

## **Then the Church (16): The Heart of a True Worshiper**

October 20, 2019

In the current message series titled "Then the Church", we have been looking at the early church that began 2000 years ago and how we could follow their example here at SDJCC. In the book of Acts we find the following description of how the early Christians lived at that time:

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46).

Here it says "every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts". They went to the temple every day, which is the equivalent to what coming to church is today. And the central purpose of coming to church every Sunday is to do what we are doing right now, to worship God.

In the original Greek New Testament, the word that is used for worship is "proskuneo". The verb is made up of the prefix "pros" which means toward one direction, and the word "kuneo" which means to kiss.

So the word worship literally means to give a kiss to God. In those days, a kiss was an expression of utmost respect. The word also means to prostrate oneself in reverence.

So it could be said that we are here to give a kiss of reverence and to bow before God, to express our utmost reverence to Him through this worship service.

In Mark 12:28-34, we find the following conversation between a teacher of the law and Jesus.

The man asked Jesus, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus replied "The most important one...is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'. The man replied "Well said, teacher...You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices". When Jesus saw that the man had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God".

Jesus said that the most important commandment is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”.

This passage shows us the kind of worship that God truly desires. The way we are to express our utmost reverence toward God is by loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

From this passage, I would like to talk about three important aspects of worshiping God. The first is to worship God with all of our heart.

### **Worship with all of our heart**

What does it mean to love God with all of our heart? What exactly is our heart? Our hands and feet are visible and could be touched, but we cannot see or touch our heart.

But we would say things like “I put my heart into this” to describe something that is important to us. Needless to say we’re not talking about our physical heart, but the phrase is used when we express our heart through our words and actions. In this way our heart is expressed in a way that is visible and tangible.

In Japan, people usually wear black to a funeral. Through their attire and by their words and actions, the attendants express their grief and sympathy towards the bereaved family.

Through their words and actions, they express their hearts. By this the bereaved family knows that others are grieving with them and are there to comfort them. People express their hearts in a way that could be seen and felt.

If on the other hand someone were to wear something inappropriate to the funeral or their words and actions were disrespectful, that too could be seen as an expression of that person’s heart.

Jesus said, we must love God with all our heart. Loving God with all your heart means to love Him wholeheartedly and with sincerity. The English translation reads, “Love Him with all your heart”.

This means that our heart must be fully committed to loving God. It is God’s desire that we worship Him with all our heart. And understanding this will affect our attitude toward worship.

Next year the Olympics will be held in Tokyo. Every athlete who is aiming for a medal has been training during the 4 years after the last Olympics. They train themselves so that they could perform in their best condition on the day and hour of their competition.

In a similar way, because I am a pastor, my week revolves around Sunday morning. I try to be mindful throughout the week so that I’m both physically and spiritually at my best at 9am on Sunday.

In the winter, if I have to go somewhere crowded, I will do everything I could to protect myself from catching a cold so that I won’t lose my voice. Still there are times when I would have to deliver a message when I’m not feeling my best.

One time someone told me that they always try to go to bed early on Saturday. The reason for this was that if they were to stay up too late on Saturday night and came to worship sleep-deprived and fatigued, they wouldn’t be able to focus their full attention on God or give Him the best worship they could give Him.

This person began preparing for the worship service on Saturday night. This person’s attitude toward worship taught me what it means to love and worship God with all your heart.

I’m not saying we should all do the same thing. But I would like all of us to reflect on what it means to truly worship God with all of our heart.

We must be careful not to become self-righteous. We are not to judge others for failing to do the same. We would be totally missing the point if we were to come to worship with that kind of self-righteous attitude. With the freedom we are given we should love God wholeheartedly. Let us love God and give Him reverence.

The second important point is to worship God with all our understanding.

### **Worship with all our understanding**

In the passage we read from Mark, when Jesus said “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”, the teacher of the law rephrased these words and said “with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength”.

He summarized the words “all your soul and all your mind” by saying “all your understanding”. And Jesus approved of this.

