

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

Friends, if you think back a few years maybe you can remember what it was like to throw pop cans, and plastic, and cardboard cereal boxes into the garbage. Remember when we used to do that...

Now we don't do that anymore do we?...we've come to the realization that if we want to be better stewards of the creation, if we want to make difference in our world, we can start by taking pop cans, plastic and cardboard and recycling them.

Recycling has become a normal part of life for us now, it feels wrong to throw a pop can in the garbage instead of looking for a recycling container to put it in.

And this has happened because we have been educated about the importance of recycling and the difference it can make in using our limited resources more wisely.

And recycling is more than just sorting out our household garbage isn't it - it's really a lifestyle, a way of living that focuses on Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling – the three R's

And the hope of course, the “why” in all of this, is that we need to live this way – or at least try, so that we can save our environment, prevent it from falling apart, and make the world a better place.

And that's a very biblical way of thinking really... and Psalm 24:1 which we read this morning starts off by stating – *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;*

Friends this world belongs to God – all of it and everything and everyone in it - and so if there is a way of living which helps us to be good stewards and caretakers of the earth, if there is something we can do to save the world, we should do it right?

Now have you ever considered that a lifestyle of “worship” might be just the thing to help save our world?

Probably not? A lot of people think of worship as something we do on Sunday morning, which involves prayer, singing and a sermon, and hopefully doesn't take longer than an hour.

Or we might say that worship is the feeling of adoration, love and devotion that we express to Christ while we sing to Him.

And these experiences of worship are partially correct – but they are not the full experience of worship that the bible wants us to have. And it's not the kind of worship that will help save our world.

So what does Psalm 24 have to say to us about worship, the kind of worship that will save the world? It tells us that worship is a lifestyle – just like recycling is.

And to help us grasp what it means to understand worship as a lifestyle, to help worship become a part of our everyday life it gives us the 4 R's of worship.

Reason, Requirements, Reward and Results.

So, the Reason why we worship is first, and this focuses on the foundations of what God intended for worship to be.

Lets look at vs. 1-2

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 belongs to God!
What a huge claim this verse makes –everything in existence belongs to God.

Now, we often think about how “nature” – the rocks and trees the skies and seas belong to God - but what about cities, and houses? What about movie theatres, skateboard parks, schools? What about factories, governments, the Calgary Flames? What about abstract things like art, music, poetry, ideas, and theories, philosophy and fantasy, Google and Facebook and the internet? These are all part of God's creation and they all belong to God as well.

Friends a lifestyle of worship means that we begin to look at everything around us in this way. That it all belongs to God.

It's kind of like looking at something to see if it can be recycled – you look for the Recycling symbol on it. Lifestyle worship begins to see the first R of worship – The Reason - stamped on to everything around us. It all belongs to God.

Now there are two very important words in verse two - founded, and established. Elsewhere in scripture these two words are used to describe the building of cities, and temples.

So, when they are used here to describe how God created the earth, the Bible is telling us that when God created the world, he was creating a very big temple – an environment where worship can take place.

Now we still might think that worship is only prayer, singing and sermons. However, once God had created this “big temple” He filled it with animals, plants, and stars and He gave it to Adam and Eve, and He told them ...He commanded them...

“Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves along the ground.”(Gen 1:28)

He didn't say go build a sanctuary where you can pray, sing hymns and listen to a sermon... He said be fruitful and multiply!

And so the very first acts of worship were Adam and Eve being obedient to this command from God. Not entirely convinced?

Well the bible also says -The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.(Gen 2:15)

and the Hebrew words – which we translate here as “*tending*” and “*watching over*” are frequently used throughout the rest of the Old Testament in connection with the worship activities that we typically think of in relation to worship.

So, what the bible is saying to us is that what constitutes worship is first and foremost what we do to be obedient to God's calling to steward the creation, explore it, develop it and care for it.

Friends - remember being a Christian is not about turning away from the creation – but enjoying it and thanking God for it!

