

The Habit of Worship
Gen 2:15-22, John 4:21-26

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And as I've said before I'm assuming that we are so thankful for all the blessings which God has given to us that we are motivated out of our gratitude to say "I want to be the best manager, the best caretaker, the best steward I can be with all that God has given me!" With the all the money, the time, the talents, and possessions that I'm responsible for.

And so we've looked at some people in the bible who are good examples – not perfect ones, but good ones because of how they exemplify one of the four habits, and we've looked at the implications of what exercising that particular habit would mean in our own lives.

So we've given our attention to learning about the Habit of Giving – because it's sort of the beginning habit, the habit which enables us to *give* the time, energy and resources needed to develop the other habits.

And we've learned about how the Habit of Studying the scriptures makes us wise for salvation in Jesus Christ, and how it gives us an understanding of what God is doing in our world and so we know how we can work with Him.

Then last week we discovered that there are differences between volunteering and serving, and that developing the Habit of Service comes from being served by Jesus Christ first forgiving our sins, and that the Habit of Service sets the context of how we relate to others.

Now today we are looking at the last habit, the Habit of Worship, and if...as we saw last week that the Habit of Service deals with horizontal relationships -how we relate to the people we serve - then the Habit of Worship deals with our vertical relationship – how we relate to the one who has first served us – Jesus Christ.

And in the same way that volunteering is different from the Habit of Serving, we need to distinguish between church attendance and the Habit of Worship - because they are two very different things.

A church attendee “goes to church” in the same way that someone would go to the movies, go to a show, or go to a Flames game.

You go when it can fit into your schedule, you go when you want to be inspired, you go because your parents or your spouse make you, or maybe just because it's something you've always done – it's a habit.

But the habit of Church Attendance misses the heart of why we've gathered together and it leaves us stuck in a rut of going through the motions without truly experiencing what it means to worship Jesus Christ.

But the habit of worship gets down to the heart of what worship is truly about and it sets us free from meaningless routine so that we grow and experience Christ in new and exciting ways – and ironically it motivates us to attend church!

So, if you want to develop the Habit of Worship in your life, the first thing you need to do is get away from church services and go back to the beginning – back to Genesis 2:15 when God

first created Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to “work it” and “take care of it.”

And we need to go back to the beginning because as I've said many times, where you start out determines where you end up, and when it comes to “worship” if you start out in Genesis you'll end up as a Habitual Worshipper, but if you don't – you'll end up as a church attender.

Why is this? Well it has to do with what you understand the term “worship” to mean. And if we want to understand it properly we need to stop thinking about church services and ask what does the bible have to say about it?

And the bible says that the meaning of the word “worship” is what we do in response to God's actions and initiatives; worship is our response to God's initiative.

Now I know this is not how Webster's defines the word “worship”, and it might not be how you would define worship, but it is what the bible means, and the English word “worship” is the best word we have to try to convey the original meaning

of the Hebrew and Greek, such is the challenge of translating things from one language to another.

So the first part to cultivating a Habit of worship is moving away from thinking about worship as what we do during that hour on Sunday morning, or that it's singing or praying, or adoring God, and beginning to understand it more broadly as our response to God's initiatives.

Whenever God does something – it demands a response. God speaks – let there be light, and it happens. God breathes into the nostril of this form He's made from the clay – and Adam comes to life!

God has made the entire creation, and He places Adam in the Garden and tells him to till the soil and be the garden's caretaker. This is God's initiative...and thus Adam's response is worship.

When Adam plants a garden – its worship, when he picks fruit from the trees - its worship, when God takes the initiative to

bring all the animals before Adam and He gives them names – that's worship.

When God brings Eve to Adam as a suitable partner, and he sees her and says “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” and they go and respond to God's command to be fruitful and multiply – that's worship.

All of a sudden our understanding of worship just got a little bit bigger didn't it.

