

Core Value #1 - Prayer & Worship
Yesterday's Sermon Summary

Our "sermon" came in three pieces yesterday, covering KirkWood's 1st core value, which reads as follows:

"Prayer and Worship – Bringing Ourselves and Others Into God's Light: By praying and worshipping in all circumstances - our joy and sorrow, success and failure, hope and despair, satisfaction and regret – each of us invites God into our hearts and daily lives. When praying for others, we bring people closer to God and to His sustaining, comforting presence. When worshipping with others, we are unified by drawing spiritual nourishment from a common source."



Regarding prayer, we touched on three of the most frequent biblical metaphors or symbols for prayer itself:

1) Prayer is like oil: In the ancient world, various oils like olive oil were some of the cleanest, purest substances to which they had access. Their water sources were often not. So oils were often the best way to treat and clean a wound in order to promote healing. Prayer is like that for us too - it is the means by which God heals us and makes us whole.

2) Prayer is like incense: In passages about the O.T. tabernacle and temple, as well as heavenly worship in Revelation (8.3-4), prayer is said to be like incense - it's strong, aromatic, pungent, and permeates everything. This goes double in the ancient world where personal hygiene was held to a much lower standard than modern America, and incense was used to overwhelm and subdue the strong smell of group gatherings.

3) Prayer is like tears: Between 25-30 times in the Psalms, prayer is compared to tears and weeping, not to mention that the most numerous kind of psalm in that book is a lament (or complaint) psalm. As an example, Psalm 56.8 reads, "You have kept count of my tossing and turning, oh God. Put my tears in a bottle and let them be Your record?" Bob Hostetler writes about this verse, and prayer being like crying, "Let your prayer be like tears. Pour out your true, honest, heartfelt thoughts and feelings to God, without art, without guile, without pretense. Let them flow and flow until none are left. And then imagine Him saving each one in a bottle, like the precious substance that they are."

Thus, a church that values prayer...

- Believes that prayer is as important as service, work, and ministry
- Sees it as God's way to be healed and made whole
- Is permeated by it
- Comes to God in its brokenness as much as in its joy and gratitude

Regarding worship, we touched on the major words groups in both testaments that are often translated into English as "worship"

The most common word group in the New Testament for worship (and the 2nd most common in the O.T.) means "to bow down or be prostrate before." Thus, worship is full of awe, reverence, wonder, and respect. And, according to Jesus in John 4.23, this is no longer localized to a holy place or a specific time/service, it can happen to anyone anywhere (click [here](#) for those verses).

The most common word group in the Old Testament for worship (and 2nd most common in the N.T.) means "to serve or sacrifice." One of the most well-known examples of this meaning for worship can be found in Romans 12.1, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship" (the underlined terms show the connection between worship and sacrifice). Thus, worship is really about a life that is given to God for His use and purposes.

What John Ortberg writes about worship summarizes the above pretty well: "I need to worship because without it I can forget that I have a big God beside me and live in fear. I need to worship because without it I can forget God's calling and begin to live in a spirit of self-preoccupation. I need to worship because without it I lose a sense of wonder and gratitude and plod through life with blinders on. I need worship because my natural tendency is toward self-reliance and stubborn independence."

Therefore, a church that values worship...

- Does not equate worship with its Sunday gatherings per se; a worship service is only effective to the degree that it develops daily, whole life worship in those who attend it
- Is marked by daily or regular divine encounter that elicits awe, wonder, and reverence
- Focuses on creating individual lives offered up to God for His service and use, both in the church and wider community

More This Week

1. Even though many of us will be discussing and exploring KirkWood's core values in our classes, groups, etc., know that our consideration is more open-ended than that. At any point, you can email or contact Pastor Chris with your thoughts on either a) what you've really appreciated at KirkWood in regard to that week's core value, so prayer and worship this week, or b) ideas you have for how we can live into the core value better, or express it more creatively.

2. This week, keep the three biblical metaphors for prayer in mind as you pray day by day: may your prayer be healing like oil, permeating like incense, and an expression of your own brokenness like tears.

3. Pray Romans 12.1 for yourself and others a few times this week, especially in the morning as you get ready for your day: present yourself to God as a living sacrifice, which is our chief way of worshiping Him.

4. More on prayer:

- Esteemed biblical scholar talking about what prayer is - and is not - from the pages of the gospels (2.5 min. video): [What is Prayer? | Gospel According to Luke | N.T. Wright Online](#)

- Some daily devotions about prayer: [Whisper a Prayer - United Church of Christ](#) and [Wisdom of the Ages - United Church of Christ A Hope and a Future](#) and [Praying all the Time - United Church of Christ Praying all the Time](#)

- Try using the online Common Prayer Book, compiled by Shane Claiborne, this week...it's just once per day and pretty short: [Common Prayer | Common Prayer Common Prayer](#)

5. More on worship:

- Short video about worship being our reaction to God's action (2.5 min.): [3 Minute Theology 5.4: What is Worship?](#)

- Some devotionals on worship to sprinkle throughout your week: [Why We Worship - United Church of Christ](#) and [The Usefulness of Beauty - United Church of Christ](#) and [Sleep, Play and Worship - United Church of Christ](#)