The Church: Our Worship

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. We are looking on Sunday mornings for a few weeks this new school semester at some of the basics of what the Bible says we are as a church.

We looked last week at the truth that Christ is the head of the church. We started there on purpose because anything we talk about who we are as a church or what we do as a church must first come with the understanding that it is Christ who is the head over His church.
And so we move forward today and we think about what is it that we are to do when we gather here as a congregation.
What is it that the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, through His Word, what is it that He has given to us that we are to do as we gather?
Now we understand that worship is in no way limited to just what we do in this place. We are to live all of our life as an act of worship.
[1:22] Every day is a day that we are to live for the Lord. But in the New Testament, something significant happens. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church begins to gather on Sunday, what is called the Lord's Day.

And when we gather on the Lord's Day, there are things the Bible gives us that we are to do. And so for this morning, I want to acknowledge that there is worship that we have all day, every day, not just on the Lord's Day.
But I want us to narrow our focus for this morning on what is it that Christ would have His people do when we gather for worship as a congregation.
Hebrews 12, look at verse 28. There are a couple of things that we can say about Scripture, the way that God commands it of His people.
One is that it needs to be acceptable. Now that matters because if God calls us to offer acceptable worship, that necessarily means it's possible to offer unacceptable worship.
[2:52] So that ought to get our attention very quickly. That it's not just a matter of do you believe or not, or we might even say do you go to church or not.

It's a question of is the worship we're offering acceptable or unacceptable. So that's one thing that we notice. Something else we notice is that how we do what we do matters.
The end of verse 28 says, As we offer acceptable worship, it's to be done with reverence and awe. How we do what we do matters.
It's not only a question of do you come to church, and it's not only a question of if you come to church, do you sing and pray and read the Bible and preach.
It's also a question of are you doing the things God has called us to do in an acceptable way. And he clarifies in that verse that the acceptable worship unto God is worship offered in reverence and in awe.
[4:03] Which means it would be possible to preach according to doctrinal truth, but not preach in a way that's reverent.

And while the culture may be fine with that, God is not. It would be possible to gather as a congregation and sing songs whose lyrics are accurate, and yet to sing them in a way that is not reverent.
This isn't a question of what does the culture want. It's not even a question of what do we in our flesh want in this church. It's simply a question of what kind of worship is pleasing to God.
What kind of worship is acceptable to God. And we are to offer unto the Lord acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

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Even just from this one verse, Hebrews 12, 28, there are several things we can say for sure that ought to be a part of our worship as God's people.
[5:11] One is we should be grateful. That's how the verse starts. Therefore, let us be grateful. Our worship should come from grateful hearts. This helps us because it takes time to be grateful, doesn't it?

Being selfish is easy. That takes no preparation. Demanding your own way takes no special effort. We can do that with no problem. Complaining, being disappointed, being critical.
Those are things that we can sadly do at a moment's notice. But to be thankful means we need to stop and remember the blessings of God. We need to be mindful of His kindness and of His grace.
Worship that is pleasing to God comes from grateful hearts. We also worship with confidence because we are a part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We understand as God's people, Christ is the King of all kings.
When we go from this life into eternity, we are a part forever and forever of a kingdom whose rule has no end. The Lord Jesus Christ is on His throne forever and forever.
[6:30] We are confident as we worship the Lord knowing that His kingdom will never have an end. It also reminds us that we are to be worshipers.

Let us offer unto God acceptable worship. We are to be worshipers. That matters. That's who we are. Reverence. Reverence. Reverence. Reverence.
Reverence. Reverence doesn't mean boring. Reverence doesn't mean tiresome. But reverence certainly doesn't mean worldly. There is a way that the people of God are to worship.
And there ought to be joy. And there ought to be a sense of victory and a sense of confidence in Christ. There ought to be enthusiasm and exuberance as we worship the Lord. But it's not a light kind of thing.
It's not a worldly kind of thing. It ought not to be difficult to tell whether you are at a concert or whether you are at a worship of the Lord with God's people.
[7:29] That should not be difficult to know. There's a sense of reverence and a sense of awe that must captivate our hearts. And it actually would impact the way that we offer our worship to the Lord.

