

Awaken
Humility
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April 22, 2007



HUMILITY

Revelation 19:1-10

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Ps. 46:10). Today we are going to revisit a nonnegotiable in corporate worship that I am convinced the church desperately needs to revisit today. It is the nonnegotiable importance of humility in corporate worship.

I want to start by reading a quote to you from a guy named A.W. Tozer, a pastor I have quoted from numerous times. I want you to hear these words. They are words that we need to hear in the contemporary church. He said: "In my opinion, the greatest single need of the moment is that lighthearted superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God high and lifted up with His train filling the temple. The holy art of worship seems to have passed away like the shekinah glory from the tabernacle. As a result we are left to our own devices and forced to make up a lack of spontaneous worship by bringing in countless cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people."

What I want to propose to you is that it is not necessary to bring in cheap and tawdry activities to hold the attention of the church people. It is not necessary because the greatness of God is more than enough to hold the attention of the church's worship. This is a truth we desperately need to revisit in the church today.

If you have your Bibles and I hope you do, I want to invite you to open with me to Revelation 19. We started this series on corporate worship, "Awaken", last week in the Old Testament, Nehemiah 12. We saw the nonnegotiable importance of community in corporate worship. We're not just a gathering of individual worshippers this morning. We are a community of faith.

What we are going to dive into today is humility and the importance of humility in corporate worship. We are going to launch into a majestic, powerful chapter of Scripture in Revelation 19, one of the last chapters in the Bible. Before we jump in we need to get the context of the whole Book of Revelation before we even begin to read here. We need to realize that this is a book, first of all, that was written to a group of Christians in the first century that were facing a lot of persecution for their faith. The emperor Domitian was a cold-blooded murderer who was wreaking havoc on the church.

One of the results of his persecution of the church was John, the author of this book, is writing it from an island where he is exiled by Domitian. Here is John writing to the Christians on the mainland, encouraging them to stand firm in their faith amidst the persecution they are facing. Now it is important for us to realize that is the context when we come to the Book of Revelation because the first thing we do when we usually come to this book is start looking at all the signs and pictures and symbols and start thinking about all these cool things they have to teach us about the future. It does have a lot to teach us about the future, however, the Book of Revelation had a lot to teach them in the first

century about the present. We need to look at this book and this passage in particular through two lenses.

First of all through the lens of what God was saying to those people in that time, and then as we see those truths unfold it will show us what God is saying to all people of all time including us today about things in the future. So that is the context that leads us into Revelation 19:1. This is where all of eternity is headed.

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.'

And again they shouted: 'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.'

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

'Amen, Hallelujah!'

Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

'Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!'

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.' (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.'

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (Rev. 19:1-10).

This passage is the climax of praise and worship that all of the Book of Revelation up to this point has been leading to. I want you to see that every word, every verse in Revelation 19:1-10 revolves around the greatness of God. He is at the center of New Testament worship. He is at the center of eternal worship. The question we need to ask is, "Is God really at the center of our worship today?" Is God really at the center of our worship? What does that look like if He is? I believe this is a question that is in doubt in the church today.

Why The Greatness Of God Will Get All The Attention In Our Worship...

So I want you to see in this text three reasons, to go back to what Tozer challenged us with, three reasons why the greatness of God will be at the center of our worship instead of cheap and tawdry activities that would entertain us in worship; three reasons why the greatness of God will be at the center of our worship.

Because He desires our worship.

Number one, because He desires our worship. Number one reason why the greatness of God will get all of the attention in our worship is because He desires our worship. Now when you come to Revelation 19:1, it starts off and says, *"After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude."* What is the "after this", what is "this" referring to? In order to answer that question we actually have to look back at the two chapters before this – Revelation 17 and 18.

Basically what is happening in those two chapters, the Bible is talking about Babylon. Babylon, that is who is referred to as the great prostitute in verse 2 and we will see why that is the case in just a second. Babylon has quite a history throughout the Bible. It is not a very good history. In the very beginning in Genesis 11, the tower of Babel, this is where God condemned human pride and arrogance as they tried to build this tower to Him. Then when you get to the people of God, Israel, Jerusalem is attacked by the Babylonians, just like we saw in Nehemiah 12 from last week. The result was them having to rebuild those walls and rebuild the temple. It was because the Babylonians had destroyed the temple. The Babylonians had destroyed the city of Jerusalem and taken the people of God into exile.

So when you get to Revelation 17 and 18 and you think about this, remember first of all through the lens of these believers in the middle of the persecution they were facing we have a picture of Babylon as the culture around them, the Roman empire that was bearing down on them, that was persecuting the church. The message is clear in Revelation 17 and 18 that one day the Roman empire, one day the Babylon that surrounds the early church there would be gone, it would be no more. It would not last forever.

At the same time what we see in the Book of Revelation, especially in these two chapters is that the church throughout history would be an outpost so-to-speak in the middle of a culture that was non-Christian, maybe even at many points deliberately anti-Christian, that was filled with all the pleasures of this world, all the satisfaction, all the wealth of this world, that would pull people away from God. That is the picture we have of the adultery so to speak in Revelation 17 and 18.

Look with me at the first two verses of Revelation 17. This is why Babylon is referred to as the prostitute or as the adulterer. It says in verse 1: *"One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries'"* (Rev. 17:1-2).

This is a picture of spiritual adultery, the culture, worldly fame, worldly glory, worldly power, worldly luxury, worldly satisfaction surrounding the church. There was a big temptation in that day. If you were going to lose your life for trusting in Christ it was very tempting to say, "Maybe Christ is not the route I want to go in my life. Maybe I'm going to go this route or

that route." So they were bombarded by the pleasures all around them in the world; the temptations of those pleasures.

