

Text: Hebrews 13:15-16 (Pew Bible, pg.1194)

Title: “Worshipping Well”

INTRODUCTION

Let’s open our Bibles to Hebrews 13:15-16. Now we’re talking these days about “Holy Habits.” As we train ourselves for godliness, one of the ways we do that is to build into our lives the habit of worshipping God regularly. Read text.

Our Blueprint for Spiritual Formation reminds us of what we know from Scripture: **PASSIONATE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST ... GLORIFY GOD IN WORSHIP**

You see, we as human beings are created, like everything else God created, to glorify Him. The cool thing is that we get to put our whole being into glorifying God in our worship. That worship is private, but it is also public (we do it with others).

Now the book of Hebrews was written to believers who were being tempted to abandon their faith in Jesus Christ and to go back to the legalistic ways of their old Jewish religion. So if they were abandoning Christ, it stands to reason that they would abandon the church. So the writer of Hebrews said...

Hebrews 10:25 - Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

They had developed the bad habit of not meeting with other believers for public worship and for mutual encouragement.

VIDEO ILLUSTRATION – Many people, believers and non-believers struggle with this. There’s an episode of the old sitcom series “Everybody Loves Raymond” where Ray’s dad tells the kids that their dad, Ray, is going to hell because he doesn’t go to church. This causes Ray to feel guilty and he goes and eats a whole carton of ice cream. But then Ray and his wife Deborah have this conversation:

So God wants us to worship well. And He has given us His Word in order that we might know how to do that. I want us to chew on vv.15-16 this morning to gain as much wisdom and truth as we can possibly gain about worshipping well. First, we see...

1. THE WAY OF OUR WORSHIP – “through Jesus”

You need to know what’s going on in this part of the book of Hebrews. As I said earlier, the book of Hebrews is written to people who were in danger of abandoning their devotion to Jesus Christ. It’s a very complicated point that the writer is making about the difference between the Old Covenant of Judaism where people were made right with God through animal sacrifices, and the New Covenant where we are made right with God through the work of Christ on the Cross. So we shouldn’t be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There's only one way to God for salvation, and that is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." And there's only one way to approach God in worship, and that is through Jesus Christ. Hold your place here and turn back a few chapters to Hebrews 10 (we read v.25 earlier): **Read Hebrews 10:19-22a.**

When we worship we are drawing near to God. Worship is delivered to God in person. But there's a huge problem: God is a holy God, and we are sinners. God's holiness is like a consuming fire; when anything unholy comes into contact with holiness it is consumed ... it perishes.

ILLUSTRATION – When a fireman goes into a burning building to put out the flames he wears a suit that is made of material that is fireproof. If he ran into that burning building with just jeans and a tee shirt on, the fire would quickly consume him. So the fireman wears his flame-resistant suit. And the only way we, as sinners, can come into the presence of a holy God in worship is for us to come wrapped in the righteousness of Jesus.

Now God is worthy of all our praise, but we don't get to worship just anyway we want to. Not all worship traditions of humans are acceptable to God. Religions of the world have a lot of different ways to worship, but it doesn't get through to God, no matter how sincere they are, if it isn't done through Jesus Christ, whether it's praying, giving, praising, singing, playing an instrument or serving.

But these verses also show us...

2. THE ACTIVITY OF OUR WORSHIP – “let us offer to God”

The word “offer” is an action word. It was the word that was used to describe the activity of a priest making a sacrifice. There's effort involved. It's not something passive; it's active. You don't just come and sit and watch. As you stand, sit, sing, listen, give, write, or kneel you are engaging your body in making an *offering* to God.

In the Jewish religion of the OT, there were people known as priests who were set apart from the people of God for the worship of God. Everything about them ... the way they dressed, the way they acted, the things they did, the offerings they made ... all shouted worship. They were the designated worshippers ... like a designated hitter in baseball. They stepped in to do the work that others were not capable of doing. But now in the New Covenant in Christ, the Bible says that all believers are priests. There are no spectators when it comes to worship ... no designated worshippers. We are to *all* be actively engaged in offering worship with every fiber of our being.

But there's also something here about...

3. THE CONSISTENCY OF OUR WORSHIP – “continually”

When we worship well we worship continually ... not just on special days like Sunday. Oh we do worship on Sundays, but the deal is that we are to bring our worship with us. It is a seven-day a week, hour-by-hour offering of our worship to God.

Psalm 118:24 - This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

When we worship well we worship continually ... not just on *special* days ... and not just on the *good* days.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

There are not "praise the Lord" days and "grumble-at-God" days. Every day is to be a "praise the Lord" day. Will we have bad days? For sure. Will we have broken hearts and disappointments? Absolutely. So the day you dread ... the day you have to go for that painful treatment ... the day you have that hard test at school ... the day you have to have that difficult conversations with a co-worker ... every day is a "praise-the-Lord" day. We *continually* offer to God our worship.

Every word we speak, every action we take, every thought we think is to be an offering of worship to God ... talking on the phone, making a sales call, changing a diaper, teaching an English class, cheering at a basketball game.

Next there is...