This is the foundation of lifestyle worship. It is the reason why we worship, is awesome, its liberating, freeing, because the things in life which you are passionate about – the unique gifts and talents God has given you can be pursued as a way to worship God – it brings him pleasure and it fulfills us. – Yes it can be that simple!

However, what makes it somewhat more complicated is that sin enters into the equation and it has disrupted the relationship between us and God. This is why there are requirements for worship, the second R, and its concerned with the relationship aspect of our worship – the relationship between God and us.

Sometimes I think we just take it for granted that we can come before God, like he's got some sort of open door policy. We can just waltz in and spend time with Him pretending like there was nothing going on between us and Him.

Psalm 24:3-4 reminds us that there are requirements for worship. It asks the question - Who can ascend up to God's temple? Who can go in? The answer is those who have clean hands and a pure heart. Those who have not given themselves to an idol, or swear by what is false, if you meet these requirements –then come on in.

Well friends - what about it? Do you meet these requirements? Do you have clean Hands – In other words is your life characterized by the right actions, do you do the right thing.

Do you have a pure Heart – In connection with clean hands this is speaking about the motivation for our actions? And it's not enough to just do the right thing – we must have the right motives too.

Think back on all that you've done this week prior to coming before God to worship...clean hands? Pure heart?

And what about lifting up our soul an idol? Now maybe you don't keep a little Buddha head your house, but friends we need to remember that the heart of idolatry is about worshipping the

creation instead of the creator. So yes it's wrong to say prayers to a statue and expect it to do what God alone can do....

But it's just as wrong to go about your day to day life, working, playing, eating and sleeping and whatever else you do just as an end in itself!

Its just as idolatrous that we look to the creation and confess through our actions that we believe it is our job, the economy, our family, our marriage, our skills and talents, whatever etc...that provides us with all that we need to live happy, safe, healthy lives.

When we do this we are swearing by what is false. We are saying that what is created can sustain what is created... and that's not true! – we are telling a lie. Friends the creation needs the creator in order to sustain it.

Just look at what idolizing the creation has done to our environment, look at what it does to the poor and helpless, look at what it has done to our world – the creation needs the creator.

So who of us can truly say that we meet the requirements for what it takes to come before God in worship? None of us can. But friends, the good news is that Jesus Christ meets those requirements for us.

Jesus Christ is the only one who has clean hands and a pure heart. He is the only one who has not engaged in idolatry – his entire life can be summed up in his prayer “Not my will but yours be done!” That is the Truth!

Friends we need to believe that Jesus Christ is the one who meets the requirements, and that is why every time we come together to worship God we need to explicitly proclaim we come in Jesus name because he alone meets the requirements, and so we enter into God's presence by putting our faith in Jesus.

Listen to Hebrews 10:19 *“we have confidence to enter the Most Holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, opened for us through the curtain, that is his body... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.”*

So Friends, are you beginning to see that worship is so much more than simply a Sunday service with singing and a sermon?

Are you beginning to grasp how worship encompasses our whole life and all that we do and has to do with our relationship with God? I hope so because this kind of worship carries a Reward with it. That's the third R... the Reward and its focuses on what unites us together in worship.

So, when we grow to experience all of life as worshiping God, Psalm 24 tells us that we will receive blessings and vindication, and that we will become part of a generation who seeks God's face.

In other words we become part of a community of people who after worshipping God in their everyday life – Monday to Saturday gather together on Sunday to worship God together, because they share the rewards of *lifestyle* worship in common.

So what does it mean to receive the rewards of blessing and vindication? Well friends, vindication is being cleared of any accusations that have been laid against you, and we all know there is plenty to be accused of isn't there?

But if we worship God through Jesus Christ we are promised to receive vindication – the accusations are true because Christ's life has been substituted for ours. Christ's death has paid for our sins and they have been forgiven.

And Friends, since our relationship with God is restored through Jesus Christ, if our life is centered on God – on obeying him and using the creation as he intended it to be used then you are fulfilling your creational purpose and God created that to be an amazing awesome extremely fulfilling thing.

