

The Church Jesus Loves

by Stuart Briscoe

The church is not a place we go, but a community of people uniquely called by God to be worshippers, and to live well spiritually.

Duration: 52:44

Scripture: Acts 2:1

Topics: "Worship And Praise", "Human Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing the creator through the things that are created. He uses examples of music, paintings, and books to illustrate how we can gain insight into the creator through his creations. The speaker also highlights the need for human beings to move beyond focusing solely on physical and social aspects of life and to contemplate what it means to be a human being. He encourages worship as a way to appreciate and serve God, and mentions different ways in which worship can be expressed. The sermon concludes with the speaker posing deep questions about God's interest in individuals and his purpose for creating them.

Transcript

I am Pastor Steph of the Worship Arts Ministry, and I have the privilege to introduce our guest speaker to you this morning. Before I came to Blackhawk, I was serving as one of the worship leaders at Elmbrook Church over in Milwaukee, and I had the great delight to serve under the leadership of Stuart Briscoe. Stuart has been involved in very significant ways in helping to shape me spiritually.

His commitment to the Word of God is extraordinary, his knowledge is extraordinary, and his desire to serve matches it. So I am grateful to welcome him here. He was a senior pastor at Elmbrook for 30 years, and now he and Jill are serving as ministers-at-large through Elmbrook Church, traveling around the world to equip pastors and missionaries who haven't had the benefit of seminary training.

So we are just so privileged to have them both here this morning, all day today, preaching in both rooms, and I am personally delighted to welcome you, Stuart. Thank you for making time for us, my friend Stuart Briscoe. Well thank you, Steph, very much.

Very nice to be here, but Jill and I are at an age now where it's just nice to be anywhere, and we thank you very much indeed for the kind invitation to come here, and of course those of you who didn't invite us, thanks for nothing. You're probably saying to yourself, you know, if you guys have sort of stepped down

from the senior pastorate at Elmbrook in order to do international ministries, working with pastors in developing world churches, why are you in Madison, Wisconsin at Blackhawk? And that's a very difficult question to answer, so I'm sorry you brought it up, but I actually have a question for you. We're taking a break between overseas trips, and Stephanie felt that this was the most appropriate way that we could take a break, and so that's why we're here.

Well it really is a pleasure to be with you, and I want to leave you with one basic thought this morning. I don't want to overtax you, and here it is. For those of you who are sleepy, you can doze off after this, but you'll know what you were sleeping through.

Church is not somewhere we go. Church is something we are. That's it.

Now I do have a few minutes left, so let me elaborate on this a little bit. You may have heard the story, if not you're going to hear it now, of the man on a desert island who was rescued after 25 years, and the people who rescued him were very intrigued. They said, how long have you been here? He said, 25 years.

How many people on the island? He said, I'm the only one. They said, that's amazing, what are these buildings? He said, I built them, I had nothing else to do. They said, what's that one there? He said, that's my home.

He said, that's beautiful, and what's the one next to it? He said, that's the church I go to. He said, you build a church? He said, yeah. He said, well who goes? He said, I'm the only person on the island.

He said, that's incredible, that's amazing. What's that other building there? I said, that's nothing, that's the church I used to go to. Now what is wrong with that picture? There is something not quite right about that picture, I think, isn't there? Well, the fundamental thing that's wrong is that the church is not somewhere we go.

Church is something we are. The church is a community of people uniquely called by God and left in this world to be something. To be something.

And there are many, many ways in which we can explore this basic idea, but the one thing that I want to explore with you this morning is this, that one of the distinctives of this community of believers, this group of people who are something different, is simply this. They are a worshipping community. They are a worshipping community.

In Acts chapter 13, we have the record, a part of the record, of a wonderful church in the city of Antioch of Syria. And this is what it says about them, Acts 13.1. In the church of Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, who'd been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. That incidentally is just a little account of something absolutely monumental. That was the birth of the missionary movement.

And the reason that you and I are here today is because of the missionary movement. And the reason that we travel the world today and go on every continent and find wherever we go that the church has been planted in varying degrees of health is because of the mission movement. And this is where it really got

moving.

