**Worship The Way It Was Meant To Be**

**Main Text: Genesis 22:1-14**

**Big Idea: Worship is about more than singing; it’s about living like God is King over your life.**

**Ice Breaker: Talk briefly about what you appreciated most in our All-Worship Sunday.**

The Bible was written in ancient versions of Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). In each of those languages, there were several words that are translated by using the English word “worship”. Those different words show us different aspects of what worship is. But the majority of the times that a word is translated “worship”, the word translated is one of four words -- “shachah (shaw-KAW)” (Hebrew) and “proskuneo (pros-kyu-NEH-oh)” (Greek) are a pair of words that mean the same thing, and “abad (ah-BAHD)” (Hebrew) and and “latrueo (lah-TRUE-oh)” (Greek) are a pair of words that mean a different “same thing”. Let’s look at what those words mean for our worship:

**(1) “Shachah” & “Proskuneo” -- acknowledging proper relationship**

*Genesis 37:5-8 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. (6) He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: (7) We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down* [SHACHAH] *to it." (8) His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.*

*Acts 10:22-26 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." (23) Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. (24) The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. (25) As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence* [PROSKUNEO]*. (26) But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."*

The movie musical, “The King and I”, is about a British teacher, Anna, who is hired by the King of Siam to educate his children. In one scene, the King has some fun with Anna while teaching her to “mind her place” -- he tells her that no one around him is ever allowed to have their head higher than his; and then he purposely moves so that she has to move up and down to keep her head below his, even lying on his side to force her to move her head all the way to the floor. *[LEADER -- have two people enact that behavior, one being the king and the other being Anna, with “the King” moving up and down around the room in such a way that “Anna” has to keep his/her head lower than the King’s. It’s fun.]*

That’s a good picture of what both of these words express, and we see it in the Joseph passage we just read -- the idea of bowing before a superior. “Shachah” means exactly that; “proskuneo” is most directly translated, “to kiss the hand toward” (an example of that is when a person bows before the Pope and kisses his ring.) When we “shachah” or “proskuneo” before another person, we are acknowledging that the person before us is our superior, and that we owe that person our allegiance and obedience.

In the Bible, both words are sometimes translated “bow, and sometimes, “worship”. They often appear in a sentence that uses OTHER words to say, “bow down” (like in Acts 10:25, above), to emphasize that the PURPOSE of the bowing is to **acknowledge proper relationship**. When we worship God, whatever way that we do it should ALWAYS, in some way, show that we acknowledge that God is our King, our Superior, our Lord, and that we recognize that we are under his rule.

**Q: In the passage about Joseph we read, why did Joseph’s brothers react to his dreams the way they did?** [They knew that bowing down before Joseph meant that they were acknowledging his superiority over them, and they weren’t going to take that from their kid brother. “When higher-ranking family members bowed before the next-to-youngest son, the family order went out of balance. (Robert Wetmore)”]

**Q: Two-Parter: Why would Cornelius have bowed down before Peter, and why was Peter alarmed by that?**

**Q:** “Shachah meant that worshipers knew how they should act toward their Lord. It was not a mystical experience or an emotional encounter. Shachah was an attempt to bring relational harmony between the King of the universe and those whom He had created in His image. [Robert Wetmore]” **What IS my part in bringing relational harmony between God and me?**

**Q:** “Shachah” and “proskuneo” are less about WHAT we do, and more about WHY we do it. **When we’re in a worship gathering, why might “the WHY of worship” be more important than “the WHAT of worship”?**

**Q: If the WHY is more important than the WHAT, then how could we show that in what we choose to do in our worship gatherings?**

**(2) “Abad” and “Latrueo” -- living out our worship**

*Deuteronomy 10:12-13 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve* [ABAD] *the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, (13) and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?*

*Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your true and proper worship* [LATRUEO]*.*

“Shachah” and “proskuneo” are mostly about the WHY of worship. THESE two words, “abad” and “latrueo”, are more about the WHAT of worship -- the things we do BECAUSE OF our understanding and attitude about God. They refer to the “living out of worship”, the “sacrifice of service” that is our worship.

“Abad” and “latrueo” are partly about the things we do together on Sunday mornings -- singing, praying, listening, giving, serving. The word “liturgy” (the form or pattern of worship that a church uses) comes from “latrueo”. But one thing that both of these passages show is that the WHAT of worship is SOOOO much bigger than that. Perhaps the biggest problem with many Christians’ worship is that we often think that what we do in the church building on Sunday morning is all that worship is. But read the Deuteronomy and Romans verses again, and then address the following questions.

