

Worship Foundations, Part 5: “Through Jesus”

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We started back in August making our way through a worship series that we’re calling “Worship Foundations.”

We’ve invested 4 weeks so far towards trying to establish a Biblical foundation for our worship. We’ve considered God’s WORTH, God’s HOLINESS, and God’s GLORY. We’ve talked about the God-centeredness of God, and seen that

“Worship happens when His glory becomes my joy!”

So, I think we’re close to being ready to start building on our foundation. But we’re still missing a couple of stones, a couple of key foundational elements. God willing, we’ll look at one of these today, and the other next Sunday.

This morning, I want us to spend just a moment considering the foundational truth that **all worship goes “through Jesus.” Through Jesus.**

Apart from Jesus Christ, we CANNOT worship God. The Bible says:

Jude 25

To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, **through Jesus Christ** our Lord - before all time, and now, and forever.

The Bible tells us that we are to:

1 Peter 2:5b

...offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God **through Jesus Christ.**

The Bible says:

Hebrews 13:15

Through Jesus let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God - the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

Our “sacrifice of praise to God” must go through Jesus.

Every act of worship, every whisper of praise, either goes to God through Jesus,

or not at all.

Ok... why?? Why “through Jesus, or not at all?”

That sounds awfully narrow - what’s that about? The Bible says:

1 Timothy 2:5

There is one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

A mediator?... at first that sounds kinda odd.

A “mediator” sounds like someone you bring in when there’s a standoff – like, between some corporation and organized labor.

A mediator is who comes in when you’ve got a dispute or a conflict between two parties that seemingly cannot be reconciled.

Why would I need a mediator between me and God? God loves me, right?

Yes, He does.

But, the simple fact that we don’t find that totally AMAZING is very telling.

“God loves you” should NOT be some trite bumper sticker slogan, (like “everybody knows that”) No, “God loves you” should be the most surprising, most astounding thing we’ve ever heard!

The fact that we’re not amazed that God loves us speaks volumes about how drastically we under-estimate the weight and gravity and offensiveness of our sin.

We’ve been talking for weeks now about God’s powerful commitment to His own glory - how important this is to Him, how fiercely devoted God is to His name being honored and praised.

And who are we?? WE are the people who drag His name through the mud time after time – disobeying Him, disregarding Him, preferring other things to Him.

Here’s a trivial illustration, but I think it might help make the point...

If you follow NFL football, you’re probably familiar with the “terrible towel” incident between the Titans and the Steelers.

Steeler fans have these yellow towels that they wave at games.

These towels represent their passion for their team, almost like a flag or something.

Last year, when the Titans beat the Steelers, some of the Titans’ players were shown on tv throwing these Steeler towels in the mud and stomping on them.

A year later, commentators are still talking about that, how the Titans stomped on the “sacred” towel and dishonored the Steelers.

And I get that it’s a big deal to a Steelers fan, but remember that we’re talking about a “ball game” here... it’s only a game, and none of this is of any true significance.

But our sin is NOT a game, our sin is a matter of GREAT significance.

Because we are guilty, not of dishonoring some football team, but of dishonoring the Creator of the universe!

When we sin, we’re declaring, “yes, I know there is a God who created me, and He deserves my obedience, and I should delight in Him and make His glory and honor the purpose of my life, but....

Right now, I don't really want to do that – so, God, I'm just gonna throw Your glory in the mud and kind of stomp on it as I walk away from You to go my own direction and do things my way.”

THAT'S what takes place EVERY TIME WE SIN.
God's magnificent glory, His great name, dragged through the mud.
And we do this over and over again. We are ALL guilty.

And guess Who the Judge is!! (exactly! God.) (the offended party is the Judge!)

Now... any judge who lets guilty criminals go free just because he feels like it is NOT a righteous judge. We wouldn't put up with a human judge like that for a moment! You can't just let guilty criminals go free – that's not justice!

Well, our God is far more righteous and just than the greatest human judge who ever lived. God absolutely does NOT “sweep sin under the rug!”
He does not just “look the other way” at our continual offenses towards His glorious name! (as though they are no big deal)
God WILL have justice!

So... for you and I to be guilty of sin, and then for us to presume we're just going to stroll into God's presence and worship Him?... NO WAY! That ain't happening!
We're not fit, we're not acceptable! Our sin is a HUGE obstacle to worshipping God!

That's the idea behind the OT Temple.
God provided the Temple as a place for His people to come and to make offerings to atone for their sin. God prescribed certain offerings (doves, lambs, oxen) that He would accept as a substitute sacrifice.
It was like the judgment that the people deserved was transferred to a substitute who suffered in their place, an animal whose blood was shed and whose life was given to pay for people's sin. This was the OT means that made it possible for people to approach GOD in worship, so that their prayers could be heard and their worship could be acceptable to Him.