So this is a critically important passage of scripture. But notice it talks about the church being gathered. You don't gather a building.

You know, church isn't somewhere you go. The church is the people. They were gathered together and what they did when they gathered together was worship.

And so that's what I want to explore with you this morning. What does it mean to be the church? With particular reference, what does it mean to be a community of worshipers? When I was a young boy, I used to listen to preachers because my dad was one. And so I had to listen to him.

And he occasionally would repeat himself. And we used to remind him about that. And he liked to preach from John chapter four about a lady there who he called the woman of Samaria.

And I was rather intrigued by this lady. I had a mental picture of her. Now the reason she was called the woman of Samaria was that she was a woman who lived in Samaria, funnily enough.

But my mental picture was of a rather jolly, rather round lady because she was the woman of some area. And I used to think a lot about this woman of some area. Well anyway, we won't go into that.

When Jesus met this particular lady in a town called Syker, actually the modern town built where Syker was is called Nablus and it's on what we now call the occupied West Bank. And it's one of the areas where there's all kinds of tension and trouble. You often read about it in the news at the present time.

It was actually there that Jesus met this woman. And while they were in a conversation, the conversation quite understandably turned to religion. And the woman got a little antsy about this discussion as people often do when you get into talk about religion.

And she said in the end, the sort of thing that people tend to say, well, you know, we go to this church, we're Samaritans and we worship the way Samaritans do. You're a Jew, she said to Jesus, and you worship the way Jews do. And Jesus said a very, very interesting thing to her.

He said the day is coming when it won't matter whether you worship on this mountain, that Mount Gerizim, that's where the Samaritans were, or whether you worship on Mount Zion, that was where the Jews worshipped. One of these days that won't matter at all. But the day is coming, in fact the hour is now here, when people will worship God in spirit and in truth.

And then he said this amazing thing. He said because that's what God's looking for. That's what God is looking for.

That's what God is seeking. He is seeking people who will worship him in spirit and in truth. Now I'm very intrigued with that statement for a number of reasons.

You've probably noticed, in fact you've obviously noticed, that there seems to be one remaining vice and one remaining virtue in our world at the present time. The one remaining vice is intolerance. And the one remaining virtue is tolerance.

We've just got to be tolerant. Now I am not here to advocate intolerance, please don't misunderstand me. But as far as religion is concerned, this tolerance has gone to ridiculous lengths now where we are to

tolerate what everybody else believes, which in a sense is fair enough.

Even God gives you the total right to be dead wrong. So why should I deny everybody the right to be dead wrong when God says sure go ahead, but you'll live with the consequences of being dead wrong. But the important thing to realize is this, that we're taking this to a ridiculous end where we're not only saying well if you want to believe that, that's fine, go right ahead.

What we're really saying now is it doesn't really matter what you believe because it's all basically the same. Now that just is not true. And this idea, as long as you're sincere, that's all that matters.

The simple fact of the matter is this, you can be sincerely wrong. And we need to accept that. And Christianity is not the same as other religions.

And one of the great distinctives between Christianity and other religions is this, in general terms you can say that other religions or the religious impulse in human beings is basically about human beings seeking God. That's in a very broad general sense. That is what religions are about.

They're about human beings seeking God. But Christianity, now listen very carefully, Christianity is all about God seeking people. That is fundamentally different.

Now there are other fundamental differences but when you get into a discussion with people who just want you to go along with this nice cozy idea that everything's basically the same, it doesn't really matter, bear that in mind. But if that is true, if it is true that God is actively seeking people, one of the biggest questions we can ever ask is what in the world are you looking for? What's he looking for? And here is the astounding answer, he is looking for worshippers. He's looking for worshippers.

And the question I keep asking myself is this, if God is actively in the world today looking for something, and I know that what he's looking for is a worshipper, the question I ask myself is this, did he find one in me? Did he find one in me? C.S. Lewis, you remember C.S. Lewis? He was the man from Belfast who became a great professor of medieval literature in Oxford and in Cambridge, and after all kinds of stages of his spiritual journey, he finished up not only a convinced Christian but a brilliant apologist. He went through all kinds of stages in his pilgrimage and at one stage he didn't like God very much. Some of you can probably empathise with this, you know, the things about God you don't like very much.

