

Covenant

Summer Series... *Seven Summits: Elevating our Worship Life*

Looking at several key passages in the NT that describe the essence of worship and how we are to enter in.

Worship gratefully, sacrificially, freely, exclusively, and today...

Worship Preeminently

As we are using seven summits as a backdrop for elevating our worship life, we don't want to give the impression that worship is encapsulated in the mountain top experiences, in those breath-taking moments of ecstatic joy and that we live from mountain top to mountain top and gut through the rest.

Lea and I love to go on vacations where there are mountains (and beaches), but especially mountains and often I have a priority of getting to the peak and missing the journey.

Distracted by stuff going on down below (decisions to make, problems to solve) and miss the journey.

(Lost ring) So worried and focused about what is missing and miss the journey.

(Unlocked car) So worried about what could be lost and miss the journey.

Distractions, worry, anxiousness, misaligned priorities and assumptions, busyness...

There are many things that can pull us away from the one thing that is needed... abiding with Jesus.

Luke 10.38-42

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰But 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, ⁴²but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

SLIDE

Three people in the story.

Mary

We find Mary at the feet of Jesus... listening... eyes fixed on Jesus.

Posture of worship.

The Gospel writers describe Mary at the feet of Jesus on three occasions.

In John 11, it is **a posture of helplessness and powerlessness, grief and sadness.**

Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus has died and Mary is so overwhelmed with grief that when she hears Jesus has arrived, she remains in the house until Jesus sends for her and then she falls at His feet in desperation and complete exhaustion and possible anger... "Lord, if you had been here, he wouldn't have died."

In the next chapter, John 12 which Travis will unpack next week, Mary is at the feet of Jesus as a...

Posture of surrender, attributing worth and glory and devotion.

From last week: The posture of worship is "Hands and knees with face to the ground, acknowledging their glory and putting yourself in their service."

*Worship song: "Falling on my knees in worship, giving all I am to seek your face. Lord all I am is yours."
John the Baptist - "I must decrease. Jesus must increase."*

But in our passage today, Mary sits at the Lords' feet, listening to His every word with wide-eye wonder.
It is a posture of closeness. Of friendship. Of sheer delight and trust and love.

In Mary, we see the posture of worship.

In her sister we see what gets in the way of worship.

Martha.

We find Martha in the kitchen... working... eyes distracted by the preparations that had to be made.
"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

All on her.

Resentment.

Where's Lazarus?

Who do you identify with the most in this story?

Most of us... it's Martha.

*Cleaning up dog poop at 2:30 this morning in the bedroom and dining room and living room.
I was upset about many things. 31 spots. Light tan carpet.

There are so many needs.

There is a lot to do.

There is a lot going on.

We need to be efficient and proficient and hospitable.

We want to be good stewards of time and resources.

We need somebody to wash these pots and pans, doggone it.

Martha was so busy doing something for Jesus, that she missed being with Jesus.

5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman.

How the person "receives" love but our default is usually to express love and kindness in the way we would want to receive it.

Our youngest has always loved to give sweet gifts... as in, loaded with sugar.

Sometimes, in our effort to be kind to someone, we are kind in our own way, instead of considering the kind of kindness that they really need.

We make assumptions.

When Jesus arrived at Martha and Mary's house, Martha kicked into hospitality mode. Jesus and his disciples must be hungry.

But what Jesus really wanted, maybe needed, was the peace and quiet of time with friends.

*** Side note on Martha...**

John 11 (Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead)...

Martha is the one who steps out in faith.

She goes to Jesus while Mary, stuck in grief, can't do it.

Martha is the one who makes a statement of faith.

"I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

John 12... Passage for next week so I don't want to spoil it, but they are back at the house and Martha is back in the kitchen AND it's all good.

But in this story, Martha needs some realignment.

Which brings us to the third person in the story... Jesus.

Jesus says: "Martha, Martha."

Says it twice... to get her attention.

Distracted. (per-ee-spah'o) - to draw away, to be over-occupied, too busy.

Anxious & troubled. Worried. Caring for. Turbulent. Disturbed. Thrown into confusion.

Matthew 6:25 - 34

Don't worry. Don't be anxious - **in GK 'to pull apart'**

Worry pulls us away from God's embrace.

What ifs?

Worry keeps us in a box.

"You are worried and upset by many things...only one thing is needed."

NEEDED... Let that word sink in a bit.