Well, what about us? What do we do? We obviously don't bring animal sacrifices.
So how do we approach God?
Is it that we just show up, presuming ourselves to be presentable and pretty much acceptable as we are? (And really, God should just appreciate us being here?...)

That's not the gospel at all!
The gospel says that every one of us needs to be rescued!
We're not presentable; we're not acceptable! We need to be saved from God's justice, saved from His righteous anger and His fierce jealousy for His glory.
We need GRACE! We need a MEDIATOR!
And that's exactly what's been provided for us in Jesus Christ.

Jesus served as our “mediator” by willingly enduring God’s wrath against our sin on the cross. Christ Himself, completely innocent, became our substitute, He received our punishment, and then God raised Him from the dead to demonstrate the complete sufficiency of His sacrifice.

Our sin was paid for. God’s justice was satisfied. THAT is the gospel!
And THAT is the means by which WE can now approach God in worship – through Jesus! The Bible says:

1 Peter 3:18

Christ died for sins once for all, the Innocent for the guilty,
that He might bring us to God.

Ephesians 2:13

Though you once were far away from God, now you have been brought near to Him because of the blood of Christ.

You see, Christ died, not only to save us from our sins, but also to bring us to God!
It is only “through Jesus” that we can COME & WORSHIP!
We can draw near to God!

In the OT Temple, there was this whole system of courts and rooms which became progressively more restricted as to who could enter and when.

The innermost room was called the Holy of Holies.

It was blocked with a thick curtain.

Only the High Priest could enter this room, and even he could enter only once each year, on the Day of Atonement.

Every year he did this, offering blood sacrifices to atone for the peoples’ sin.

The whole design of the Temple vividly communicated the “holiness” or “separateness” of God, the barrier that sin creates between God and man, and the terrible cost to bridge that barrier.

That was the temple. Then came Jesus.

Matthew’s gospel says that, when Christ breathed his last breath on the cross:

Matthew 27:51

The curtain of the temple (the barrier into the Holy of Holies) was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Do you get the powerful symbolism here?? The Bible says that:

Hebrews 9:11-12

When Christ appeared as a high priest ...He entered once for all into the holy place ...by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

In His death on the cross, Jesus takes the position of High Priest, figuratively entering the Holy of Holies, to offer not the blood of a sacrificial animal, but His own blood.

And He secures redemption - not just for a year, but for eternity!

So that now...

Hebrews 10:10

We have been **made holy through the sacrifice** of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all.

Hebrews 10:19-20

We have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us...

Can you see that this should not be?!

I shouldn't have any "confidence to enter the holy place!"

I should be terrified to approach God! I am sinful, GOD holy... I should expect to be consumed!

But, because of the blood of Jesus, I can draw near to God and worship Him.

So, you see, **the Cross is foundational to worship.**

We cannot possibly understand worship without understanding the Cross.

Apart from the Cross, we would have no access to God at all!

But...

Ephesians 2:18

Through Jesus both Jews and Gentiles have access in one Spirit to the Father.

It's only through Jesus that we can even approach God.

And, it's only through Him that our worship is acceptable to Him.

The Bible says that our spiritual sacrifices are:

"acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

So, although we sing & play instruments & dance & speak with all the skill we can muster, it's NOT the excellence of our offering that makes our worship acceptable.

It's the excellence of Jesus.

Our worship is accepted by God, NOT on the basis of anything WE have done, but on the basis of what JESUS has done.

And this will never change!

Even in Heaven, Christ's work on the cross is the focus of worship!

In The Revelation, John writes that, in Heaven, they worship Jesus singing:

Revelation 5:9

"Worthy are You... for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your **blood** men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

You'd think maybe in Heaven, with eternity in the presence of God before us,

it might be time to put the cross behind us, look past it, maybe kinda “get over it.” But NO!
John writes:

Revelation 5:11-12

I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders;
...thousands upon thousands, saying:
“Worthy is **the Lamb that was slain** to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and
honor and glory and blessing.”

The hosts of Heaven never get over it! And neither should we.

Jesus said:

John 14:6b

“No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Hebrews 7:25

He is able to save forever those who draw near to God **through Him**...

Hebrews 13:15

Through Jesus let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God...

Through Jesus.

This is the truth that rips down the curtain...
that destroys all the barriers...
that nails open the doorway into the presence of God!...

That all those who are in Christ may COME... and WORSHIP.

PRAYER:

Father, this morning, through Jesus... we draw near.
Just a dirty, ragtag bunch of rebels.
Completely undeserving... Sinners, every one of us... we come.
Not because of who we are, but because of Jesus.
Because of Your amazing grace.
Because of Your wonderful cross.
We draw near, and worship...

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