What he didn't like about God was this, that God was sitting up there saying, come on worship me, come on worship me, I want people to worship me and you must forgive me, well forgive Lewis because this is in quotes, he said God sounds rather like a vain woman. He said it, not me, don't throw anything. God sounds like a vain woman who needs compliments all the time in order to boost her rather fragile ego.

But does God have a fragile ego? Is he sitting up there and saying, you know, I wish somebody would write a song about me saying he's altogether wonderful and he's altogether beautiful and I wish people would, you know, on a nice Sunday morning they go and sit in a stuffy church instead of being outside in the beautiful sunlight and they just stand there and say he's altogether lovely, he's altogether beautiful and I would feel so good if he did that and it would make me feel so good about myself. You see, you know, we're always talking about doing stuff to make ourselves feel good about something, right? Well some people got the idea God's like that, he wants us to worship him so he'll feel good about himself. Is that what he's looking for? Well nobody's going to articulate that except C.S. Lewis but some of us have got a sneaking suspicion that's the problem.

Well if that is not the case, if God is not seeking people to worship him for his benefit, why in the world is he doing it? And the answer must be for our benefit. He wants us to worship him for our benefit. Well how does that compute? It seems to me that's an important question.

Why is God looking for people to worship him so that it will benefit the people who worship him? Look at it this way. Human beings are uniquely wired up and we need to understand what is unique about us. When you say, well the thing that's unique about us is we're alive.

We are alive. That is true but it's not what is unique about you. Cucumbers are alive too.

In fact many vegetables are alive. In fact all vegetables are alive and they enjoy physical life like you do and it's lovely to see cucumbers enjoying their physical life. I mean they take in nourishment.

They appreciate all that's made available to them and they grow and they develop and it's encouraging but so do you. It's encouraging to see you growing up as well. I mean you started out about this long and then you grew and grew and grew and then suddenly for some unknown reason you tipped up.

You started to grow this way right. You grew up and then for some incredible reason you started to grow out. It's good.

It's good to see you like a cucumber you see but nobody wants to be regarded as living at the same level as a vegetable. In fact if somebody has a terrible accident and they're barely alive we say they are in a vegetative state. Well what's the big deal about being a human being then if it hasn't been physically alive just because vegetables are.

Well the answer is of course as human beings we are physically alive but we are socially active as well. We relate. That's what makes us so special.

So do animals. Cats relate. They don't relate as well as dogs but they do.

They do relate and we know that they relate. They don't have many social skills but they have some and in the same way that we are physically alive like cucumbers we are socially alive like cats but people get insulted if you call them like an animal. They don't like that very much because there's something very special about being a human being.

Well what is it that's special about being a human being? If it isn't that we're physically alive because vegetables are, if it isn't that we're socially active because animals are, perhaps it's because we are spiritually wired up unlike the vegetable, unlike the animal and that actually we do relate to the vegetables in many ways and we do relate to the animals in many ways. It's amazing. We chew on cucumbers and apparently they do us good and as far as animals are concerned they actually take organs from animals now and stick them in us now and they work in many instances.

So the link that we have with the vegetable kingdom and the animal kingdom is inexplicable but they don't confuse us with that. What is it that's special about us? Like the vegetables we're physically alive, like the animals we're socially active, like human beings we have a spiritual dimension. Physically we relate to the physical world, socially we relate to the social environment, spiritually we have the ability to know and be known by God.

We are not just horizontally oriented, we are vertically oriented too and what God wants is that we should function in all dimensions. He is seeking worshippers not for his benefit but for ours. Why? Because he wants us to be well-rounded people who are living well physically, who are living well socially, who are living well spiritually.

What does it mean to live well spiritually? Well part of it is to be a worshipper. Well how does that work? To live well spiritually or to be a worshipper is totally dependent initially on God taking the initiative. Totally dependent on God taking the initiative.

