

PRAISE THE LORD

HERE WE ARE, THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. WE KNOW THAT CHRIST IS RISEN (**HE IS RISEN INDEED**). THE OLD TESTAMENT READING TODAY WAS PSALM 150, THE LAST OF THE PSALMS. **THIS PSALM IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE PRAISE OR PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING BY AN INDIVIDUAL OR A COMMUNITY OF WORSHIP.**

WE HAVE BEEN STUDYING ON SATURDAY NIGHT THE QUESTION **"WHAT IS WORSHIP?"**. MANY OF THE ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND IN VERSES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS, ESPECIALLY THE PSALMS, WHICH WERE GENERALLY SUNG DURING A GATHERING FOR WORSHIP. **I HAVE HEARD A PSALM SUNG AS WELL AS *ARRON'S BENEDICTION*.** THERE WAS A PEACE IN THE AIR THAT DID PASS ALL UNDERSTANDING.

WE SING THE SONG "SURELY THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE" WHEN WE ARE WORSHIPING GOD IS HERE! HIS PRESENCE IS HERE. WHEN THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL GATHERED TO WORSHIP THEY EXPECTED HIS PRESENCE! WHY? BECAUSE THEY WERE IN HIS SANCTUARY. IT SEEMS IN MANY OF OUR HOUSES OF WORSHIP THE PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR AWE, THEIR FEAR OF GOD MEANS RESPECT FOR GOD. **GOD WARNS THE PEOPLE A NUMBER OF TIMES THAT WORSHIP IN THEIR DAY OF SACRIFICE OF ANIMALS AND BURNT OFFERINGS WAS NOT WHAT GOD DESIRED. HE DESIRES THE PRAISE AND WORSHIP OF HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR HEART.**

I TALKED ABOUT WHAT **TRUE SACRIFICE** WAS LAST WEEK ON EASTER. THERE WERE THREE PARTS TO SACRIFICE AND ONE OF THOSE PARTS WAS IT MUST BE COMPLETELY AND TOTALLY

GIVEN WITH NOTHING HELD BACK. WHEN WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD – IS THAT OUR FOCUS OR IS IT "WHERE I AM GOING TO EAT AFTER CHURCH" OR "I REALLY NEED TO GET TO THE STORE TO GET THAT...? AND WE WONDER WHY WE DIDN'T GET ANYTHING OUT OF THE SERVICE? OF COURSE WE WOULDN'T BLAME GOD, WE WILL PROBABLY BLAME THE PASTOR, AFTER ALL HE CHOSE THE PRAYERS AND THE HYMNS! BUT WHEN WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY TO WORSHIP IT REALLY IS A VERY INTIMATE TIME FOR EACH OF US.

THE PURPOSE OF THE HYMNS, THE PRAYERS, AND THE WORDS OF GOD ARE TO HELP BRING US, EACH ONE OF US, INTO HIS PRESENCE, TO SENSE GOD IS WITH US. THE HOLY SPIRIT HELP US FROM WITHIN TO REACH OUT TO GOD IN WORSHIP – WORSHIP DESCRIBED BY JESUS' OWN WORDS – WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH.

WHEN THE JEWISH PEOPLE FIRST BEGAN WORSHIP THEY KNEW GOD WAS IN THEIR MIDST, BUT AFTER A TIME GOD QUESTIONED THEIR PURPOSES IN WORSHIP, WHICH HAD BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN A ROUTINE TO FOLLOW AND PERFORM. GOD WAS TROUBLED BECAUSE AS IT SAYS IN ISAIAH 29:13 *"And so the Lord says, "These people say they are Mine. They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. And their worship of Me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote."*

THE BIBLE SHOULD BE FOR US THE GREATEST ADVICE BOOK KNOWN TO MAN, BECAUSE GOD INSPIRED IT! WE CAN LEARN FROM THE BIBLE THE WAY WE SHOULD LIVE, BUT ALSO LEARN FROM THE "MISTAKES" OF THE PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE. THE QUESTION TODAY IS ONE, "HOW DID THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL LOSE THEIR RELIGION?" IF WE KNOW THAT, WE CAN APPLY IT TO OUR LIVES AS THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH CALLED

CENTENNIAL, AND HOPEFULLY AVOID THOSE PITFALLS.