When we look at all the worship services being held around the world, we notice that each one has its own characteristic. In San Diego alone there are many worship services being held this morning, and each one is unique. Sometimes by attending these different services we are taught many things.

But a worship service is not just a gathering where people do whatever they feel like. Jesus said we must love God with “all your understanding”.

Sometimes, people misunderstand being spiritual as abandoning our intellect and acting impulsively while claiming to be led by the Holy Spirit. But this is far from the truth.

In previous messages I’ve mentioned about the book *The Case for Christ* written by author Lee Strobel. He studied law at Yale and was a long time legal editor of The Chicago Tribune, and as a journalist he backed his articles with extensive and meticulous research.

For a long time he has been suspicious of Christianity, so when his wife became a Christian, he felt the need to rescue her, and as an investigative journalist, he began to objectively examine the claims of Christianity.

His investigation led him to write the book “The Case for Christ”, which proved that Jesus’ claims about Himself are intellectually verifiable.

It is true that we worship an almighty God and His greatness surpasses our understanding. So the last step to having a personal relationship with God is to put our faith in Him. But we can also know God and come closer to Him through our intellect.

Each day I am convinced that the message of the Bible regarding the current state of the world and the things we experience day to day is practical and logical. Through our intellect we can verify that the best way to live our lives is to live by the Word of God.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of First Corinthians, Paul says that if we were to speak in tongues and utter unintelligible words in our worship service and nonbelievers came to the service, they would think we are out of our mind.

They would feel apprehensive toward Christianity, because what they would see and hear will be incomprehensible to them.

Paul emphasized that our worship services must also make sense to those who are not yet believers and wrote “I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding” (1 Cor. 14:15).

At the end of the chapter he also tells us that “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way”. The foundation of the Christian faith is the Bible. And the Bible is the Word of God. Every word that is written or spoken must be in a certain order for it to make sense to the other person. God’s word is the perfect embodiment of order.

The Word of God is at the center of our worship service. If we were to have a worship service where the Word of God is not taught but instead we are merely seeking an emotionally uplifting experience, then we are not worshipping God with all our understanding.

So let us worship God not only with our heart but also with the intellect He has given us.

The third and final point of today’s message is to worship God with all our strength.

### **Worship with all our strength**

What did Jesus mean when He commanded us to love God “with all your strength”?

Earlier we saw that to love with all our heart is to express our hearts through our words and actions. We show our heart through our small gestures and the way we speak.

But what does it mean to love God with all our strength? It is to do everything within our strength to show our love for God.

If someone says to another “I love you”, but doesn’t do anything to show their love for that person, there is no strength in their words.

If we truly love someone, we will put our love into action. If someone we love was sick in bed, we don’t just call out to them from the other room and tell them “I love you”.

To help them recover we would cook them a meal that’s easy to eat, go to the pharmacy to buy medicine, or take them to the emergency room even if it’s midnight. We will do everything within our strength to take care of the sick person.

We must put our heart into our worship services. And we must also worship with all our strength. A pastor must especially focus on studying and teaching the Word of God with all his strength. In the same way the praise team and the worship MC’s must put all their strength into what they do. It is the same for those who cleanup in and around the church building every week before the service.

Sometimes the act of attending a worship service itself will require all our strength. When we try to put God first in our lives, we will face many challenges and obstacles. And we must use all our strength to put God first. We must love God with everything we got.

In the early church, the believers kept meeting together in the temple courts. This was the source of their strength. They reflected on themselves before God, received strength from the Lord, and returned back to where they lived. They faithfully repeated this pattern.

We too must continue to worship the Lord without ceasing. Every Sunday, we are here to worship God with all our heart, all our understanding, and all our strength.

We begin each week before the Lord, walk with Him each day of the week, and when Sunday comes, we worship Him with all our heart, understanding, and strength.

Blessed is the person who lives according to this pattern and have made worshiping God their number one priority in life. When we conform to this pattern physically and spiritually, our life will be renewed day by day and we will reap many blessings as a result.

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Once we know that this promise is true, we can never go back to living any other way.

Let us pray.