There are two basic ways that people go about their lives. Some people go about their lives on the basis of what I call for a better term, speculation. You know at one stage in their lives they're very thoughtful and they're asking some very severe, some very serious questions like, who am I? What am I? Why am I here? What am I doing? What is the point? Where am I heading? What's going to happen? Where will I go when I die? It's wonderful people ask those questions.

They usually do it in the first year of college. Now they start casting around. You see sometimes somebody recommends a book for them and so they will read somebody else's opinions on what they are.

But it's all speculation. And then somebody says, oh you don't want to read that book, you want to read what he said about that book. So now they read not only about the speculations of somebody else, but they read about somebody else's speculations on the speculations.

So in the end they come to this wonderful conclusion. This is who I think I am. This is why I think I'm here.

This is where I think I'm going. I think what I think I think. Yeah but he thinks I shouldn't think what I think I think.

And he thinks that what he thinks about what I think about what I think I think is all wrong. And so I find myself in a morass of speculation. Uncertain, insecure.

Does that sound like anybody you've met recently? Unsure. Now there's an alternative to speculation. It's called revelation.

If speculation is me sitting down here scratching my bald spot and saying who am I? Revelation is God leaning out of heaven, tapping me on the shoulder saying, excuse me, sit down please. Be quiet for a minute. Keep your eyes wide open.

Keep your ears wide open. And I will do something wonderful. I will reveal myself to you.

Now the alternative to speculation is revelation. The initiative for speculation comes from me. The initiative for revelation comes from God.

The question is, is God in the business of revealing himself to mankind? And the answer is an emphatic yes. If that is not true, we're out of business folks in the church. The question now then is how does God reveal himself to us? And his theologians will give you two answers to that.

They'll say he reveals himself in general revelation and he reveals himself in special revelation. Romans chapter 1 has a fascinating statement there. It says in the things that are created, the invisible things of God are clearly seen.

Now think about that for a minute. In the things that are created, the invisible things of God are clearly seen. In other words, that suggests to us that if we go around in the world, the created world of which we're a part, we can get a whole lot of clues about many of the invisible realities concerning God.

Well we can understand that. You listen to some music, you can get some ideas about the musician. You look at a painting, you get some ideas about the painting.

You read a book, you get some ideas about the author. That which is created will in some way reveal the creator. It is imperative that human beings begin to move around, not just thinking about the physical life, living like a cucumber.

Not just thinking about their social life, that's living like a cat. But going around thinking about what it means to be a human being. Looking at the world around them and seeing in the created something of the creator.

A nice story about a little Dutch boy, not the one who stuck his finger in the dike, this was his twin brother. This little boy was standing by some tulip fields in Holland. I flew over Holland just a couple of weeks ago.

It's dead flat there, so beautiful and clean, very organized Holland. It's a lovely country in its own flat way. As we were flying over this beautiful flat reclaimed land, there were strips of brilliant red and brilliant yellow.

You don't see that anywhere at all. It was the tulip fields in Bloem. This little boy was standing by this tulip field looking at this gorgeous display of flowers.

And he was heard to say, well done God. What's happening to the little boy? This little boy is seeing something of the creator in the created. Seeing something of the creator in the created.

Do you know what? A lot of people live their lives blinkered. Elizabeth Browning put it this way in one of her poems. Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush aflame with God.

He who sees takes off his shoes and worships. The rest sit round plucking blackberries and daub their natural faces, unawares. What a commentary on humanity.

Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush aflame with God. He who sees takes off his shoes and worships. The rest sit round plucking blackberries and daub their natural faces, unawares.

God is revealing himself in general revelation. But then we've got to admit the fact that in general revelation you only get sort of a partial understanding. I mean creation is wonderful but it's fallen.

And our minds are wonderful but they're fallen. And the immensity of God is so immense that there's no way that it can be adequately revealed and no way that it can be adequately perceived. And therefore even looking at creation we don't get a perfect view of the creator.

That is why we move now into special revelation. And the wonderful thing about the Christian message is this, that Jesus of Nazareth puts a face, a human face, on the invisible God. And if you want to know what God is like, you look at Jesus.

