Selah Psalms 68:32 (NIV) ... [2]

Commented [notes12]: When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:7 (KJV) ... [3]

Commented [notes13]: ³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. Psalms 33:3 (NIV) ... [4]

Commented [notes14]: 1 Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Psalms 96:1 (NIV) ... [5]

Commented [notes15]: 1 Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ... [6]

Commented [notes16]: 9 I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, ... [7]

Commented [notes17]: 1 Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. ... [8]

Commented [notes18]: 10 Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you w ... [9]

assignment this week? Write a new song to the Lord. Pick a melody you know if you don't want to write one and put some words to it about your love for our faithful God. That is the source of many of the praise choruses today and many of the hymns of old. Someone was moved to tell of the grace of God in his or her life. They wrote a new song to the Lord and it caught on. Remember last week when I shared about extravagant worship? I mentioned how the things we do for God are like children's drawings to their parents. A new song to God may not be a masterpiece in the music world, but the heart of God treasures it. If God told us six times in Scripture to sing a new song to Him, He must desire it a great deal. Don't forget that homework. You can turn it in to Jesus.

We've looked at kneeling, raising the hands, being still, clapping, shouting, singing and singing a new song. Be open in your personal times of worship to the Spirit of God leading you to express your worship in one or more of these ways. You might find more expressions in Scripture. All our expressions should be flavored with reverence and awe. (Hebrews 12:28)

In closing, I want to add a fundamental ingredient to worship. It is our reasonable act of worship. Listen to:

Romans 12:1 (NIV) *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.*

Whatever our form of expression, whatever words we use, we are to worship in view of God's mercy toward us. Our response to the gift of mercy is to give our bodies as living sacrifices to God in return. That means that if He asks us to raise our hands, they are raised. If He asks us to be still, we are still. If He asks us for a new song, we pen it and sing it, for our body belongs to Him, an instrument to bring praise to the Creator of all things. That surrender of our body is a spiritual act of worship. This is the Greek word *latreia*. The heart bows in submission, *proskuneo*, and then the body is yielded to serve as the Lord directs, *latreia*.

Worship that does not affect our life and actions is shallow. That is why the Great Commandment of loving God is followed by the command to love our neighbor. We love Him in our heart, but then we express that love outwardly in loving deeds towards those He died for, our neighbors. A mother's love is not only in the heart but is expressed in her tender care, her concerned words, and her guiding hand in our life. The expressions of worship are just the beginning of outward expressions that come from a heart surrendered to the love of God. The next actions of worship are hugs, encouraging smiles, deeds of kindness, and actions of assistance that help the needy at the direction of the Holy Spirit. In as much as you have done it to one of the least, you have done it to Jesus.

(Matthew 25:40) I encourage you to let the Lord direct you this week in ways to express your worship.

Commented [notes19]: 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,
Heb. 12:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
Matt. 25:40 (KJV)

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Psalms 149:1 (NIV)

Page 4: [9] Commented [notes18] notes

¹⁰ Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.
Isaiah 42:10 (NIV)