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Title: Be Worshipful

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Text: [Psalm 100](#) and [Acts 2:42-47](#)

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[Watch the service.](#)



We begin a worship series called #beChurch which is both a kickoff series and a vision for the church and for our lives together series. I want to say upfront that this is not a series that is designed to simply attract people to and to grow our worship attendance. If you have spent time in church, you are probably used to the fall kick off, the

church events designed to bring people back to church after the summer break, when many people take church off and most programs take a well-deserved break. This is not that kind of kick-off. Second, I want to say this is not a series that is designed to bring people physically back into our space. One of the gifts, if there are any, of the COVID-19 pandemic, is that in March of 2020, we had to pivot, very quickly, I might add, to livestream our worship services. It was something that had been talked about, to expand our witness and reach. We found reasons not to do this, yet we discovered when pressed, we could begin livestreaming our services with about a two-week notice. This has created a way for our worship services to not be limited by time, by space, by geography. Online worship is now a viable way for people to connect to the church and a viable way for us to reach more people. So, those are two things that this series is not.

Now, let me tell you what it is...it is a series about engagement. It is a series about how our engagement in what God is doing in our lives, in this church, in the world, makes a difference. It makes a difference in your life and mine, it makes a difference in other's lives as well. It's a series about how we believe that engagement in the love and grace of God as we know through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

Throughout this series, we will look at some of the differences between church attendance and church engagement.

I like the point that church consultant and author Carey Nieuwhof makes: "Jesus never said attend me. He said follow me."

He goes on to say, the only reasons one followed Jesus in Jesus' day was that you were either intrigued by Jesus and what he was doing or because you had a sense that he was who he said he was. You were engaged...you didn't attend Jesus, you followed him.

You didn't attend a church, rather you were the church.

Early Christians understood engagement. Our overarching scripture for this series comes from the book of Acts, which describes the life of some of the earliest Christian communities.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved". Acts 2:42-47 NRSV

Early followers of Jesus did not attend church, they were the church. Had social media and hashtags been around back then, had Peter had twitter and tik tok to use, they would have been on board with the idea of #beChurch. That is what this series is about, and it is our hope that you will feel refreshed, inspired, and challenged by the idea of being the church.

We begin the series by looking at worship, what it means and why it matters that we be worshipful.

We are told the early church devoted themselves to teaching, and even many years before that, we have the Psalms, which in many ways are some of the earliest worship texts we have. The Psalms were used for daily worship.

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Psalm 100:1-3

Make a joyful noise
Worship the Lord with gladness
Come into God's presence
Know that the Lord is God
We are God's people.

It's interesting...when we read through the Bible, there are few if any texts about *why* we worship. However, there are many about the *importance* of worship.

My final year of seminary, I worked as a teaching assistant in an Introduction to Worship class, required of all first year Master of Divinity students. The professor I was working for was a well thought of worship professor and a world-renowned Organist. So much so that he spent many weekends traveling around the country to play the organ. The morning of the first class of the semester, which was an 8 AM class, he called me about 7 AM. He had been giving a concert and a recital the evening before in Detroit and his evening flight back to Atlanta had been cancelled. There was no early morning flight that would get him back in time to class, so he was calling me to tell me to take roll, pass out the Syllabus, make sure people understood the syllabus, and then he asked me to talk to them about worship. I pleaded that I wasn't really prepared to do that, and he said to me, "sure you are, just talk to the class about the mystery of worship. Tell them about what happens when we make room for God's Spirit through the act of worship."

I first I thought he was just trying to get me off the phone, but then I realized he was right. There is something that happens when we worship God when we worship God together. It's happened when we are in a large room together and when we are digitally connected. I suspect you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you have been in a worship experience together and whether it's through song, prayer, message, or table, you can sense that something is different. That *something* has happened.

The Psalmist captures this so well in saying: "*Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*" Psalm 100:3

Worship, what we experience in this moment, is a gift from God. Much like prayer, we don't worship God because God needs to be worshipped, rather we worship because we need God. We need the gift of a being in relationship and in the presence of God.

I asked a question on Facebook a few weeks ago about worship and two themes emerged in response. The first was that many said that worship reminds them of something bigger than the day to day. We can get caught up in what is happening in any moment, but worship centers us around the bigger picture, a picture painted with God's love and God's grace.

The second theme that emerged was the reminder that none of us are alone. Almost to a person, whether people have worshipped online or in person, there was power in worshipping together. There is power in people coming together to worship the living God. The truth is that you cannot be a Christian alone.

We are hard-wired to be worshipful together. The early church knew this: Listen again to how they designed their lives.

"They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers." Acts 2:42 MSG

In this text, we hear the rhythm of worship, the teaching, the common meal, the prayers...the life together.

We hear in the Psalms, which was the songbook of the early church, to make a joyful noise, to come into the Lord's presence with singing... life together.

The word liturgy describes the songs, the prayers, the words, the meal... the word liturgy describes what we do in worship. It comes from a Greek word, that means, "the work of the people.": life together.

A third theme about what is important about worship together is perhaps best captured in this story told by Anne Lamott about a little girl who got lost in her hometown. She wandered out of neighborhood and down a few streets and became seriously lost. She began to cry as she could not find her way home. A police officer came by and offered to help her find her way home. He asked her if she knew her address and she didn't, so he invited her into the front seat of his patrol car, and they started driving around town. She was looking for landmarks, desperately seeking any landmark that would help her get home. They turned the corner and she saw her church. She screamed out, stop, stop right here. The police officer asked, "do you live at the church?". No, she said laughing, I don't live at the church. Well, you don't live here, we should keep looking. No, she said, let me out here. I know my way home from the church. I know how to get home from the church.

It is critical to be Worshipful because we need to know our way home. Amidst all in the world that seeks to undo us and derail us, we need to know our way home. At its best, at its most faithful, the church shows us the way home. Shows us to the very heart of God, the God who redeems us and sustains us.

The longer I have worshipped each week in a community of people, the more convinced I am that my professor was right. When we worship together, when we make worship a priority, something happens. Even though we can't quite explain it, it is something powerful.

We are reminded or come to know for the first time of God's love and grace and there is something bigger at work than what we might see in any given moment.

We see the value in life together with God at the center of that life together. We are reminded of the source of all of life, of our lives. And we experience the power of others in our lives.

And finally, worship enables us to find our way home. Even when we feel lost, worship shows us the way to home, to our true life.

Let Us Pray