And if you want to look at Jesus, you look in the inspired word of God. And you see in the inspired word of God a portrait of Jesus who puts a human face on the invisible God. And we have special revelation.

That is why it is absolutely imperative that if we want to be fully human, we must function in the realm of the vertical. And if we're going to be functioning in the realm of the vertical, we've got to understand it is predicated on divine self-revelation. And if we understand the imperative nature of divine self-revelation, we become people of the book.

We become people of the book. And there is a pandemic disease in the western world at the present time. You know what it is? Biblical illiteracy.

Biblical illiteracy. Here's a word particularly for men. It is a chronic disease in a pandemic sense, particularly among men.

And one of the reasons is this, it's like pulling teeth to get men to read. It's like pulling teeth to get men to read. Mark Twain said, He who does not read has no advantage over he who cannot read.

He who does not read has no advantage over he who cannot read. We all know Mark Twain was always right. So what do we do? We become people of the book.

One thing that I try to impress upon the Elmbrook congregation, without any discernible success as far as many of them are concerned, is this. Never put your head on the pillow at night if you haven't had your nose in the book during the day. You see, the simple fact of the matter is this.

God is looking for people to worship him for our benefit, not for his. And in order that we might worship him, we have to start with the fact that he is revealing himself. But if we are not paying attention to the revelation, guess what? Well, it's rather like a radio signal when the radio is switched off.

It's like a television signal when the television isn't plugged in. It's like having a cell phone message coming to you and your cell phone is switched off. In fact, at this moment, this room is full of radio signals, television signals, and cell phone signals.

Fortunately, we are being delivered from all of them right now. But tragically, many, many people don't seem to understand that they live in a world that is absolutely full of signals from God, revealing who he is. But if we're not switched on, then we're failing to receive that which is being transmitted.

So what's a worshipper? A worshipper is somebody who understands that he or she is not just physical and not just social. They understand that they are physical, social, and spiritual. But moreover, they understand that they are utterly dependent on the great Spirit who created this world revealing himself.

And they know where the revelation is happening. And they're taking the time and the interest to discover what he is saying. Now, the wonderful thing about it is this.

Like a radio set that is tuned to a station has the ability to pick up a signal, so human beings are uniquely created unlike animals and vegetables. They're uniquely created with a receptor. The ability to receive and to understand, to assimilate, and to appreciate what God is showing of himself.

Do you know what a worshipper is? A worshipper is somebody who is living in terms of the spiritual, who is interested enough to be seeking out what it is that God is revealing, and is developing his or her skills in appreciating and assimilating what God is saying. G.K. Chesterton, that wonderful British writer, said this. This world will never starve through lack of wonders, only through lack of wonder.

Think about that. This world will never starve through lack of wonders, only through lack of wonder. One of the lovely things about being a child is you have the ability to wonder.

You see wonderful things. Have you ever seen a little boy? I remember going with a friend of mine, his little kids had just started to learn to play soccer. And I was all excited about that.

I'm very excited about anybody who learned to play soccer because that's what football is. It's a game where you apply a foot to a ball, but we won't get into that. And this little boy clearly wasn't really into playing centre back with any great intensity because he'd noticed some daisies growing there.

And he'd sat down in the middle of the game and was picking daisies. And he was totally oblivious to what was going on around him. He got that wonderful childlike ability to wonder.

And then we get mature. And then we get focused into the mundane. And then we go places.

We say, been there. Then we do say things. We say, done that.

And then we accumulate the ability to say, been there, done that, got the t-shirt. And then we look for something a little more exciting, something a little more extreme. And now we can't have sports, we've got to have extreme sports.

And the extreme sports are becoming increasingly extreme because we're bored, because we're blasé, because this world is full of wonders, and we've lost the ability to wonder. Do you know what a worshipper is? A worshipper is somebody who understands that there's a spiritual dimension to life, that God is in the business of revealing himself to them. They take the time out to find out what he is revealing, and they allow it to seep down into their consciousness and into their spirit because they become contemplative and meditative.

Those are two strange words, aren't they? Contemplative and meditative. And they begin to grasp, once again, the ability to wonder at the sheer majesty of who God is, and the thrill of what he's done. And now something wonderful happens.

