

Copyright September 12. Geist Christian Church. All Rights Reserved.

Title: Be Worshipful

Preaching: Ryan Hazen, Lead Pastor, Mud Creek Campus

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

E-mail: [Ryan Hazen](#)

[Watch the service.](#)



When the staff first talked about this weekend in the life of Geist Christian Church, we had some visions that are different from reality. We envisioned this weekend as the traditional time when people could re-engage with church. The pandemic would be over and we could begin a whole host of new programs and people could be

physically back together. Obviously, the pandemic isn't over and we're still learning things about what it means to be the church in this new time and it continues to change week to week.

We've very intentionally called this new series - #beChurch. We certainly hope that over time, more and more people will be drawn to attending Geist Christian Church. But if that's what it's all about, we might as well have called it ATTEND CHURCH. BE CHURCH implies that it's more than attendance that God wants from us – God wants us to #beChurch. But what exactly does that mean? We'll use scripture as our guide over these four weeks to answer that question. Today, we'll take a look at us – here in this place – the act of worship.

The word worship comes from the Old English *weorthscipe*, which combines two words meaning "worth acrive" or a "give worth to." ¹ So, by definition, worship is ascribing worth to something or someone. There is nothing difficult about worship. Christian or non-Christian, pagan or holy, every human being worships something. Consider a group of sports fans watching and talking about a game. They worship. Consider a group of teenagers at a concert. They worship. We readily worship food, sports, travel, arts, and music. We most certainly worship comfort, control, power, achievement, work, money, and relationships.

But true worship is also a matter of the heart. It must be felt. It can't be just a ritual. It can't be just going through the motions. True worship is a heartfelt expression of love, adoration, admiration, fascination, wonder, and celebration. In church, it's something that happens in your heart and soul

when you begin to praise God for who God is and give thanks for what God has done – in the case of us Christians, sending Jesus Christ to stand in our place.

I want to challenge you whenever and wherever you worship – whether you physically come to this place or if you tune in online or when you worship on a mountaintop or a beach - to think in three directions – UPWARD, INWARD, and OUTWARD. ² Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to look at the worship experience of Isaiah recorded in Isaiah 6. I know it is the scripture that Schuyler used as his text last week to talk about his call to ministry. Instead of Isaiah's call, I want to look at Isaiah's worship experience.

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke." (Isaiah 6:1-4).

Worship should first draw you upward, to glimpse God in glory. Worship should focus on our view of God. It should pull our affections off our idols and put them onto God. It should cause us to remember how good God is, how big God is, how kind, powerful, and loving God is, and how holy God is. Whenever you worship – be drawn UPWARD.

Second, worship should bring an inward look. Continuing Isaiah's path – "'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.' Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it, he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'" (Isaiah 6:5-7).

When you see God for who God is, as Isaiah did, you start to see yourself for who you are. You start seeing things in your heart and in your life that didn't bother you before. But notice that after Isaiah saw and confessed his sinfulness, he also experienced the mercy, grace, and forgiveness of God. That's what happens when you worship. Whenever you worship – be drawn INWARD.

But worship doesn't end there. There's one more verse. Isaiah's inward look is followed by an outward look. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send

me!" (Isaiah 6:8) Genuine worship always leads to an outward look—a personal response or action—a desire to be obedient to whatever God calls you to do. Whenever you worship – be propelled OUTWARD.

Genuine worship isn't just singing songs and getting a good feeling in your heart. Genuine worship is seeing God for who God is—power, greatness, holiness, sovereignty, love, and compassion—and then giving God the best of your time, your talents, your thoughts, your words, and your deeds. True worship is seeing afresh the tremendous worth of God and, in response, giving God the best of everything you have.

We are God's people, the sheep of God's pasture. God made us, we belong to God and for that, we come before God in praise. That's the essence of the 100th Psalm. Worship has evolved over the years. We don't have the flying seraphs carrying hot coals like described in Isaiah – and for that, I think I'm thankful. We tend to look a little more like the early Christian community in the Book of Acts. Even with that guide, Christians have argued and split over what worship should look like. Our ancestors in the faith, the Restoration Movement, split in 1906 over whether there should be musical instruments in worship because they are not mentioned in the New Testament.

Acts begins with a wind that blows through the people and there is the imagery of fire. The Spirit is tangible and touchable. People are bewildered and amazed and perplexed. Peter stands up and gives the kind of sermon that most of us as preachers can only dream of giving. He weaves in the Hebrew Scriptures with Jesus' life and calls on them to join this band of believers that worship and serve - and three thousand people join the young Christian community.