So, how we worship is clear. With reverence and with awe. The question I want you to consider with me then is, what do we do?
We've seen how we do it. Gratefully. Confidently. Worshipfully. With reverence.
But what is it that we are to do as we gather? Hebrews chapter 10. Just one page to your left. Familiar words for us if you look at verse 24. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.
[8:37] Not neglecting to meet together. As is the habit of some. But encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

What are we to do as a church? We are to gather together. Yes, we can worship all week long and should. Yes, we can worship in our homes and we should.
Yes, you can worship driving down the road as you sing songs of praise. And that's great. Yes, you can worship in your office during your lunch hour as you read your Bible. That's wonderful.
But there is something else we are called to do. And that is to gather together. To be together. That's what we're doing right now.
And we recognize that's not only what we are to do. But we're also put on watch that many people will neglect it. That's verse 25. Not neglecting to do this as is the habit of some.
[9:42] There are some people who don't ever attend church in the Lord's Day because they don't know the Lord. They don't trust the Lord. They don't have a relationship with the Lord. There are some who don't attend worship because they are angry at somebody.

Or angry at the church. Or angry at a brother or sister in Christ. But there are many who don't meet together anymore because they fall and pray to the habit of staying away.
This is to be something that is the practice of our lives. That we order our families, our homes around the Lord's Day.
Not fitting worship in wherever we can. Now I say before, I've said many times, let me say it again. I'm not talking about a legalistic kind of thing. I'm not talking about you keep track of how many sons you've been here.

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And you're here 50 and your friend was here 48 so you're holier than them. I'm not talking about a kind of legalism that you can't be away on a vacation or whatever. I'm not talking about a legalistic view at all.
[10:49] What I'm saying is, is it the habit, the practice of your household that your family's schedule revolves around gathering for worship on the Lord's Day?

Or is it your family's habit and practice that church is something you do when the schedule allows? There's a big difference there.
It's the habit, he says, of many to neglect the Lord's Day. And it probably wasn't their intention. That's usually how habits work. Habits become habits because we just fall prey into doing what is convenient rather than what is convictional.
So we want to make sure that we know how we worship, but also that we are reminded of the importance of it. And just make a note of Acts 2.42 when it speaks of what the early church did.
[11:50] They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. When the church gathered in the New Testament, there was Bible reading, there was Bible preaching, there was fellowship, there was connection, there was a togetherness of the people.

There was the breaking of bread, there was the observance of the Lord's Supper, and there's praying together. These are the things that the church has always been called to do. And we do those things with reverence and with awe.
How we do it matters. But what are the specific things in the New Testament we are to do? Well, Acts 2.42 gives us what that is.
And while generally we're walking verse by verse through books of the Bible, to look at a topic like this on the church, we do have to be able to look at various texts.
And so we're going to do that this morning as I just want to show you. We've looked at how we're to worship, but what are the things that we're to do reverently and with awe? Number one, when the church gathers, we are to read Scripture.
[13:05] This seems so elementary, doesn't it? Almost like it shouldn't even be said. And yet, and yet, in many churches today, you will be hard-pressed to hear a public reading of Scripture.

I don't say that to be judgmental or to condemn another congregation. I say that to just let you know that in our culture today, even among people who gather regularly for church, the public reading of Scripture is often something entirely neglected.
That's why we want Scripture to permeate all of our service. That's why you hear it read. That's why we read it together as we've already done this morning.
1 Timothy 4.13, make note of that. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and to teaching.
Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture. It's the only perfect part of our worship gathering when we're reading the Scripture.
[14:25] Usually, we stand when we do that as we did this morning. That's what we normally do. It's not because standing is magical. It's not because standing is required. It's because it is a way for us to show reverence and awe.

It's a way for us to cultivate a culture here of giving reverence to the Word of God. It's why it's important that you have a Bible.
Because when we read the Word, this is one of the most amazing privileges of our time, is to be able to have the Word of God in our language where we can hear from God.
You heard it just a few moments ago, didn't you? When we turned our Bibles to Hebrews 10, you heard the sound of hundreds of pages rattling. What a privilege.
What a privilege to have Bibles we can hold in our lap and to say, God, speak to us. The Scripture is to be read. And we do it with reverence and with awe.
[15:39] There's a second thing we do. There are a couple things I'm just going to touch on because there may be things we're going to come back later on in our study of the church to spend more time on. So, I'm just going to touch on number two. We are to sing when we gather together.