**Q: Keeping those verses in mind, make as complete a list as you can together of the parts of our lives where we should be “latrueo-ing”.**

**Q: Now, still keeping those verses in mind, take two or three of those areas you listed in the last question, and talk about how we “latrueo” in those areas.**  [For instance, how do we worship God by serving him in the way we live our family life, or in the way we approach our job or career, or in the way we build our budget and spend our money, or interact with our neighbors?]

**Q: What problems do we invite when we try to confine our “abad/latrueo” worship to just Sunday morning at church?**

**(3) An awful, beautiful picture of worship**

*Genesis 22:1-14 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. (2) Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love -- Isaac -- and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." (3) Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. (4) On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. (5) He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship* [SHACHAH] *and then we will come back to you." (6) Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, (7) Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (8) Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. (9) When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (10) Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. (11) But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. (12) "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (13) Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. (14) So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."*

One of the ways that Bible scholars better understand the Bible’s meaning is a principle called “the Law of First Mention”. They pay close attention to the FIRST TIME that a particular word is used in the Scriptures, and what it means there. Even if the word sometimes needs to be translated in other ways to fit other contexts, the way it’s used in its first instance sets the tone for how that word should be primarily understood.

In Genesis 22:5, we find the First Mention of a Bible word being translated “worship”. “We will worship and then we will come back to you.” What do we learn about worship from that verse, and the story around it? Let’s let David Jeremiah tell us about it:

“Think what Abraham was prepared to do. Abraham has climbed the mountain with his son, whom he intends to offer in sacrifice. Most of us recognize this story with a twinge of pain -- one of the most gut-wrenching accounts in all the Scriptures. God has allowed Abraham to wait for many years to have this child -- not only his beloved son, but the precious seed of a promised nation -- and now the obedient father is asked to place the boy on the altar and give him back to God . . .

“The whole Abraham / Isaac incident gives us probably the most moving and horrific and beautiful example in the Old Testament of the true nature of spiritual obedience, of worship – “The faithful worshipper will obediently surrender to God Whatever He asks, trusting in God’s promises of provision and blessing.”

“Abraham had to come to that altar completely as he was, questions and all. “Here am I, Lord,” he must have said. “I don’t understand. I’m not without deep fear and misgivings. But obedience is my true sacrifice. It’s obedience that I lay on this stone before you. Obedience and trust. You will never fail in Your promise, and I must never fail in my obedience.”

“Abraham laid all these things on that altar. He laid down his questions, his confusion, and his emotions. He laid down his faith and his obedience. It was all a test of priorities, to reveal what finally stood, what Abraham would cling to when all else was stripped violently away. How would you pass such a test? Would you worship in complete obedience if all else in the world were removed -- if your every worldly possession, every beloved relationship, every fond hope and dream were lost to you? “What would God ask you to place on the altar of testing in your life?” It’s quite a question for you and for me, but perhaps it’s the central question of worship.”

**Q: What if your worship of God demanded of you the thing that you value most in the world? Could you do it?**

**Q: To what extent DOES your worship of God demand of you the thing that you value most in the world?**

**Q: What connection do you see in this to the words of Jesus, from Matthew 6:21: “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”?**

How was Abraham able to do this? We find the answer in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11:17-19:

*Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, (18) even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (19) Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

David Jeremiah again: “It’s quite simple: Abraham had received a promise. He had the assurance of God that Isaac would be part of a great line of people who would bless the world. But now God was asking for the child to be given in sacrifice. God doesn’t break His promises, so the only conclusion left open to Abraham was that the Lord would have to raise Isaac from the dead! Such was the trusting spirit of Abraham, willing to literally put his faith under the knife.”

**Q: Other cultures of Abraham’s time often sacrificed their children to their “gods”. What differences were there between what those people did and what Abraham was going to do?** [It’s a matter of FEAR vs. HOPE. Those other cultures sacrificed their children out of fear of those “gods” and what would happen to them if they didn’t. Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac because he was certain that God would keep his promises, and make Isaac the father of a host of nations. FEAR vs. HOPE.]

**Q: What has God asked you to give up in the worship that is your life that you’ve had to trust Him deeply for?**

Maybe some of your answers to these questions might change when you learn that this mountain, where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son, is the same mountain on which the city of Jerusalem would be built; the same mountain where the Temple sacrifices would be made for hundreds of years; the same mountain on which God’s Son, Jesus, would be crucified.

**Q: God asked Abraham to do just what God knew that He Himself would do to save mankind -- offer His own Son Jesus as a sacrifice for sin. How does that affect any of your answers to the questions about this story of Abraham and Isaac?**

**NEXT STEPS:**

This Sunday morning, get up a little earlier than usual, and spend some extra time preparing your (and your family’s) heart for worship the next morning. Talk about (or consider deeply) why you’re going to the church building to gather with others for worship together. And talk about (or consider deeply) what it means to worship by the way you live, as well as by the things you do at church that morning.