They say, I want to articulate that which I am discovering of God. I want to articulate that which I am discovering of God. So what happens? Revelation, reception of revelation, appreciation of what you're receiving, articulation of appreciation.

And now I'm turning into... And the wonderful thing about it is this. It's not for God's benefit. He's in great shape, folks.

Don't worry about him. His ego is very, very healthy. Indeed.

It's you and me who have the problem. Because our problem, very often, is that we're not living fully. And he's looking for worshippers so we can live fully.

Now, I omitted to define what a worshipper is, and that's serious. Because it's very important we define our terms. I learned this many years ago when our eldest son, who had his 44th birthday a couple of weeks ago, was a little boy.

Strangely, how long ago it is. Yes. My wife said to me one day, David needs an x-ray on Monday.

This is on the previous Friday. Would you take him? I said, sure. Tell him not to go to school.

So I said, on the Friday, Dave, don't go to school Monday morning. I need to take you for an x-ray. I forgot about it till Monday.

Get the kid, put him in the car, driving down the motorway in the north of England to the hospital. He is looking very, very nervous. I said, Dave, you're not worried about this, are you? He said, of course I'm worried about it.

Dave, there's nothing to worry about. He said, don't tell me there's nothing to worry about, Dad. I know what an execution is.

I said, x-ray? He'd heard execution. That was one of the biggest lessons in communication I ever had. What did it teach me? What it taught me is this.

If people can misunderstand, they will. That is a fundamental rule of communication. So the communicator's task is what? To make it as difficult as possible for anybody to misunderstand.

And how do you do that? By defining your term. Because, you see, I can talk about worship for hours and hours and hours at this level. And you can be thinking at this level.

And so I'm thinking worship and you're thinking worship. There's only one problem. We're not thinking the same thing about worship.

What is worship? What is worship? Well, the worship, of course, is a modern English word. It comes from an old English word. And I'm very interested in old English for one very obvious reason.

I'm an old Englishman. And the old English was worth-ship. So at its simplest level, worship is to attribute worth to one who is worthy.

But how do we do that? You know, let's assume the revelation is happening. We're appreciating it. We're articulating it, etc.

But how do we articulate this sense of the wonder and the worth of who God is and what he has done? Well, you know that the New Testament was written in Greek, not in English. I know your eyes are going to glaze over now. As soon as preachers mention Greek, oh boy, here we go again.

But you've got to be sympathetic to us. I mean, if we've learned it, give us a chance to strut our stuff. I mean, how are you going to know we know it if we don't tell you? But we'll make it as painless as possible.

The most common word for worship in the Greek in the New Testament is proskuneo. I want you to remember that. Proskuneo.

It's a lovely word, isn't it? You say, yeah, I love that. I am so glad I got up early on this Sunday morning and came into this stuffy room when I could have been outside. This is going to change my life, knowing proskuneo.

Well, let me tell you about proskuneo. It comes from two Greek... Oh, I say, don't tell me it comes from two Greek words. I'm just struggling with the first one.

Proskuneo comes from two Greek words which translated mean to kiss towards. Oh, you say, that's wonderful. I am so glad you told me that.

That is the root meaning of worship, to kiss towards. Have you noticed in the Old Testament, it always talks about them bowing down and worshipping. Did you notice in the songs that we sang at the early part of the service? This is what helped me decide what I was going to tell you this morning as we sang those songs.

We talked about, I'm going to bow down and worship, I'm going to bow down and worship. Well, this kiss towards has the same idea. You see, it's a picture of a king sitting on his throne.

In the old days, don't do this now, sitting on his throne and his servant coming up the steps and kneeling down on the steps and leaning forward and kissing his feet. There's a picture of submission to a sovereign. Or in another environment, it would be the master at the beginning of the day, having the servant coming and taking his hand and leaning forward and kissing his wing.

Either picture is the same, kissing towards. It is a posture of submission. It is a bowing down.

You know one thing we do in our lack of humility, in our pride and our self-sufficiency? Do you know what we do? We try to keep our back straight, hold our head up, keeping a stiff neck. And the opposite of a stiff neck and a set jaw and a rigid attitude to God is worship. Because now I'm confronted with the wonder of all wonders of who he is.