Colossians 3.16, Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.
Note this at the end of verse 16. With thankfulness in your hearts to God. Write down Ephesians 5.19-21.

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Listen to this. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Verse 21, Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. You notice the repetition? [16:41] Hebrews 12, Colossians 3, Ephesians 5, all mentioning thankfulness. And reminding us that as we sing with thankfulness, it's out of reverence for Christ.

And there's a time when we sing to clap our hands. That can be appropriate. There's a time to sing where it's energetic and exciting and just lifts your spirits.
There's a time to sing songs that are more reflective and bring conviction. There's a time to sing songs of repentance. Our music ought to take us through the entire range of what it is to be a believer.
And it's good to have songs for all seasons of life. But all the singing we do, no matter what year the song was written in, what matters most is are we singing thankfully than are we singing reverently? Colossians 3, sing with thankfulness in your hearts. Ephesians 5, verse 20, give thanks always. Hebrews 12, 28, let us be grateful.
[17:51] You can't miss it. That the worship that we do, including the singing we do, is to be done gratefully. And Ephesians 5, 21, I read a moment ago, as we are singing, let us submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Our singing is to be done reverently. It doesn't have to be boring. It doesn't have to be somber. But our joy is reverent joy. Our celebration is a reverent celebration.
Our petition is a reverent petition. Our confession is a reverent confession. It's not a question of are we supposed to sing? We know that we are, but it's also how we sing.
It's what we do, and it's how we do it. Third, when the church gathers, we are to pray. We're to pray. Colossians 4, 2 reminds us, continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. Do you notice the theme here? Every one of these texts about what the New Testament church does is always what?
[19:03] With thanksgiving. There's a joy. If you don't understand the joy of gathering on the Lord's Day with God's people, something is off.

And maybe it's because you weren't trained in the Scriptures, or maybe it's because you've not been a part of a church that has joy in Christ. Maybe it's because your own focus is more on yourself than on the Lord.
It could be any number of things. But you can't escape this. That biblically, when the people of God gather together, there is thanksgiving. There is joy. There is a delight as we gather together.
Now I understand, and as do you, we live in a real world, and some of you had a really difficult week. I get that. I'm not saying that every single week you're on the mountaintop, but what I am saying is there ought to be thanksgiving as we gather to worship together.
To sing, to read, to pray. Some of you just started school, and you had a great first day, and others of you started school, and you came home, and you started the countdown to Christmas break.
[20:08] That's just the teachers. That's not even the kids. But some of you, you dropped your kid off to kindergarten for the first time, or you dropped your kid off to high school for the first time, or you moved your child into college and let them in the dorm for the first time.

I get it. Those weeks can be hard. I remember them well. They're exciting, and they're tearful. And some of you had even more significant things you've dealt with this week.
But we're not talking about a light, trivial, worldly kind of joy that's just fleeting. We're talking about the kind of thankfulness that says, even on your hardest week, you're thankful to come into the house of the Lord, and to sing to the Lord and to worship with your brothers and sisters.
Thanksgiving doesn't mean everything in your life is perfect and that everything is how you want it to be. Thanksgiving means that you can say sometimes, though my heart has been crushed this week, I'm so thankful I've got a family I can come to worship the Lord with and remind myself of the goodness and the greatness of God.
A worldly kind of happiness has to keep trying to conjure up feelings and emotions and they've got to keep you perpetually buzzed to make you feel happy. That's not biblical joy.
[21:33] Biblical joy says, whatever circumstance I'm facing, painful though it may be, there is a thankfulness in my heart that I get to gather in this place and remind myself that even on my hardest day and darkest night, Christ Jesus is King.