But it doesn't end with a mad, emotional revival. Listen to how this passage describes that early worship mostly meeting in homes. "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).

They are doing theology, they are living together, they are eating together, they are praying together--this is a kind of community that most church leaders would give anything to experience. And while this part of the story is

not as noisy as that earlier revival, it has its reckless beauty--the new Christians are giving everything away that they have so that no one will be hungry or homeless and doing it all in awe and with gladness and joy--and the community just keeps growing every single day. Did you hear it there too? Just like Isaiah only in a different format. Awe came upon them – UPWARD. Breaking of bread and prayers – INWARD. Distribute offerings to any with need – OUTWARD.

The whole story in Acts and the early church is exciting and it is a wild ride of a young Church just leaping off into the world empowered by the Spirit and loving people and preaching the Good News of Jesus. But because the church is human, it's also full of stories of conflict, exclusion, and failures. Almost every negative experience of the church can be traced to us making the church about us and not about God. The same can be said for worship. When we make worship about us and not about God, we've lost sight of why we're here.

Imagine celebrating a birthday party for your child. You buy a cake, invite guests, and give her presents. Now imagine discussing the party with your spouse later that night. Your spouse asks you what you thought of the party. You say, "I don't know. I didn't get anything out of it. It didn't impact me. We had chocolate cake and I know that's her favorite, but my favorite is lemon. People didn't bring me presents. We sang happy birthday with a guitar, but I'd rather hear it on an organ." We say these things about worship all the time because we make it primarily about us rather than primarily about God.

Isaac Wardell, a minister of worship in Charlottesville, Virginia, recently posed this question to a group attending a workshop on church music. "Do you think of gathered worship as being more like a concert hall or a banquet hall." How they – how we – answer that question is very revealing to why worship is important to us. Wardell says, "If the answer is a concert hall, we show up as passive observers and critics, eager to have the itches of our preferences and felt needs scratched. If the answer is a banquet hall, that's a communal gathering. We come hungry and in community, ready to participate and share the experience with one another." ³

Here we are today – September 12, 2021 - over 2,000 years after those first believers gathered in houses for worship and the church is still moving. The church is still moving because the Spirit is still moving. The failures of the early Church didn't stop the Spirit from continuing to move and spread the Good News that "the blind see and the lame walk" for nearly two thousand years. Whatever obstacles COVID has thrown us cannot stop the grace of Jesus Christ from continuing to move in us and through us.

The main character in the book of Acts is not Peter, even with his fantastic preaching. The main character in the book of Acts is not Paul, even with his radical missionary work. It is not even the church with her radical expansion. The main character of the Book of Acts is the Holy Spirit and the way that the Spirit sweeps through our lives, whether we want it to or not, and sweeps through our churches even when we can't see a way that things can be made new.

Our good news is tremendous news, it is the best news of all, that Christ cannot be stopped by our sin and our failures, whether those sins are institutional or individual. And the good news is that, at least in this church, in this service of worship, all are welcome in all our messiness and diversity. This is us. This is the church. This is how we worship.

In 1968, one of my mentors, the pastor of the first church I served after ordination, John Bean, gave an address on worship to the Disciples Divinity House at the University of Chicago.⁴ This week, as Ruth was cleaning out our home office, a copy of his address emerged. He says that the planners of the worship experience should provide a way for the worshipper to experience a presence of God that is and will always be holy, a way to have moments in which they know God is with them and that they are equipped as missionaries in the world. That sounds a lot like UPWARD, INWARD, OUTWARD.

He argues that the hymns that are chosen are not picked because they are pretty but because they have meaning – that the parameters are not decoration to add some color but reminders of where in Christ's journey we find ourselves.

Every time you enter this space or participate in worship online, I hope that you see yourselves in a banquet hall and not a concert hall. I hope that you gather around this table, hungry for the spirit of God to dwell in you richly through Jesus Christ and that you will want to share the abundance of the table with everyone. Something powerful happens when we worship together. We know God's power – UPWARD. We know that we have sinned and Christ died for us – INWARD. We know that we are called to be Christlike in the world – OUTWARD.

¹ Etymology of worship found at <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/worship>.

² Idea of upward, inward, outward found in article by Chip Ingram, "Worship: The Key to Drawing Near to God," posted at www.crosswalk.com

³ Both of these illustrations found at <https://thepastorsworkshop.com/sermon-illustrations-2/sermon-illustrations-worship/>.

⁴ Worship: The Gathered at the Secular Community by John R. Bean. Address given on January 15, 1968 at a conference on "Worship and Community" held at the Disciples Divinity House at the University of Chicago. Published in DDH Bulletin, Volume 39, No. 1, Autumn, 1967,