Martha was **distracted, entitled, worried** because her **perception** of what was NEEDED was **distorted and blurry**. It was urgent. It was **tangible**. It was **doing**... something. It was **practical**. It was the **reality of work** as opposed to the **luxury of leisure**. The needs were **overwhelming**. There were a **million things** to do but Jesus said no... there is only **one thing** that's needed...to be consumed by Christ.

Many Things. / One Thing.

Worship Preeminently...

Above all. In particular. Chiefly. Distinctively.

Psalm 95:6-7 (NLT)

"Come, let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,
for he is our God.

We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care."

One thing is needed.

Psalm 27:4

"I'm asking God for one thing,
only one thing:

To live with Him in His house
my whole life long

I'll contemplate His beauty;

I'll study at His feet. "

One Thing

There is another place that phrase shows up in the Gospel...

Luke 18.

Rich Young Ruler wants to follow Jesus.

Jesus lays out a bunch of commands and the rich young ruler can barely contain himself...

"All of these I have kept since I was a boy!"

In other words, "If you look at my resume' you'll see I'm pretty qualified."

Jesus *looked* at him and *loved* him and said, "**One thing** you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

One thing you lack... can get **lost** in and amongst the **many things** you **don't** lack.

You might be an extremely **gifted** person, or you're constantly doing **good things**... you're **helping** people, you're **innovative, responsible, hard worker, model citizen, sensitive and caring** friend or spouse, you're not **addicted** to pornography or reality tv shows, you try to **pray** and read the **Bible**, you come to church on Sundays...

Yet, Jesus looks at us and **loves** us and says... '**There's one thing you lack.**'

And that **one** thing could be **anything** but for you, for me, it's that ONE THING and that one thing has the potential to distract, confuse, overwhelm us spiritually... it's the thing that keeps us from following Jesus with **everything** that we **have** and that we **are** and that we **do**.

Seek First...

We want to do something significant. We want to change the world. We want to make a difference.

We want to do big things for God. We want an extraordinary life.

The trouble is when we are more focused on doing big things *for* Jesus OR many things *for* Jesus instead of the ONE THING of simply being *with* Jesus.

Often we are more concerned with external reputation or performance or metrics or efficiencies or achievements... than with internal transformation... of resting in the presence of Jesus.

The message of the Gospel is not that God helps those who help themselves (that's not Scripture), but rather that God helps the helpless because they are helpless, that on the front end, there is nothing we can do to merit God's blessing. "By grace we have been saved."

Our desire and motivation to do something significant is absorbed by the significance of the cross, reframed by the grace of God, and mobilized in step with and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When you have experienced His grace, priorities and perspectives are radically altered and Jesus says when God's Kingdom becomes our priority we can trust Him for the rest - not just to provide what we need, but to give those "second things" a Kingdom-centered purpose and place.

When our eyes are fixed on Christ, when our posture is one of open-handed reception and humility, we are given the gift of an extraordinary life in the midst of the ordinary day to day, ongoing walk with Christ... thoroughly content to sit at his feet.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

We used to sing this song in my church growing up... **'Turn your eyes upon Jesus.** Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.' It's a bit disconcerting to look somebody in the face full on even if their face is wonderful. [if you looked at each other right now...]

But the PREEMINENT, DISTINCTIVE, ONE THING that Jesus said was THE THING, was what Jesus called out as the essence of worship....

Attentiveness. Attunement. Adoration.

Seeing Jesus as He really is. Getting beyond my perceptions of Him. Getting beyond reading about him for a class or Bible Study. Getting beyond this nice safe All-American Jesus that is predictable and boring.

Maybe we are reluctant to look him in the eyes, maybe we have never really looked Jesus in the eyes... There are all sorts of reasons for this...

Weighed down by our guilt and sin.

Weighed down by our responsibility to get it perfect.

Ashamed / Apathetic / Confused

Distracted by schedules or even an Inappropriate attachment with good things.

Uncomfortable with Intimacy.

Look at my eyes.

Singular focus.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus who is full of Grace and truth.

Ephesians 1:18-19

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

David Henderson's dear friend and Billy Graham's brother in law, Leighton Ford wrote:

"Grace opens my eyes as I wait so that I may see both Giver and gift, and be grateful. Each of us is called to a life patterned by Christ. A life not shaped by inner compulsions, or captive to outer expectations, but drawn by the inner voice of love. To listen to this voice, we need to pay careful attention to where our inner and outer selves disconnect and where they need to come together in a beautiful pattern that reflects Jesus, whose inner life with his Father and outer life of ministering to others were very much one."

Colossians 3:2-3 (message)

"Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ. See things from his perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life... is with Christ in God. He is your life."