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And so we pray and we pray with thankfulness. It's been said this way, we inhale the Word of God and we exhale in prayer. That's just the continual breathing of the church.
We inhale the Scripture, we exhale in prayer. Private prayers are important, but we're talking this morning about what do we do as a congregation.
but one of the things we do is we are to pray as a church. Public praying in worship, there's some cautions against it.
Jesus speaks about not praying in long, flowery language to try to impress people, not trying to pray in a way to make everybody think you're so smart and wise. We don't want to be performative when we do anything, including our praying.
[22:43] But public prayers in a church service, and I want you to understand this biblically, public praying matters for a congregation. When we pray publicly as a part of our worship, it's a way for us to model biblical prayer, it's a way for us to teach theology as we pray, it's a way for us to lift the needs of the congregation before the Lord.

And please watch this. One of the benefits of public prayers and worship is it reminds us that no matter how much the preacher has studied, and no matter how much the musicians have rehearsed, we need God's help.
There is no amount of study or skill that can get us beyond the reality of needing the Spirit's help, and there is no amount of rehearsal or practice that would make the Spirit's help no longer essential.
When we pray as a church, I hope that you listen. I hope that you're edified by it. I hope that you're encouraged by it. I hope that every time we pray, you're reminded to say, our church needs God's help.
That's why we pray. There's a fourth thing we're called in Scripture to do when we gather, and that is to preach. Turn with me, if you would, 2 Timothy 4.
[24:23] 2 Timothy 4. Familiar words again, I know. 2 Timothy 4, verse 2.

There's something else we're to do, and as we do this, we're to do this with reverence and awe.
Look at 2 Timothy 4, verse 2. Preach the Word. Be ready in season and out of season.
Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching. The men who are part of our Men's Institute, our next course that begins next month is hermeneutics.
It's the science of Bible interpretation. Let's just do a little group hermeneutics this morning, okay?
So your eyes are at 2 Timothy 4.2. Let's just do a group exercise here as we practice together how it is that Scripture tells us what to do and how to do it in a way that honors the Lord so that it's acceptable worship, okay?
So you're looking with your eyes right now in your own Bible, 2 Timothy 4, verse 2. What is the preacher to preach? And according to verse 2, what does the preacher preach?
[25:49] Preach what? The Word. We're one for one. We're on a roll. That is what we preach. Preach the Word.

It's the explanation and the application of the Bible that is to always be the focus of the preacher, okay? So it's not just show up and have a man talk.
The Scripture tells us not only what to do but how to do it. It's not only show up and talk and say things that are true. We are to say things that are true in a reverential way.
But what is the theme? What is the focus? What is the continual theme of the preacher's sermon if it's acceptable to God? Preach what? The Word.
That's what we are to preach. Now, let's do another question. When is the preacher to preach this way? Look at verse 2. What do you preach?
[26:50] The Word. When does this happen? Be ready in season and out of season. You know what that means? All the time.

Two for two. Don't you love group tests? All the time. Preach the Word in season and out of season.
It's not just are you willing to preach the Word this Sunday but will you preach it next Sunday and the next and the next?
Will you preach the Word when you see visible results and lots of people coming? Will you preach the same Word with the same reverence even if people turn on you? Will you preach the Word when you get affirmed?
Will you preach the Word when you get rejected? Preach the Word in season and out of season. So for our worship to be acceptable to God we have to do what He's called us to do.

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One of the things we do is preach when? All the time. What do you preach the Word? When do you preach it? In season out of season. Why?
[27:56] Why do we preach the Word? Keep looking with your own eyes here at your Bible in verse 2. Preach the Word that's what? Be ready in season out of season that's when why?

Reprove rebuke and exhort. This is why we preach the Word because there is a task that the Word does.
Reprove rebuke and exhort. If those words seem confusing of exactly what they mean let me give you a word to write down for each that may help you.
To reprove means to correct. To rebuke means to confront. To exhort means to comfort.
What kind of preaching does God call for here? It's the kind of preaching that corrects error, that confronts sin and that comforts God's people with truth.
[29:07] That's why we preach the Word. Because there's always error to correct. There's always sin to confront and there's always the sheep of God to comfort.

comfort. There's a very specific kind of preaching biblically that God calls us to and it's the kind of preaching that's able to correct error, confront sin and comfort His people.
Now this is very, very important for the church and this is important for families too because in the church the preacher has to speak with all those different kinds of voices.
In fact, if you look in the New Testament the way it describes a pastor or an elder is he's someone who is able to teach and also able to confront and correct error.
You've got to have a voice for that. But you also have to have a voice to exhort, to encourage, to comfort the congregation. Now think of this just in your own home.
[30:22] If you have a father who has a voice to discipline his children but no voice to engage and play and enjoy being with them.