If you're skeptical friends, realize that the Hebrew word which describe how Adam was supposed to till the soil of the garden “abad” is used all throughout the Old Testament with respect to responding to God's actions and is translated into english as “worship”

Let me give you an example - Exodus 8:1 “Then the LORD said to Moses, “*Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may **worship** me’*” *The Hebrew says “that they may **abad** me, that they may serve, work, labor for God.*

Interesting isn't it – they are not to be laborers for Pharaoh anymore, they are to be laborers for God – this is what it means to worship.

Friends The Habit of worship means that we serve, we work for, and we labor for God.

But again we need to return to the beginning... we need to go back to Genesis because it's easy to misunderstand that laboring for God means our activities are restricted to the church, to doing bible study, to evangelism, to mission work, helping the poor and needy – to the kinds of things that we think are serving God.

But friends, what did God say to Adam and Eve in Gen 1:28? He said “*subdue the earth and rule over it*”

Why? Because God took the initiative to create us in His image, He took initiative to make us His representatives to the rest of the creation. So when we respond to this...its worship! This is how we serve God, its how we labor for Him – on behalf of Him.

And that means serving God is not restricted to church work, or charity work – as wonderful as those things are, serving God – worshiping God happens when we till the soil as farmers, when we drill for oil and mine for gold, it happens when we fish, when we hunt,

It happens when we make investments, when we buy and sell, when we play sports, when we cook food, when we compose music, when we paint pictures and make movies.

Anything that involves us working with some aspect of this universe which God created is our response to his initiative to make us in His own image – to make us his representatives in this world – that is worship.

At least that is what worship should be, it's what worship could be...if it were not for Sin.

You see friends, the other aspect of God placing Adam in the garden was that he was to be its caretaker – and any caretaker has guidelines which they operate by.

So its no surprise that as soon as God commissions Adam as the caretaker of the garden, He gives the rules. *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

In other words God is saying to Adam, although you are a representative of God, you are not God – you have freedom with-in certain limits and those limits are that it is God’s prerogative to determine what is right and wrong, not ours – and this tree is off limits to represent that.

Case in point – Adam is alone, but it is God who declares this situation not to be good – not Adam, and it’s God who then provides the solution, not Adam.

So Adam is the caretaker, the keeper of the rules, and the Hebrew word for this is “shamar.” Adam is the “shamar” the watchman, the guard. As long as Adam and Eve exercise the freedom they have as God’s representatives without trying to usurp God’s prerogative in deciding what is good and evil – they are worshipping.

But when they transgress that boundary and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they are rebelling – and Sin warps and distorts them and affects how they rule over the creation.

As a result the human race develops and does not labor for God, and they do not keep God’s command – they do not worship God.

They decide for themselves what is good and evil – eg. the story of Lamech’s decision to take two wives in Gen 4, and Paul description in Romans 1 of humanity’s decision to consummate sexual desires with same sex partners. Both are examples of rebelling against what God decided was the right solution to Adam’s loneliness.

And they labor, they work hard for themselves – eg. the story of the tower of Babel in Gen 11, a tower and city built as a monument to human industry and pride – impressive enough to reach to the heavens and impress God himself they think.

But God re-initiates a relationship with humanity, and how the people He reveals himself to respond to him is now worship.

So we go through a period in history when the right way to worship God, to serve Him was to be obedient and keep the instructions He prescribed in the Mosaic Law.

There are festivals and sacrifices, offerings, tabernacles and temples, Levites and Priests and the distinction between clean and unclean.

And then God takes another initiative, one that He's hinted about doing for a long time – ever since Adam and Eve sinned.

He sends a savior to do something about our sin – God takes the initiative and becomes one of us in Jesus Christ, and this initiative fulfills all of God's other initiatives making them obsolete so that what is most important now is how we respond to Jesus Christ.

In becoming human in Jesus Christ, God wanted to undo the heart of our rebellion that prevents us from laboring for God

and keeps pushing us to continue to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Jesus Christ became the new human who labored for God, and who submitted to God's prerogative to determine what was good and evil – in other words Jesus Christ became the perfect worshipper – He embodied the Habit of worship.