Fix your eyes

And when you turn your eyes on Jesus, look at His eyes, His eyes are on you but once He has your gaze, He will turn our attention to those around us and to people who have no clue to look at Him in the first place... you will get to be the hands and feet and ears and voice... the heart of Jesus.

Eugene Peterson...

"Worship doesn't satisfy our hunger for God, it wets our appetite. The more we see of Jesus the more we know there's still so much to be seen. The more we see God's perfection, the more we realize the imperfection all around us. True worshipers look outward, noticing the world they live in and longing to make a difference to the injustice, poverty and pain that surround them. A worshipper of Jesus cannot turn a blind eye to these things. "

Don't just do something... sit there.

Don't just sit there... do something.

Worshipping at the feet of Jesus leads us into the proverbial "washing one another's feet" as well. It's not a pendulum swing from the kitchen to the chapel... from singing worship songs to feeding the poor... it is a whole life abiding with Jesus.

Case Study: Brother Lawrence

17th century a 50 year old guy named Nicholas walked into a monastery in Paris and joined up. He had been a soldier, had dealt with depression very heavily for 10 years and then God transformed his life. Nicholas took on the name Lawrence and took on a passion for the presence of Jesus.

He got assigned to the kitchen where the most mundane took on a sacredness. People loved to hang out with him because He believed and lived the fact that the presence of God was continual.

Called God "Lord of all pots and pans and things." Nothing was dull because he lived everyday in expectation and anticipation that God was going to do astonishing things.

"We must study ever to regard God and His Glory in all that we do, and say, and undertake. This is the end that we should set before ourselves, to offer to God a sacrifice of perfect worship in this life, as we hope to do through all eternity." - Brother Lawrence.

For Brother Lawrence, practicing the presence of God was as real in the kitchen as in the sanctuary. As Mary demonstrates in this story, hospitality means giving who we are - giving our time, our undistracted attention, our presence.

Which leads us to Communion...

COMMUNION

Throughout the Gospel stories, Jesus received hospitality from others. On one occasion, Zacchaeus, the tax collector, unexpectedly found himself welcoming Jesus into his home. On the road to Emmaus, the two disciples asked Jesus to stay and eat with them, even though they didn't realise that it was Him at the time. And here were Jesus' friends, Martha and Mary, welcoming him into their home. On every occasion, having received hospitality from others, Jesus somehow became the host.

JESUS THE GUEST. JESUS THE HOST.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

The word "communion" is defined as the *act of sharing, or holding in common; participation.*

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Participation.

100 Portraits - "We want to worship God. We are convinced that God is not satisfied with being 'far off'. We want the opportunity to pray to Him, dream about Him, cry in front of Him, question Him, and search for Him. If God really cares then we believe that He will reveal Himself to us in the middle of the expressions, the worship, and the participation..."

In the words of Travis and quoted by Brently...

"Worship is bringing all that you are before all that God is and allowing that communion to change your life."

We invite you to take the bread, the body of Christ and to drink the cup of the New Covenant, the blood of Jesus.

"...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." - Hebrews 12:2

There will be days when it is so hard to focus.

There is just so much going on, so many things spinning, so many tasks and expectations and responsibilities... and you are just tired.

Fix your eyes on the blessing of the grace of Jesus

Life drops out from under you and all you can see is this situation that you're in and you want to see the big picture of how it's going to turn out but you can't and it's overwhelming.

Fix your eyes on the blessing of the grace of Jesus

There will be days when what's going on in the world is too much and you can't take it and you wonder how on earth we got into such a mess and as creative as you are you can't figure out how to fix it.

Fix your eyes on the blessing of the grace of Jesus

There will be days when apathy creeps in and you don't feel motivated to worship, you have no passion in your life to look at God's words to you. You feel numb and you want to scrap this whole thing.

Fix your eyes on the blessing of the grace of Jesus

There will be days when people beat you up emotionally or verbally. Days when you feel isolated and lonely.

Fix your eyes on the blessing of the grace of Jesus

To look someone in the eye is only half the story. They are looking at you as well and it's within this pretext that you are ultimately exposed and soul exposure is the deepest form of intimacy.

How many times throughout the Gospels it says "Jesus turned and looked."

How is He looking at you?

What do His eyes do to you?

What will change in the deepest parts of you when you dare to return the gaze?

Worship equals life it's being leveled in the moment, the sacredness of here, mundane becomes a sacrament, embrace reduces fear, joy returns and my lament gets buried in the song.

And my place is on my face, when I cannot wrap my mind around the grace I can't erase, awakened by a deeper kind of love.