

The Four R's of Worship
Psalm 24:1-10

Friends, I'm not sure if you are aware there is a condition that causes millions of males across North America to routinely neglect their wives or girlfriends on a regular basis and focus all their passion and energy elsewhere - it's a condition known as "being a sports fan..."

If you're in a relationship with one you'll know what I'm talking about.

Whenever the season for their favorite sport comes around, they are totally focused on watching the games, keeping up with news on players, analyzing statistics, and dreaming about their team winning the championship and everything else seems to take second place for them.

And if their team makes the playoffs – sports fans become fanatics... and they display their passion for their sport any chance they get.

Wearing their team's jersey, flying a flag on their car, and doing whatever it takes to get to the games – they have to be at the games, with all the other fans to cheer on their team and show their loyalty and devotion.

And when you have two sports fans who are married to each other, things work out fine – it's a common interest that a husband and wife can share together.

But if... as it happens more often than not... the wife isn't a sports fan, then this passion for following a sport can become an issue of competing loyalties and interests.

And many a marriage counselor has recommended to a frustrated wife that it is futile to try and change this behavior in their husband.

Instead they should attempt to make an effort to join in with their husband's interest and use it as an opportunity to get to know them better and be able to spend time with them that way.

And reluctant wife gives it a shot and usually complaint that comes back is that she just doesn't understand the game which their husband is so enthusiastic about. She doesn't understand what all the fuss is about.

But... there have been documented cases in which something amazing has happened.

Once the wife or the girlfriend was able to understand what was happening in the game... what was going on – it captured their interest, and they started to genuinely become interested in the sport and ended up becoming sports fans themselves.

It can happen!

And friends I think there is a similarity for us with regards to being passionate about worship.

There are people who just love to go to church and to participate in worship. They are worship fans – they love to sing, they love to clap, raise their hands, dance, pray, listen to sermons, read their bibles and they go to church every Sunday.

But for many people, they just aren't into going to church and participating like that. It's just not our thing – we'd rather play sports 😊

And I think this occurs friends, because we don't quite understand what's going on. We don't get what all the fuss is about.

Oh sure, we know that we go to church to “worship God” and to do that we sing songs, that we pray, we read scripture, we listen to a sermon, give an offering and drink coffee afterwards...

But is that all that is happening in worship? Is that really what worship fans are so enthusiastic about? Fives songs, two scripture passages, a twenty minute message and a cup of coffee?

There has to be more to it than that... and there is – but do we really get it? Do we truly understand what is going on?

Friends the good news is that in Psalm 24, the scripture fills us in on what is happening in worship.

And I believe that if we take the time to listen to what the bible has to say about it, if we believe it and accept it – that the Holy Spirit will use that knowledge and understanding to begin turn us into worship fans...

And we will experience new levels of passionate spirituality in church.

So the first thing which Psalm 24 helps us understand about worship is the “**Reason**” for it.

Look at vs. 1-2 where it says *“¹ The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; ² for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.*

Why do we worship? Because everything was made by God and it all belongs to God – including us.

So it’s only natural that we would want to respond back to our creator and discover more about where we came from and who made us and why we are here – right?

Eg. people looking for biological parents, and ancestry.ca

And one of the things we discover about God is that when He created the universe, from His perspective He was building a **temple**.

You see the words in verse 2 which talk about God’s creating activity that we translate as “founded” and “established” are architectural terms in Hebrew that relate to the building of temples.

So, our world and this universe is in fact one great big huge temple and that makes the activity which occurs in it...worship.

All the being fruitful, the filling of the earth, the subduing it, and ruling over the animals that God commanded Adam and Eve to do in Genesis 1:28, all that activity is “worship”

So another “reason” for coming to worship on Sunday morning is to start of your week off on the right note.

Everything you do from Monday to Saturday is supposed to be worship to God, your work, your family life, your school, your sports, your entertainment, even your multiplying☺

So... that’s a big task. It only makes sense to get out to church and get a proper start to your worship that continues on after the service is done until next Saturday.

Like the Canadian Tire ads used to say “where you start out has a lot to do with where you end up!”

How are you going to know how to “worship” in your work and school and in your relationships if you don’t start off on Sunday morning at church?

Now friends please make note of these reasons that Psalm 24 gives us for worshipping... because according to our NCD survey this year we have a difficult time explaining exactly “*why*” we attend the worship service.

In other words we weren’t really sure about the “reason” behind worship.

Well here it is! We worship because God made everything and He made us and it is natural and right that we respond back to God.

We attend worship on Sunday in order to get us off on the right foot to continue worshipping for the rest of the week.

So if a neighbor or a friend or a co-worker, or your spouse... asks you “why are you going to church!?” (or maybe you have to convince them to go to church)

You can answer back and say “because it helps me to continue to worship for the rest of the week!”

Or if your kids protest and say “Why do we have to go to church?”

You can answer back “because worship is the way to show thanks and gratitude to God for making this world, giving it to us and we will find out more about the one who made us!”

And your teens will immediately say “oh... of course! Give me a minute and I’ll be ready to go right away!”

I wish! But this leads into our next point.

You see Psalm 24 also helps us understand why it is that there seems to be a natural resistance to worshipping God that goes on with worship as well.