And because his labor for God was to face shame and scorn on the cross and put our sinful nature to death, and because He submitted to God's determination that this was good and not something evil – He was raised to new life and was made Lord of the Universe.

So what is our response to this? It is to recognize our sin and our need for forgiveness and cleansing and to believe and trust that Jesus Christ is the one who forgives and cleanses us. That's should be our response – that is our worship!

And we should respond to being forgiven and cleansed from sin by being the best stewards that we can be with the creation – laboring for God in all we do.

This is what Jesus means when he says “*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks*” (John 4:23)

Worship in Spirit and in Truth – what does this mean?

Well friends, Jesus said that He was the way and the Truth – so to worship, to respond to God in the Truth is to respond to God through Jesus Christ.

But remember Jesus is also the Word of God – the Word, by which all things were created, the creation which we were made to rule over as God’s representatives.

So to respond through Jesus Christ, to worship through Jesus Christ is also to take up our original calling again and labor for God in everything we do, and to keep God’s command to reserve the right to determine good and evil for God alone.

But that’s where worship in Spirit comes in. Because the while scriptures give us some guidelines about what’s good and what is evil they don’t cover every situation.

What is good or evil in when it comes to being stewards of science and biology when we can clone or keep people biologically alive indefinitely? What about stewarding economics and being able to manipulate stocks and create enormous amounts of money without any actual wealth connected to those numbers?

Or maybe we face more common dilemmas of determining what companies we should invest in, what house should we buy, where we send our kids to school, or who we should vote for?

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Jesus specifically said that He sent the Holy Spirit “*to guide us into all truth.*” (John 16:13) To guide us in developing and

ruling over the creation according to what God has determined and will determine is good and evil.

Worship in Spirit and in Truth – friends that is the essence of what it means to exercise the Habit of Worship in our lives.

So much more than an hour on Sunday, so much more than just music and singing, and because it is so much more than that- when we do gather on Sunday, and sing praises, offer our prayers, and study the scriptures... we experience a new depth of meaning and an emotional response that we will never get from simply attending a church service.

But the first step is to understand the reality of worship really is, and we've tried to cover that today - Worship is our response to God's initiatives.

So the next step is for you to make yourself aware of all that God does in your life – so that you can respond, so that you can worship....Habitually... in Spirit and in Truth. Amen.

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But friends, what did God say to Adam and Eve in Gen 1:28? He said “*subdue the earth and rule over it*”

Why? Because God took the initiative to create us in His image, He took initiative to make us His representatives to the rest of the creation. So when we respond to this...its worship! This is how we serve God, its how we labor for Him – on behalf of Him.

And that means serving God is not restricted to church work, or charity work – as wonderful as those things are, serving God – worshiping God happens when we till the soil as farmers, when we drill for oil and mine for gold, it happens when we fish, when we hunt,

It happens when we make investments, when we buy and sell, when we play sports, when we cook food, when we compose music, when we paint pictures and make movies.

Anything that involves us working with some aspect of this universe which God created is our response to his initiative to make us in His own image – to make us his representatives in this world – that is worship.

At least that is what worship should be, it's what worship could be...if it were not for Sin.

You see friends, the other aspect of God placing Adam in the garden was that he was to be its caretaker – and any caretaker has guidelines which they operate by.

So its no surprise that as soon as God commissions Adam as the caretaker of the garden, He gives the rules. *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

In other words God is saying to Adam, although you are a representative of God, you are not God – you have freedom with-in certain limits and those limits are that it is God’s prerogative to determine what is right and wrong, not ours – and this tree is off limits to represent that.

Case in point – Adam is alone, but it is God who declares this situation not to be good – not Adam, and it’s God who then provides the solution, not Adam.

So Adam is the caretaker, the keeper of the rules, and the Hebrew word for this is “shamar.” Adam is the “shamar” the watchman, the guard. As long as Adam and Eve exercise the freedom they have as God’s representatives without trying to usurp God’s prerogative in deciding what is good and evil – they are worshipping.

