

Worship: The Missing Link (Is.6:1-8)

Intro (adapted story): A couple who lived in a small town had two young boys, aged 8 and 10, who were excessively mischievous. They were always getting into trouble. It seemed that if any mischief occurred in their town, the boys were in some way involved.

The parents really tried but nothing seemed to work. Then they heard about a minister that had apparently been successful in disciplining other unruly children. Willing to try anything, they met with him. The minister agreed to meet the boys and speak to them. But he asked to see them individually, rather than together.

The eight year old was sent to him first. The minister sat the boy down and asked him, "*Where is God?*"

The boy was dumfounded. He made no response. He just sat there with his eyes wide open staring at the minister. So the minister repeated the question in a louder and sterner voice, "*Where is God?*"

Still no response. No reaction. So the minister raised his voice even more, got right in front of the boy and shook his finger in the boy's face. "*Where is God?*" he thundered. The frightened boy jumped up from his chair and ran all the way home. He climbed the stairs and hid himself under his bed.

The boy's older brother soon followed and asked him, "*What happened?*" The eight year old replied, "*We are in really BIG trouble this time. God is missing and they think WE did it!*"

Do you feel sometimes that God has gone missing in our churches/plans/ services/ meetings/ programmes/ and activities?

This is why I want to talk about worship.

I seriously believe that worship is the missing link in the life of the church. And yet, worship should be our number one priority.

Worship is the life and heartbeat of the church.

Worship is our highest and ultimate purpose. Worship is the most important thing we can do. We are created to worship. We are called to worship. We are saved to worship. We evangelise so that people will worship.

The Three Angels Message is all about worship ("Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."). Yes, the finality of our mission as a church is not to baptise people. Our goal is that every nation, tribe, tongue, and people worships God. Our goal is to make more and better worshipers.

And yet many, too many have embraced a truncated vision of worship. For some, worship simply means to go to church on Sabbath. For others, worship refers to the singing section before the sermon. But we know that worship is more than preaching and singing and giving. Worship is living, living wholeheartedly to God's glory. "Worship is, as William Temple once put it: "the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness;

the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His Beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of the will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration...”

But how can we call the world to worship God if worship is not at the top of our Agenda? How can we invite people into the throne room if we ourselves are reluctant to spend time there? How can we invite people to bow down in adoration if worship is not the most important single activity of the church?

This is the reason I believe there’s a need for us to seek a fresh understanding of worship. Like Isaiah (Is. 6:1-8), it is essential that we encounter God’s glory and recognise His holiness so that we can respond to Him in service.

1. **It is essential that we encounter God’s Glory.**

Isaiah encountered God’s glory at a very difficult and low moment in his life. It happened at the time of the death of King Uzziah.

Uzziah had ruled for 52 years. He was the greatest king Judah had ever known since Solomon and under his leadership the nation had prospered economically, socially and militarily. However, Ellen White points out that “this outward prosperity, (~~however~~), was not accompanied by a corresponding revival of spiritual power: “The temple services were continued as in former years, and multitudes assembled to worship the living God; but pride and formality gradually took the place of humility and sincerity.”

Friends, when pride and formality, the main characteristics of the church of Laodicea, takes centre stage, true worship goes in hiding. Worship becomes an endangered species when formality takes precedence over sincerity; worship is in mortal danger when ceremonials overtake spirituality, worship is in danger of extinction when we have “ritual without reality, form without power, fun without fear, religion without God.”

We need to remember that God is seeking for worshipers. He is seeking for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24). He is seeking for those who have a passion for Him; He is seeking for worshipers who will respond to Him with reverence and joy, delight and fear, with loud exuberant voices and silent wonder.

Now king Uzziah was dead and Isaiah went to the temple. And as Isaiah stood there, suddenly the gate and the inner veil of the temple seemed to be withdrawn, and he caught a vision of the eternal King, the Sovereign Lord of the universe, the One who reigns over all time and space. He caught a vision of Jehovah seated upon a throne high and lifted up, while the train of His glory filled the temple.