That's what it means to receive blessing. Life goes well for you, for the world around you - for the creation.

Now remember I asked if you had ever considered that worship could be something that can save the world? This is how – by

receiving “vindication” and “blessing” from God and passing it on to others.

Friends, the bible reveals to us that the root problem in our world is Sin and how it affects those whom God has called to rule over the creation. Change that and you change the world!

Imagine how many wars would stop if governments were honoring Christ instead of themselves. Imagine how much waste and pollution would be preventing if manufacturers and business were honoring Christ instead of the bottom line. Imagine how different the content of the internet would be if webmasters were honoring Christ instead of the freedom of information...Imagine your work, your school, your family....

Because friends, this is the result of worship. It affects the world around because at the core of worship is the realization that God as Creator is the King of Kings, and through worship we turn away from the rebelling against Him, which is so rampant in our world and we become his loyal subjects once again.

This is the fourth R – the result and it is concerned with the reality that worship brings forth – namely the Kingdom of God.

Now to understand vs. 7-10 which talk about this Result, you need to be aware that in the ancient world in order to complete a conquest a King had to conquer the capital city – so for the most part cities were captured as trophies for the Kingdom, and not destroyed.

And a great ceremony would be held as the conquering King would enter the city and claim it as his own. The King, surrounded by his army and all his officials would approach the city – and the residents of the city would then open the gates and welcome their new ruler.

And once the King entered the city He would appoint positions of authority and government to those who were loyal to him and would see to it that the city would serve His interests, while He went back to His palace, or continued on his campaign.

So Friends, we need to begin to see what we do on Sunday mornings as we gather for what we call a worship service, is in reality a great ceremony where we as loyal subjects of the King throw open the gates of our hearts, our community, our city and welcome the conquering King.

And we are commissioned to go out from here with authority to be representatives of the Kingdom of God to ensure that our families, our workplace, our schools, our communities are called to be loyal to Christ and serve His interests.

And its important that we understand this is what is happening when we gather on a Sunday morning, because this is what determines how we plan our services and what we include in them.

We don't have band up here because it's cool, we don't use video because it's trendy, and we don't incorporate drama and dance simply because it's entertaining...no

Friends, understand that what when include something in our worship service we are making a statement that it belongs to God and that it is part of our life of worship!

And over the past 50 years the culture we live in has changed and developed - music styles, clothing styles, ways of thinking and speaking, technology, etc...

But one thing hasn't changed – it still all belongs to God and our calling is to make that claim, if not who else will and it's left to fall into the hands of the devil! And we make this claim by incorporating the significant parts of our culture into our worship service.

Each Sunday we continue to try and find more and more areas where we can open the gates of our culture to God and invite Him in to rule over it and to transform it so that it might serve Him.

Now, maybe you don't like certain parts of our culture – your tastes in music or technology reside elsewhere, that's ok –

Sunday mornings aren't really about what we like or feel comfortable with - they're about what we passionately want to see become a part of God's Kingdom and proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

Sunday mornings are about realizing that we have a part to play in God's mission to bring His Kingdom into every heart, every home, every business, every school, every community, every nation in this world – starting where he has placed us, right here in Springbank Hill.

What we include on Sunday mornings begins this mission symbolically and spiritually so that we will be inspired, empowered and equipped to start working alongside the Holy Spirit to make it a reality from Monday to Saturday.

Worship that can save the world – that's the Result

Friends, earlier on I asked you if you could remember when we used to just throw out pop cans and plastic bottles in the trash... but now we wouldn't think of it.

We'll friends, I pray that we will become as affected by the 4 R's of worship as we have been by the 3 R's of Recycling so that it feels odd, wrong even... not to worship Christ in every area of our life.

That it would be abnormal not to gather together regularly with other believers on Sunday

Because we know the Reason for worship, Christ has met the Requirements for worship, and we want the Rewards and to see the Results of worship!

All of life is worship friends – To Christ be the glory forever
Amen.