Maybe you like me have wondered why it is that the Sunday morning worship attendance percentage hovers at 50% in spite of the fact that we are growing.

Why does our Sunday morning service seems to be our neighborhood’s best kept secret?

I know there’s always room to improve in what we do, but we’ve got good coffee, great music, a really friendly group of

people and the preaching seems to be ok – so why isn’t the rest of Springborough lining up to come in and be a part of what’s going on here in worship on Sundays?

Well look at what Psalm 24 says in verses 3-4 “*Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.*”

Friends there are “Requirements” for wanting to worship - “clean hands, a pure heart, no idols or false beliefs.” If you don’t have them – you won’t have the desire, you won’t want to come into God’s presence in worship.

Think about it. When we’ve just screwed up big time, for the umpteenth time or done something that we know is really wrong, again – do you feel like going to church for worship? No. It doesn’t feel right.

God is good, we’ve just done something bad.

So it's easy for people to resist going to worship at church because they feel like they are not good enough and they don't have their life together.

And friends, another thing that kills any desire to come and worship God is idolatry, which is allowing our lives to revolve around something else other than God.

That's easy to do because there are lots of good things which can become god things - family, kids, work, money, sports, get-away time, sleeping in...

You see what your life revolves around is what you will desire to spend your time "worshiping"

So if people are not coming out to worship its quite possible that something other than God is competing for the central place in their lives.

And finally swearing by what is false – false beliefs will put out any enthusiasm to come and worship.

We don't have time this morning to go into all the false beliefs people can have about this world and life and God. There are too many.

But we've already heard one when I said that some people believe that your life needs to be in order before you start coming to church – it's like the cherry on top to celebrate when you've been able to be that good person you want to be, a kind of reward.

That's a false belief. Friends Psalm 24 helps us understand that there is false because in verses 5-6 it tells us that there is a Reward for participating in worship but it's not a pat on the back for being a good person.

Verse 5 says that our reward is "blessing" and "vindication" from God *our Savior* – Jesus!

Friends, this is what worship fans get so excited about – you see salvation happens in worship, you get good things from participating in worship, those negative feelings of low self-worth and uselessness, accusations of being a hypocrite,

shame... you are vindicated from all of it by Jesus Christ when you worship Him. What a blessing!

But the catch is that you need to come to worship realizing that you are in need of blessing and vindication and a savior.

That's why we always take some time in our worship service to confess to Jesus Christ that fact we don't have clean hands, a pure heart, that we've struggled with idolatry and we need his forgiveness.

I know that may not always feel inspiring – but worship that ignores the reality of sin in our lives and fails to point out our need for forgiveness isn't inspirational – it's delusional.

And this is why we believe that we need to listen to the scriptures and have teaching from them to help us identify and correct any false beliefs we might have – especially false beliefs about worship.

And the ironic thing friends, is that when we push through our natural resistance to worshipping God – by His grace- and we

intentionally and regularly worship Him, and we understand what is happening... something amazing happens we become worship fans!

That is as verse six points out we become part a group of people who seek God – our tendency to not want to worship God is reversed and we actually start to desire to be with God - and not just “god” in a vague spiritual sense...we seek the face of the God of Jacob – the God revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

So that brings us full circle – because we started out by saying that the reason we worship is to get to know our creator better and to prepare ourselves to worship him in whatever we do in the coming week.

So Psalm 24 helps us understand how worship can Result in preparing us for worship during the rest of our week at work, at school, at home, or while we are away.

So the final verses of Psalm 24, verses 7-10 speak of God as the mighty King and Ruler. That's the understanding of God it leaves us with.

It started with God as Creator, moved to God as Savior and ends with God as Conqueror and King.

So what we learn is that continuing the worship we started on Sunday morning throughout the rest week has to do with our obedience to God as our ruler...

And if God's rules and commands sound too legalistic to you remember that the first command was to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

We have been freed from our sin through Jesus Christ in order to embrace God's creation and obey his original command!

And verses 7-10 reveal to us that participating in worship commissions us to go out from church into our homes, our places of work, our schools, our communities as Ambassadors for this mighty King of Glory.

Worshiping God throughout the week means we are promoting the Kingdom of God to our families, our friends, our communities, organizations, schools, cities, governments, countries...

whomever God gives us opportunity to connect with – telling them how glorious and amazing God is and urging them to open their gates to Jesus Christ...

whom God has made King of Kings and Lord of Lords who promised that one day He will return...

so as His Ambassadors we need to get people ready for that day and help them accept Christ as their creator, savior and king and worship Him as God...

so much more going on in our worship service than 5 songs, 2 scripture passages, a twenty minute sermon and a good cup of coffee! So much more according to Psalm 24.

So what know? Well, I think that rap artist Notorious B.I.G has a very profound phrase which speaks to what we've learned today and it's this...

“So if you don't know...now you know!”

Now you know friends – you know the reason, you know the requirements, you know the reward, and you know the result... You know what is going on in worship!

Knowledge is power and this has the power to change how you go forward in your participation in worship from today on.

Let's pray and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us, to work in us – to bless us, vindicate us and save us – to make the reality of what happens in worship something that we truly know we are experiencing...let's pray.