It's all discipline and no joy. You're going to raise a certain kind of child with a certain kind of issue.
If you flip it and you have a father who has a voice to be with his kids and to play with his kids but is unwilling to correct and discipline his kids, he's going to raise a very worldly shallow child.
A father in the home needs to speak with both voices. You have a voice to correct and to confront and you have a voice to comfort.
And the faithful father understands which voice does my child need today? When the school calls and says your child was missing, he ditched class, your child was talking back and being disrespectful to a teacher, your child was caught stealing from another student, and your child comes home and your voice says, what do you want to do for fun today?
[31:57] It's the wrong voice. You've got to correct and confront. When your little girl has her heart broken for the first time from some boyfriend that broke up with her and she comes in convinced she'll never get over this, dads, don't let your first words be to her some lecture.

Have a voice of empathy and compassion. The faithful father in the home speaks with both voices.
There's a voice where we confront error and we combat sin and there's a voice where we build up and encourage and we comfort.
So it must be with the people of God. If you have a pastor who is always angry and always fighting and always a battle and always just nothing but confrontational and he convinces himself, I'm just being strong.
Well, you may be strong, but you're also to exhort and to comfort the people. But if you have a pastor who's always only comforting and afraid or incapable of confronting error, he's going to have people that he tells he loves them.
Meanwhile, they are being blown apart from every shifting wave of the sea as Ephesians 4 describes it. So the text is very clear for us.
[33:28] What do we preach? The word. When do we do it? In season, out of season. Why do we do it? To reprove, rebuke, and exhort. How about the how? Biblically, how should we reprove, rebuke, and exhort?

Look at the end of verse 2. It tells us explicitly, with complete patience in teaching. That's how we do it.
With complete patience in teaching. hundreds of you teach Sunday school in Awana in our church. Hundreds of you are involved in teaching every week. Teach with patience. Hundreds of you in our church are raising children at home.

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How do you teach them? With patience. patience. The Word of God is to be preached from the pulpit in the faithful church. How is the Word to be preached?
[34:32] With patience. With teaching. It takes time. It takes relationship.

And the preaching we give in the body of Christ ought to be done with reverence and with awe. 2 Timothy 3.
16 and 17. If we were to look just a few verses back. It says, all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work.
What do we do when we gather? We read the Bible. We sing. We pray. And we preach.
And we do it together. There's relationship that's a part of that. But it's not just what we do, it's how we do it.
[35:44] With reverence and with awe. And so really at the end of our worship service, anytime we gather, really there's just one question that needs to be answered.

We'll end where we began going back to Hebrews 12. 28. Here's the one question. Was our worship acceptable to God?
Now that's a question that matters. Was our worship acceptable to God?
Did we read, pray, sing, and preach? Did we do it with thankful hearts? Did we do it with reverence and with awe?
Did we do it with patience? And while in one way that's a question we answer collectively, in a more personal way, that's a question that we answer individually.
[37:01] Did you worship in a way that was acceptable to God? was your heart sincere?

Was your heart thankful? Were you reverent? Is the focus of all you did today Christ and Christ only?
I tell you, I long for nothing more than for the Lord to be pleased with us. Isn't that true for you? That's what we long for. The pleasure of God.
The affirmation of the head of the church. My evaluation of a church service is not the most important because I'm not the head of the church. Your evaluation of the worship service is not the most important because you're not the head of the church.
But there is a head. We looked at it last week. It is Christ. And in his goodness, to him.
[38:11] And the great truth is that what God wants from us just happens to also be what is our greatest good. isn't God kind to command from his people not only that which brings him glory, but that which is our greatest good.

Lord, we thank you for your word today and pray that you would use it to stir our hearts. We thank you, Lord, for this church and the people that are a part of it. You have been so good and so kind to us.
In Christ's name, Amen.

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