And I begin to recognize what I am compared to who he is. And I am beginning to find again my ability to wonder. My ability to be awe-struck.

My ability to see the immensity and the glory and the thrill of who God is. Do you know what I'm talking about? Do you feel it in your soul? Deep down in your soul. You bow before him and say, God, if you really are who you say you are, why in the world are you interested in me? And God, if you've really done what you say in Jesus you've done, why in the world did you do it for me? And God, if you made me and put me in this wonderful world of yours and you had a purpose for it, what in the world did you have in mind for me? Oh God, what can be more important than me coming humbly before you, kissing towards you and saying, Lord, I gladly submit myself to your saving lordship.

That's the essence of worship. That's what God's looking for. People who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

Now, Joel mentioned in the early part of the service, Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, where Paul says, summing up all the great theological treating and then introducing the practical application, he says, therefore, in light of all this stuff I've been telling you about, Paul says, I want to encourage you. I want to encourage you to present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your spiritual worship. Well, actually, some of you might say, well, in my Bible it doesn't say spiritual worship, it says reasonable service.

And the reason for that is this, the Greek word, sorry, but the Greek word can mean either spiritual or reasonable, or it can mean either worship or service. Same word, same word. And it's not proskuneo, this is another one, latruo.

And you've got this idea now, it's very fascinating, that worship is inextricably bound up with service. In fact, I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but you probably thought to yourself, well, should we go

to the first worship service or the second worship service? We call them worship services. Well, what is it, worship or service? And the answer is, yes.

You see, in many languages, they don't draw a distinction. Now, we've drawn a distinction now. What's happening in the contemporary church, and I'm fascinated with the contemporary church because I'm living in it.

What's happening in the contemporary church is this, we are saying more and more about worship than I ever remember. I'm 72 years of age, I've been in the church for 72 years in one form or another. Very bored initially, but kind of more and more interested when I got to be about four and on from there.

And this is it, over these many, many years of experience of the church, I would have to say we're saying more and more about worship than we've ever said before. And the more we say about it, the less we mean by it. For now, worship is usually limited down to praise.

I often go to a church now and they'll say to me, well, we're going to worship for 45 minutes, then you can share. Well, that makes you feel great, doesn't it, as a preacher? Well, they're going to worship and then you come along, you know. Say, are you going to start worshipping as soon as we open God's Word? Well, the idea of worship is basically narrowed down to praise.

Now, praise is obviously an important dimension of worship, but it's only one dimension of it. Actually, we go a step further than that. Usually, when we talk about worship, we don't just mean praise, we mean musical praise.

And in fact, all the debate that's going on in churches, and many people pick the church they go to now on the basis of the, quote, worship. But what they mean is on the basis of the music, the music. And the music that decides where they become part of a church is the music that they like.

That's what we've narrowed worship down to, you see. Well, we better get the thing expanded again, because worship also includes service. I've been to churches sometimes and the people come together and worship, oh, they have a great time worshipping.

And then they get up and make the announcements. And the announcement goes something like this. We need people to volunteer for help in the nursery, and we are desperately in need of people in the Sunday school.

And the young people, they really would like to have a certain thing, but we are short of sponsors for this. And the prayer groups, we really want more people to be involved in prayer, but we're very short here. And I say to myself, I thought this place was full of worshippers.

If it's full of worshippers, why are they short of servants? And the answer is because people have dichotomized between worship and service. You can't do that. That just shows our inadequate understanding of what God is doing to us.

You see, what God is doing to us is helping us develop a full-orbed life. And a full-orbed life means that we live not just on the horizontal, but the vertical. And the vertical means that in light of God's self-revelation, which I am assimilating and appreciating, I'm now articulating my appreciation.

And how do I do it? By serving Him. By serving Him. It's called worship.

And there are many, many ways you can do that. Now, in actual fact, in Acts chapter 13, there's an entirely different Greek word. Don't worry, I won't go into it.