4. THE PRESENTATION OF OUR WORSHIP – "sacrifice of praise ... the fruit of lips"

So the Bible says we all are priests, and the offerings we make are sacrifices of praise to the name or character of God. That is the proper way for worship to be presented to God ... with praise. Jesus said that the kind of worshippers the Father seeks are those who worship in spirit and in truth. So my praise starts inside of me (my spirit) where I have thought truthfully about God ... and it flows out of my lips as praise to God.

ILLUSTRATION – If we're not careful it can be like singing the National Anthem. When is the last time you sang the National Anthem and actually thought about the words? It's easy for that to happen in our singing of songs in public worship.

And we are to offer to God this sacrifice of praise with our lips. It is the "fruit of lips..." Now sometimes worship is done silently, but there must also be times when our private worship erupts into public worship. Praise and worship must be heard from our lips. Some of you make the excuse that you don't sing well so you don't sing at all. Who are you singing for anyway? Is it pride that you don't want to embarrass yourself by singing? Take that up with God.

I realize some of you are people of few words. But that's no excuse for withholding your praise to God with your lips.

ILLUSTRATION – What kind of marriage would you have if you never told your mate that you love them, or if you never thanked them for what they do, or expressed your admiration for them. (Some of you men are thinking, "Uh, I'm supposed to do that???) I've heard people say, "Well, they know how I feel. I'm just not one to express myself in that way. I just don't think that's very dignified." No, no, no. That won't cut it. Could it be that it's just pride?

We are to continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise from our lips. Show your adoration for God in every way you know how ... but do not neglect to use your lips in singing and speaking to give praise and thanks to God.

But in order for us to worship well we need to understand...

5. THE ESSENCE OF OUR WORSHIP – “confess his name”

You see, our worship is also our witness. This goes back to not being ashamed of Jesus. Our worship should be unashamedly Christ-centered. This is where all of creation and all of history is going ... toward a day when...

Philippians 2:10 - that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Philippians 2:11 - and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Could it be that there is little worship coming from our lips because there is little love in hearts for Jesus? He isn't our treasure, so He isn't our praise.

When we worship well our worship is *through* Christ and *about* Christ, for all that God has done for us in Him. Let your heart be drawn by Christ. Lose yourself in His love so that your lips just explode with songs, words, testimonies, prayers, Bible lessons and sermons that confess Christ.

Now we go into the next verse and we see...

6. THE LIFE OF OUR WORSHIP

We worship with our lips and our life ... with our talk and our walk ... with our words and our works.

Romans 12:1 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Now this is actually a second sacrifice that is mentioned here in Hebrews 13, but it is not to be separated from the first.

Hebrews 13:16 - And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

So we live out this life of worship as we show love to other people ... by doing good and sharing with others. “Doing good” can cover all kinds of ministries: giving food to the needy ... giving someone a ride to work or to a doctor's appointment ... helping someone pay their rent ... shoveling

snow off your neighbor's sidewalk. "To share with others" literally means to make yourself a partner with someone else in their need by investing in the meeting of their need.

This goes back to something the writer said earlier in Hebrews. **Read Hebrews 13:1-3.**

So we glorify God in our worship with our lips and with our lives. We show how much we treasure God with our lips by our words and our songs. And we show how much we treasure God by our lives when we are willing to let go of our possessions for Him in order to meet the needs of others. By that we show we our treasure is God and not our stuff.

Now the last few words of v.16 are the key to worshipping well. They have to do with ...

7. THE PLEASURE OF OUR WORSHIP – “with such sacrifices God is pleased...” (v.16)

You see, the idea is not what worship pleases me. That has no place in the discussion. The real issue is, “God, what worship that comes from my lips and from my life is pleasing to You?”

ILLUSTRATION – Guys, it's sort of like giving your wife a chainsaw for Valentines Day. It's pleasing to you, but is it pleasing to her? Ladies, it's sort of like giving your husband a gift certificate for a pedicure. That pleases you, but does it please him?

Stop thinking about pleasing yourself in worship; think about what pleases the Lord. And according to the Bible, I'm worshipping in a way that pleases God when...

- I worship through Jesus Christ
- I'm actually, actively offering my praise to God with my words and my songs
- I worship continually, not just on special days or good days
- I worship with my lips *and* with my life by giving up stuff to help other people

That's the kind of worship that pleases God. It's also the kind of worship that gets the attention of non-believers. What an awesome witness when others far from God see us worshipping well. They wonder, “What kind of God can elicit that kind of devotion, that kind of passion, that kind of compassion?”

AFTER INVITATION

We had a wonderfully positive Share and Prayer Gathering last Sunday night as I shared the plans for a new Sunday schedule and worship format for our church. Beginning May 4 we will have a blended worship service here in the Sanctuary at 10:45 led by John Lee and the Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra. Going on at the same time we'll have a contemporary worship service in the Great Room of the West Building led by Jared Longoria and the worship band.

We are moving to this new worship schedule not to please us, but to offer sacrifices of praise that are pleasing to God ... to give Him greater glory. And when that kind of worship is happening around here, non-believers will be drawn to see what kind of God causes that kind of change, that kind of worship in a believer's life.