WE CAN LOOK AT **PSALM 150** AND DISCOVERING THE FOUNDATIONS OF WORSHIP, IT IS LIKE LOOKING AT A PARABLE AND REALIZING THE MEANING BEHIND IT THAT WE CAN USE EVERY DAY IN OUR LIVES. **IF WE LOOK BACK AT EXODUS 32 WE FIND THEM BEING IMPATIENT BECAUSE MOSES IS NOT BACK FROM MT SINAI AND THEY BUILD A GOLDEN CALF.** THIS IS **WORSHIPING A FALSE GOD** AND BREAKING THE FIRST COMMANDMENT, WHICH IS TO WORSHIP ONLY THE LORD GOD. **IF WE GO INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT WE SEE JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS AND SATAN WANTS JESUS TO FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP HIM, A FALSE GOD. WHERE DID THE JEWISH PEOPLE GO WRONG?**

ANOTHER WAY IS TO **WORSHIP IN A FALSE AND UNACCEPTABLE WAY.** **IF WE LOOK TO CAIN AND ABEL ONE OFFERING WAS ACCEPTED AND THE OTHER WAS NOT ACCEPTED – SIMPLY AN ATTITUDE PROBLEM BY CAIN THE WAY HE CAME BEFORE GOD TO WORSHIP.** TODAY WE MAY COME TO WORSHIP WITHOUT THE RIGHT ATTITUDE, BUT GOD WILL NOT COME OUT OF A “CLOUD OF GLORY” AND CONSUME US AS HE DID WITH ARRON’S SONS.

TODAY, WE HAVE THE GRACE AND FORGIVENESS OF GOD BECAUSE OF WHAT JESUS DID ON THE CROSS!! THINK ABOUT THIS – **IF WE COME WITH A BAD ATTITUDE** AND JUST SIT THERE WE MAY NOT BE CONSUMED, BUT I BELIEVE **BY WORSHIPING THAT WAY WE CHEAPEN THE VERY THING JESUS DID FOR US ON THE CROSS.** HE SUFFERED SO WE CAN MAKE MISTAKES AND HAVE GRACE, BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE IT RIGHT. **WE HAVE TO CONFESS OUR SINS, REPENT AND TURN FROM DOING THE SAME OLD THINGS IN THE SAME OLD WAYS** AND NOT SAYING “WELL, THAT’S JUST THE WAY I AM – LIVE WITH IT”.

NO, IT IS GOD’S DESIRE FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU AND DUE TO FREE WILL HE LETS YOU CHOSE. IN JOSHUA 24:14-16 “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and **serve Him in sincerity and truth;** and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, **choose for yourselves today whom you will serve:** whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods”.

THE NAMES OF THE PLACES MAY SEEM ANCIENT AND ODD, BUT WE COULD FIND NAMES AND PLACES THAT PEOPLE TODAY SERVE AND “WORSHIP” - SINGERS, MOVIE STARS AND OTHERS. I HAD A FRIEND ONCE THAT THE MEN AT THE CHURCH ALMOST IDOLIZED HIM. HE TOLD THEM “**I WILL DISAPPOINT, LOOK TO JESUS, NOT ME**” THAT IS WHO WE MUST KEEP OUR FOCUS ON.

WHEN WE COME TO WORSHIP IF IT’S A LITTLE WARM OR COLD, JUST REMEMBER WHAT CHRIST WENT THROUGH FOR YOU AND ME! HE HUNG ON THAT CROSS IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY FOR HOURS. RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT BEING COMFORTABLE. I HAVE HEARD MANY A COMMENT ABOUT OUR OLD PEW OUT IN THE NARTHAX, NOT CUSHIONED AND FAIRLY STRAIGHT BACKS AND TALK ABOUT THE OLD POTBELLIED STOVE IN THE CENTER AISLE AND NO AC!!!

WHY DO I BRING THESE THINGS UP? IT IS A REMINDER TO NOT GET TOO WORKED UP OR EVEN UPSET AND LOSE OUR FOCUS ON THE REAL REASON WHY WE ARE HERE AND ON WHO WE ARE WORSHIPING. WORSHIP ISN’T A BUTTON WE JUST PRESS AND BE READY. **WORSHIP IS A WAY OF LIFE AND PREPARATION BEGINS**

LONG BEFORE WE COME THROUGH THE DOOR. OUR LIVES ARE FILLED WITH MANY DISTRACTIONS. NO ONE, EVEN JESUS HAS SAID BEING A DISCIPLE IS EASY. MAYBE THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS THE CHURCH HAS BECOME LESS AN INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY. WE ARE TOO MUCH LIKE SOCIETY. THERE IS NOTHING TO CHALLENGE US, TO MAKE US UNCOMFORTABLE AND BE DIFFERENT IN A GOOD WAY. THINK OF THE ATHLETE, TO BE A BETTER RUNNER OR BALL PLAYER SOMETHING IN YOUR ROUTINE HAS TO CHANGE TO IMPROVE YOU AS AN ATHLETE.

IN I Corinthians 9:24-27 *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control...”* **WE SHOULD NOT BE CONTENT WHERE WE ARE IN OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY. THE DESIRE TO BE IN CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND WALK WITH HIM SHOULD BURN WITHIN AND SHOW WITH AN ENTHUSIASM ON THE OUTSIDE.**

THIS ALL BEGINS WITH WORSHIP. THE WORLD CAN CERTAINLY DRAG US DOWN, BUT WHEN WE COME INTO HIS SANCTUARY TO WORSHIP, DURING THE WORSHIP. AND THEN GO FROM HERE AND BACK INTO THE WORLD, **WE SHOULD BE REFRESHED AND POSSESS THAT “BLESSED ASSURANCE” WE SING OF SO OFTEN.** THE WORDS OF THE CHORUS SPEAK *“PRAISING MY SAVIOR ALL THE DAY LONG”, DO WE???* IF WE FOLLOW THESE WORDS THEN BY OUR VERY ACTIONS AND SPEECH WE WILL BE WORSHIPING.

THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE WE ARE GIVEN THE WAYS OF WORSHIP AND LIVING LIFE THAT IS PLEASING TO GOD. WE DON'T LIVE THAT WAY JUST TO BE ON GOD'S GOOD SIDE, BUT BECAUSE WE LOVE HIM AND WHAT HIS SON HAS DONE FOR US. IT IS THEN WE ARE WORSHIPING!!!!

PSALM 150 IN THE SHORT NUMBER OF VERSES GIVES A PICTURE OF THE WHAT, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW OF WORSHIP. NOW THE PSALM MAY SEEM ON THE SURFACE TO CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL WORSHIP, THAT WHICH WE HAVE BECOME “COMFORTABLE” WITH, BUT **LIKE ANY WORDS IN THE BIBLE WE MUST SCRATCH THE SURFACE AND DISCOVER A FULLER MEANING THAT LIES BENEATH. THERE ARE WITHIN THESE VERSES THINGS THAT APPLY TO US TODAY JUST AS THEY DID BACK IN THE TIME THE PSALMS WERE USED IN WORSHIP.**

“PRAISE THE LORD” WAS A PHRASE WIDELY USED IN THE 70S AND 80S BY NUMEROUS CHURCHES AND GROUPS. THE PHRASE WAS USED OVER ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND CARRIED A NEGATIVE ASSOCIATION. THIS DEMONSTRATES, HOW WE IN OUR HUMANNESS, CAN TAKE A GODLY THING AND MAKE USE OF IT IN A WAY NEVER INTENDED.

“PRAISE THE LORD” IS USED OVER 250 TIMES IN THE BIBLE. IT APPEARS THAT WE SHOULD INDEED “PRAISE THE LORD”. NOW THE FIRST VERSE INSTRUCTS US TO PRAISE HIM IN HIS SANCTUARY, HIS SANCTUARY, NOT OURS!!! THIS IS GOD'S HOUSE NOT MINE, NOT YOURS. HOWEVER, OUR PRAISE DOES NOT STOP THERE. IN THE NEXT VERSE WE ARE TOLD TO PRAISE HIM IN HIS MIGHTY EXPANSE, IN OTHER WORDS TO PRAISE HIM EVERYWHERE WE GO!!! DOES WORSHIP STOP HERE THE MINUTE THE SERVICE ENDS, AS SOON AS WE GO OUT THE DOOR? THE PSALM TELLS US “NO”. IN THE SATURDAY NIGHT BULLETIN, WE USE A PHRASE AT THE END OF THE SERVICE - **“WORSHIP HAS ENDED, LET WORSHIP BY SERVING BEGIN!!! THIS IS WHAT PSALM 150 IS SAYING TO US IN THE FIRST VERSE!!**

THERE ARE SEVEN WORDS IN HEBREW FOR PRAISE. THEY ALL RELATE TO WAYS TO WORSHIP GOD AND THE HOW WE VALUE GOD BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE! THIS “WHY” IS ANSWERED IN THE SECOND VERSE.

THE VERSES IN THE REST OF THE PSALM TELLS US THE “HOW”. THE MEANING BEHIND THESE WORDS TELLS US THERE ARE MANY “TOOLS” OF WORSHIP, FROM ORGANS TO PIANOS TO GUITARS TO FLUTES, CYMBALS AND MUCH MORE. MUSIC IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF WORSHIP AS IT WAS IN THE TIME OF THE PSALMIST. I VENTURE TO SAY THAT AFTER READING THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT INVOLVING DAVID AND WORSHIP GATHERINGS THAT HE MIGHT BE MORE FAMILIAR WITH A SERVICE WITH ALL THE INSTRUMENTS THAN MANY OF THE SERVICES TODAY.

IN CLOSING THE PSALMS LIKE THE ONE TODAY GIVE US A MEANING INTO THE WHAT, WHERE AND HOWS OF WORSHIP. IF WE LOOK BEHIND THE WORDS WE CAN DISCOVER THE FOUNDATIONS OF WORSHIP AND APPLY THOSE TO TODAY’S WORSHIP.

WE RECEIVE OUT OF WORSHIP WHAT WE PUT INTO IT. WHEN WE COME TO WORSHIP WE MUST FOCUS ON WHO WE ARE WORSHIPING – GOD. WHEN WORSHIP COMES FROM WITHIN, FROM THE HEART THEN WE CAN “PRAISE THE LORD”!!!

AMEN.