But when they transgress that boundary and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they are rebelling – and Sin warps and distorts them and affects how they rule over the creation.

As a result the human race develops and does not labor for God, and they do not keep God’s command – they do not worship God.

They decide for themselves what is good and evil – eg. the story of Lamech’s decision to take two wives in Gen 4, and Paul description in Romans 1 of humanity’s decision to consummate sexual desires with same sex partners. Both are examples of rebelling against what God decided was the right solution to Adam’s loneliness.

And they labor, they work hard for themselves – eg. the story of the tower of Babel in Gen 11, a tower and city built as a monument to human industry and pride – impressive enough to reach to the heavens and impress God himself they think.

But God re-initiates a relationship with humanity, and how the people He reveals himself to respond to him is now worship.

So we go through a period in history when the right way to worship God, to serve Him was to be obedient and keep the instructions He prescribed in the Mosaic Law.

There are festivals and sacrifices, offerings, tabernacles and temples, Levites and Priests and the distinction between clean and unclean.

And then God takes another initiative, one that He's hinted about doing for a long time – ever since Adam and Eve sinned.

He sends a savior to do something about our sin – God takes the initiative and becomes one of us in Jesus Christ, and this initiative fulfills all of God's other initiatives making them obsolete so that what is most important now is how we respond to Jesus Christ.

In becoming human in Jesus Christ, God wanted to undo the heart of our rebellion that prevents us from laboring for God

and keeps pushing us to continue to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Jesus Christ became the new human who labored for God, and who submitted to God's prerogative to determine what was good and evil – in other words Jesus Christ became the perfect worshipper – He embodied the Habit of worship.

And because his labor for God was to face shame and scorn on the cross and put our sinful nature to death, and because He submitted to God's determination that this was good and not something evil – He was raised to new life and was made Lord of the Universe.

So what is our response to this? It is to recognize our sin and our need for forgiveness and cleansing and to believe and trust that Jesus Christ is the one who forgives and cleanses us. That's should be our response – that is our worship!

And we should respond to being forgiven and cleansed from sin by being the best stewards that we can be with the creation – laboring for God in all we do.

This is what Jesus means when he says “*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks*” (John 4:23)

Worship in Spirit and in Truth – what does this mean?

Well friends, Jesus said that He was the way and the Truth – so to worship, to respond to God in the Truth is to respond to God through Jesus Christ.

But remember Jesus is also the Word of God – the Word, by which all things were created, the creation which we were made to rule over as God’s representatives.

So to respond through Jesus Christ, to worship through Jesus Christ is also to take up our original calling again and labor for God in everything we do, and to keep God’s command to reserve the right to determine good and evil for God alone.

But that’s where worship in Spirit comes in. Because the while scriptures give us some guidelines about what’s good and what is evil they don’t cover every situation.

What is good or evil in when it comes to being stewards of science and biology when we can clone or keep people biologically alive indefinitely? What about stewarding economics and being able to manipulate stocks and create enormous amounts of money without any actual wealth connected to those numbers?

Or maybe we face more common dilemmas of determining what companies we should invest in, what house should we buy, where we send our kids to school, or who we should vote for?

In these situations we need to respond, to steward, to worship with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus specifically said that He sent the Holy Spirit “*to guide us into all truth.*” (John 16:13) To guide us in developing and

ruling over the creation according to what God has determined and will determine is good and evil.

Worship in Spirit and in Truth – friends that is the essence of what it means to exercise the Habit of Worship in our lives.

So much more than an hour on Sunday, so much more than just music and singing, and because it is so much more than that- when we do gather on Sunday, and sing praises, offer our prayers, and study the scriptures... we experience a new depth of meaning and an emotional response that we will never get from simply attending a church service.

But the first step is to understand the reality of worship really is, and we've tried to cover that today - Worship is our response to God's initiatives.

So the next step is for you to make yourself aware of all that God does in your life – so that you can respond, so that you can worship....Habitually... in Spirit and in Truth. Amen.