Rooted: Worship

Mark 11: 1-11

032821

***Becoming*** a Christian is all about grace

* Eph. 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this not from yourselves it is the gift of God not by works so that no one can boast.”
* But ***Being*** a Christian is not about only receiving God’s grace, it is also about what we do in **response** to all that grace
* Aka. What should we do with our New Life in Christ?

Our Lenten focus, “Rooted,” has been a weekly exercise in practical ways to **respond** to God’s outpouring of grace.

* This is how I am like the tree planted my streams of living water
* **Song: “I Shall Not Be Moved”**
* It’s all about the roots!

Prayer, Fasting, Silence, Simplicity…anchor me and nourish me like the roots of a mighty tree.

Today, our focus is on the spiritual discipline/practice of ***Worship****.*

**Is worship a spiritual discipline?**

Worship is a spiritual discipline because it is an “ordered way of acting and living that sets us before God so God can transform us.” -Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*.

* This definition is at the heart of all I’ve been preaching for 5 weeks
* Helping you discover an ordered way of acting and living that sets you before God so God can transform you?

It just so happens that our focus on this discipline today corresponds with the story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem **amidst the shouts of praise.**

* Many of us remember that the shouts of praise and worship were short-lived as in only a few days the voices became bloodthirsty.

**For now, let’s look in on this scene on the day we now know as Palm Sunday.**

 **11**As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, **2**saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. **3**If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

**4**They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, **5**some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” **6**They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. **7**When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.**8**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.**9**Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna![[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2011&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24650a)]”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2011&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24650b)]

**10**“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

**11**Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

--Mark 11: 1-11

I. What happens at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem looks a lot like worship.

* Good crowd
* Holy words
* Fitting actions
* Appropriate day (start of Jewish Passover)

“**Hosanna**” = By Jesus’ day this is a word of praise, though its origins are in ancient Hebrew meaning “Please save us.” By this time, it is similar to hallelujah.

* + There is some distance between Hosanna’s historic and scriptural meaning.

**“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”** = Psalm 118:26. Words usually chanted as the pilgrims entered the temple by those already inside, but here the words are used out on the street as Jesus rode in.

* + Is this just excitement or something else?

**“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”** = Popular longings for the re-establishment of the throne of David.

* + This phrase points more toward the arrival of the Kingdom of David, not so much the Kingdom of God.
	+ This phrase is packed full of nationalistic hopes and dreams for a messiah to supplant Rome and restore God’s people to the glory days of the first Temple and King David.

**This seems like it might be worship, but how do we know?**

* Is it fair to see the confusion between what God is up to and what their hearts are fixed upon?
* Is it fair to recognize that through a variety of circumstances, not all of them their fault, they are saying words that sound like worship, but true worship is missing?
* **Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, quoting Isaiah 29:13, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”**

**Do we sometimes say and do things that look like worship but fail to hit the mark?**

II. How should we understand worship?

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury when he passed away too soon in 1944, said:

*To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.* –William Temple.

Based on William Temple’s five standards for worship, I find **myself doubting** these words at the festival in Jerusalem.

* Their conscience is quickened but not by the holiness of God
* Their minds are feeding on something but not the truth of God
* Their imaginations are in overdrive, but I fear not by the beauty of God
* Their hearts are set on something but probably not the love of God
* Their wills are engaged but on purposes other than God’s purposes for the world.

**The Jerusalem pilgrims had the lingo, the crowd, the posture, the day but they were 0-5 on the William Temple worship scale.**

So wrapped up in the circumstances of their lives, the Jerusalem pilgrims missed the opportunity to

* **truly experience** the incarnate Christ,
* **to embrace** his agenda over their own,
* **to engage** with Jesus’ redemptive work in their own day

**The non-climactic ending** to this story seems to say that Jesus understood this greeting similarly.

“These people worship me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me…”

**Haunting words for us today**

Jesus’ re-entry the next day and his actions in the Temple seem to indicate that much needed repair, not the least of which was the Palm Sunday entry.

III. How are we doing in worship?

* I wonder if we aren’t sometimes **like the Jerusalem crowd…**
* Are we so wrapped up in the circumstances of our lives that we miss opportunities to truly experience Christ?

How are you doing in worship?

**Do you regularly experience:**

* the holiness of God?
* the truth of God?
* the beauty of God?
* the love of God?
* the purpose of God?

**Can you point to times this week when you experienced these?**

Are these things happening as you worship here at Central?

Are these things happening in your regular life outside of your time spent here?

**How can we get our minds around the discipline of worship?**

IV. Worship is more than what happens here on Sundays

* **Scripturally**: John 4:24,**“**God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”
	+ - **I hear William Temple’s definition in Jesus’ words…**
* **Practically**: Worship is Corporate and Individual
	+ - **What happens here on Sundays can be worship, but it is up to you**

* + - **It is up to what you do all week and what you do when you get here**

V. Worship is a human response to a divine initiative

* God is always going first and inviting us to a response
	+ God sought **Adam and Eve** and before the fall, enjoyed communion with them
	+ Jesus’ work **on the cross** drew people to himself (John 12:32) “…and when I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself.”
	+ Ours is a **God of the Prodigals**, always seeking and searching for us to come to him.
* Worship is our response to the **overtures** of love from God.
* This week, Holy Week, is the ultimate expression of God acting first and inviting our response
* **The goal of worship is Spirit touching spirit.**
* Singing, praying, praising may all lead to worship, but they are not, in and of themselves, worship.
* Therefore, we worship God for **who God is**
* We also worship God for **what God has done:**
	+ goodness, faithfulness, justice, mercy, salvation, sanctification, calling.

**Close:**

**What do we learn about worship today from the Palm Sunday crowd of Mark 11?**

* Just because there is a crowd with **good** **words** and **postures** it doesn’t mean we are worshiping.

**Worship begins tomorrow in your home and you bring it with you next Sunday**

* “We learn to cultivate the soil of our lives in such a way that the seeds of worship grow and flourish in us throughout the week and burst into full bloom when we gather together on Sunday.” --Barber

**What should you do now?**

* **Develop** a **methodology** whereby your conscience, mind, imagination, heart, and will are all placed before God so that God can work on you. (Temple//Foster)
* **Where to begin?**
	+ Pray foundational prayers starting with The Lord’s Prayer. This prayer prayed intentionally, meditatively leads you into the depths of God.

* + Fast as the Spirit leads, self-denial turns us toward God.

* + Make room for silence/solitude each day and give that space to God.

* + Simplify your stuff and your schedule.

* **Are you daring enough to put it all together this Holy Week?**

* **Imagine** 7 days from today…what will Easter be like if you prepare like this?

**Prayer**

**Song**: “No Longer Slaves”

**Benediction**:

Thanks for giving

Thanks for serving

Invite to Good Friday (6:30) and Easter (9:30 and 11:00)

Open hearts and hands:

“God, you love each of us so much that you sent your son Jesus to redeem us. In response may we worship you in Spirit and truth.” –Amen.