

Marks of the Church: A worshipping community

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Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. This, says Jesus, is one of the great commandments.

But how do we love God? How do we love someone who has no needs?

Does God need our praise? In the old days, people used to sacrifice animals to God as an offering of love and awe. Did God need those sacrifices?

Not at all, and the wise in the old days knew it, for God told them (Psalm 50):

I will accept no bull from your house, nor he-goat from your folds.

For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.

I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine.

Yet God commanded us to worship. Why is that?

I think the deep answer is that *we need it*. As John wrote, We love, because God first loved us.

The English word “worship” comes from the older English form, “worth-shp”, or “worthiness.” In worship, we acknowledge that God is worthy of praise; that the world in which we live and move and have our being is a world that God created. That we feel love because God brought love to us.

If I tried to pretend that gravity didn’t exist, my life would be a lot worse off. I’d hurt myself quickly, and if I keep on believing gravity didn’t exist, you’d be right to call me at least a little bit crazy.

“Here I am, just floating around. Oh, I’m sitting down right now, but I could float if I wanted to.”

Likewise, to live in God’s creation and imagine we don’t is an act of silliness and perversity.

Granted, God isn’t usually as obvious as gravity, but once we acknowledge that God is who the scriptures say God is, it would be an act of foolishness to not consider how that should affect our behavior, and worship God.

We are the called-out ones, those assembled together because we believe in God as revealed by Jesus Christ. And we don’t wish to be fools — so obviously, a mark of the church is that we worship God.

Further, we worship God *together*. It is not enough to worship God alone in our rooms or as we walk through the woods, although those are indeed good things. Why not? Well, we are also told to love our neighbors as ourselves, and I need you and you need me to help each other worship God as well as we possibly can. Do not neglect, says the scripture, the assembling of yourselves together, as is the habit of some. As Ephesians says,

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

So, let me ask you to write down one or two times, or one or two practices where you really felt you were worshipping God.

Let's share these.

And let me ask you another question: How can we bring those practices more into our little church?

Sing!