That vision was to remind Isaiah that though Uzziah was dead, God was alive and still on His throne. The vision was to remind him that God still held supreme authority, that His kingdom still stood high above all others and that his reign was still eternal.

That vision also opened a window for Isaiah to see the nature of heavenly worship, a vision of angelic beings continually lifting up their voices to give glory to Him, constantly in awe before His majesty, relentlessly declaring how great He is.

You see, the angels never become tired or bored of worshiping God; each glance at God's throne reveal some new wonder, each display of His love inspires in them new ecstasy. Each divine decision arouses in them praise and worship.

O, if only we could catch a glimpse of God's glory! O, if only we could gaze on the beauty of his character, we would see how excellent, how majestic, how righteous, how glorious and also how holy He is!!!

2. It is essential that we recognise God's holiness.

One thing that comes very clear in Isaiah's vision is that God is holy. Speaking about the seraphim, Isaiah 6:3 says- *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

Notice that they did not say. Powerful (3) or Loving (3) or Righteous (3) but Holy (3). This is what the angels declare in perpetual chorus.

This is a declaration of the transcendence of God. This is a declaration that God is above everything, a declaration that His being is necessarily and essentially holy, a declaration of His absolute purity.

His holiness is that which distinguishes Him from everything else.

No one is holy like Him. His love is holy. His righteousness is holy. His mercy is holy.

How then should we respond to the manifestation of God's holiness? Isaiah simply said:

Woe to me! ...I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty. Isaiah 6:4-5

Confronted with the reality of God's holiness, Isaiah saw his own sinfulness. But God did not leave him there. In verses 6 and 7, we read:

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.⁷ And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

*"Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged."*

Hallelujah! In worship, we not only encounter God's majesty and holiness, we also encounter his cleansing and forgiveness.

3. **And this is what leads us to respond to Him in service.**

In Isaiah 6:8 we read: *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

Notice that Isaiah was now ready to go because he had caught a vision of God's glory and holiness. He was ready to go because he had been touched with holy fire. He was ready to go because he had laid his life down in adoration.

Friends, this tells me that true worship, not only informs the worshiper about God; it also transforms the worshiper into God's likeness. We cannot come into God's presence, come into contact with his glory and his holiness, experience his cleansing and forgiveness and remain unmoved, untouched, unchanged.

This tells me that true worship inspires service for the Lord. True worship motivates us into full action for God. True worship always precedes God-led mission (see Mat. 28:17).

This is why we need to let the flame of worship burn within our hearts so that our light can shine to the remotest corners of the earth. This is why we need to encounter God's glory in order to burst into service for Him. For we can't find God without God (know/sing/preach/be on mission/serve).

Dear friends, it is time for us to rediscover the missing link, worship! We may be good at many things but if we fall short where it really matters, we would have missed the most glorious calling of our existence, to worship the living God!!! Allow me to imitate the apostle Paul as I conclude:

If we have all the zeal to win the whole world for Christ, and do not worship, we are only passionate evangelists with no ultimate goal. If we have all the enthusiasm to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and uphold the poor, and do not worship, we are only good humanists with no ultimate sense of our higher calling. If we replace the organ with the guitar, hymnals with projectors, choirs with praise bands, and do not worship, we are simply liturgical innovators with no substance. And though, we meet to study Scripture and discuss about God, if we do not worship, we are like empty drums rolling down a steep slope. Lots of noise but going nowhere and signifying nothing. Worship is essential. Worship is vital. Worship is crucial. Worship will endure forever.

Hence my appeal to all of us: let us make worship our priority. Let us cultivate the art of worship. Let us develop members into worshipers. Let us offer to God the worship that He deserves. Let us bow down in adoration before Him. Let us lift our voices in praise to Him.

"O come let us adore Him (x3), Christ the Lord.
For He alone is worthy(x3), Christ the Lord.
We'll give Him all the glory (x3), Christ the Lord."