There's an entirely different Greek word here describes what they were doing in terms of worship there. But I've got my hand on the clock, and I've got four more minutes, and I'm going to take every one of them, and that's all. Isn't that exciting? It will seem a lot longer than four minutes, but that's how long it will be.

There's another interesting little word that has to do with worship. Duleo. Duleo.

It's the word that comes from doulos, which is the word for a servant or slave. And it has to do with this idea that worship is also about work. I want to leave you with this because it's going to be Monday tomorrow morning.

This is what I want you to think about. Instead of going to work tomorrow, go to worship. You say, you don't know where I work.

You're right. You're right. But I do know what Paul said to the slaves, and he knew where they worked, and it was not good.

Osher was not helping those slaves out in those days. And this is what Paul said. He said, when you go to work as slaves, it's the pips, guys.

But don't work as if you're working for your slave masters. Work as if you're working for the Lord. Listen, for you duleo, you serve the Lord.

What he's talking about is going to work with an attitude of worship. Why in the world would I do that? I'm glad you asked. When you go to work, do you put in your eight hours? You say, oh yeah, I put in my eight hours.

Good. How many of those eight hours did you create? None of them. So, you mean you put in your time, yeah? Where did you get your time from? Well, it was a gift.

So you simply put in a gift, right? Did you put some energy into it? Either mental energy or physical energy? Oh yes, I did. Where did you get the energy from? Well, it was kind of a gift. Mm-hmm.

Did you utilize your skills? Yeah. Where did you get them from? Well, I guess they were a gift. It's not interesting.

You went to work. What did you do? Put in your time, which was a gift. Expend some energy, which is a gift.

Develop some skills that were a gift. Who was the giver? God. So you went to work and as you went to work, you put energy and skills and time in.

As you put energy and skills and time in, what were you doing? You were taking God's precious gift and you're saying, God, this is how I regard the precious gift you've given me. And I'm presenting them back to you today and I'm doing this as unto you. That kind of attitude in the workplace would revolutionize your day.

It would revolutionize the workplace. And it's just one more dimension of worship. Now, I hope this won't offend anybody, but there's a chain of restaurants, you probably have one here, I don't know, called Fridays.

Do you have Fridays here? I won't eat in Fridays. Nothing to do with their food, everything to do with their name. Because if you look at Fridays, in actual fact, the full name is T-F-R-I-D-E-S.

T-G-I Friday. What does TGI stand for? Thank God it's Friday. What does that mean? Thank God the workday's over.

Now I can live. That is not the Christian attitude. The Christian attitude is, thank God it's Monday.

What are you laughing at? It's called worship. Thank God it's Monday. I explained this to some of the men at Elmbrook one day and they said, you mean Sunday is over at last? I said, that is not what I meant.

Church isn't somewhere we go, folks. Church is something we are. But what are we? Well, among other things, we're a worshipping community.

So this is what I want you to do. I want you to ask yourself one question. If God is looking for worshippers, did he find one in me? Let's pray.

Thank you, dear Lord, that you don't sit remote and removed, unapproachable and unknowable, hidden in the clouds. That you have taken all kinds of initiatives to let us know that you're there, to let us know what you like, to let us know what you're doing, to let us know what you want us to be and to do. And we thank you for the revelation of yourself in creation.

And we thank you for the revelation of yourself in Christ, recorded for us in scripture. And we ask you, Lord, to forgive us for sitting around plucking blackberries so often. And we ask, Lord, that we might be stimulated and encouraged to take the trouble to receive that which you're transmitting.

And we ask, Lord, that we might recover again that sense of wonder, that the wonders that you're showing us. And we ask, Lord, that from this sense of wonder and joy and delight in your presence, we might see developing a desire to honour you and to serve you and to bring you joy. And in so doing, may we arrive at a deeper appreciation of the fullness of life.

You offer us in Christ. Take these thoughts home to our hearts. Make them make sense.

Help us to mix them with faith and to render obedience to them in order that we might be blessed thereby. We pray these things in Jesus' name. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

This day and henceforth. Amen. Thank you for coming.

God bless you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2430.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stuart-briscoe/the-church-jesus-loves/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net