What the Book of Revelation is showing us is that in the middle of the anti-, non-Christian culture here is an outpost called the church that God desired the worship of His people, in the middle of all of these different things the world was offering to them. Now you've got that picture when you come to Revelation 19. So I want you to see God's desire for worship unfold in two different ways.

First of all, God orchestrates history to display His glory. The primary point of Revelation 19 is that God is more glorious than anything this world has to offer that His greatness and His power, His satisfaction and His pleasure far surpass anything Babylon, so-to-speak, has to offer us that God has orchestrated all of history from the beginning of the Bible all the way to this point and in to all of history, everything is aimed at one thing. He wants to put His glory on display. He wants to show over and over and over again that He is worthy of the worship of all nations and nothing else is worthy of our worship. He has orchestrated all of history to be at this point culminated in Revelation 19, a picture of hallelujah, praise be to God, He alone is worthy of worship. Nothing in this world can compare with Him.

You do realize that when we come together for corporate worship, we worship a self-exalting God. Let me repeat that one more time. We've got to realize this. When we worship God, we've got to realize that we are worshipping a self-exalting God. His drive is to be glorified in all the world. That is His desire, His aim. In all of history, in all of our lives, in all of His church, everything is aimed at glorifying His name. Everything is made to center around Him. He lives for His glory.

Now this is something we can miss very easily in our culture today where everything is made to center around us. If I were to ask you the question this morning, "Why does Jesus save you from your sins?" I am guessing the predominant answer would be, "Because He loves me." That is true in part. But let's take it a step deeper. Why does He love you? Why does God love us? "Well...I don't know...He just does." Well, no. There is a reason God loves us. There is a reason Jesus died on the cross for us. And yes, it is a part of His love but ultimately Jesus loves us so that God would be glorified in us. Jesus loves us so that through our lives in His redemption and His salvation in our lives, God would receive glory. Everything ultimately centers not around you and me; everything ultimately centers around God. Everything is aimed toward Him and Him alone.

Some of you might think at that point, "Well, are you saying, David, that God is selfish? Are you saying that God is self-centered?" I believe that is exactly what Scripture teaches. I believe God is radically self-centered. He lives to exalt Himself. Who else would we have Him live to exalt? Who would He put higher above Him that He would submit Himself to? Because at that moment He would no longer be...what? God. He is radically self-centered. He is radically centered around God.

This is different. We don't bring our children to Sunday school or Bible study on Sunday morning and have them bringing home pictures that say written on them, "God loves Himself." That is exactly where all of history is aimed. He has designed it that way so that, you and I are not at the center of God's universe. God is at the center of His universe. Everything revolves around Him, all of history orchestrated to display His glory. God, help us to get a picture of this.

Now, some of you are thinking, "David, I thought you told us last week that worship involves us." In a sense it is about us. This is where it gets really good. God orchestrates all

of history to display His glory but second, God ordains His church to enjoy His glory. He ordains His church to enjoy His glory.

You get through this passage; you get down to verse 6 and 7 and the church chimes in "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns" and it says, "Rejoice and be glad and give him glory" (Rev. 19:6-7). You see rejoicing equated with giving Him glory. Don't miss the picture here of the Church. Here is the Church amidst Babylon, amidst all the pleasures and wealth and fame and luxury that Babylon has to offer and the Church is rising up and saying that God is the satisfaction of our souls that God is the joy of our lives that we live to worship Him and there is nothing in Babylon that can compare with the glory of God and the joy we find in the glory of God. Here is the beauty of biblical worship. God's desire for His glory and our satisfaction in Him go hand in hand. It all makes sense.

If God is infinitely loving and all that is love is summed up in God then what is the greatest way He could show love to us? By giving us what? Himself. Enjoyment of Himself; glory in Himself. Don't miss the beauty of this. God in His infinite wisdom has not given us in our lives silver or gold or temporary pleasures or fleeting satisfaction. He has given us infinite love and enjoyment in His very character glory, worshipping Himself. God ordains the church to enjoy His glory. Everything centered around Him and that is why Psalm 148 would say something like:

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens. He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord (Ps. 148:1-14).

That...that is why the greatness of God must be at the center of our worship. Because He desires our worship. If anything else is at the center of our worship then we have missed out on the eternal purpose for which we have been created. He desires our worship. It is when we worship Him that we find ultimate enjoyment in this life. He desires our worship.

Because He deserves our worship.

Second, because He deserves our worship. The greatness of God will be the center of attention in our worship because He deserves our worship. Here is where we see now how John expands on this whole overarching picture of God desiring our worship. I want you to see what causes wars in Revelation 19; what causes the sound of thunder in Revelation 19. If we're going to worship like the multitudes in heaven worship God, which I think would be a worthy goal...if we are going to worship like they worship in heaven then we need to see what they see in God.

What I want us to see is the greatness of God that is revealed over and over again in Revelation 19. We're going to run through some of the characteristics of God that are emphasized that are exalted here in Revelation 19. I want you to see them with me.

First of all, He is Savior. He is Savior from the very beginning, "*Hallelujah! Salvation...belong to our God*" (Rev. 19:1). Now this is more than just individual salvation. The fact that we are saved from our sins as individuals through what Jesus did on the cross. This is a picture of all of history from Genesis 3 when sin came into the world and man was separated from God and the whole picture from Genesis 3 all the way to Revelation 19 is God redeeming people, bringing people back to Himself through His grace and His mercy. So when you get to Revelation 19 it is a picture of the culmination and the fact that God has redeemed His people. He has made salvation available to them. He is Savior.

Second, He is glorious. Salvation and glory belong to our God. Now you notice four different times in this passage one word is mentioned – hallelujah. What is interesting is that is a very common word in the Old Testament, but it is actually not common in the New Testament. This is the only time it is used in all of the New Testament. It is used four different times emphasizing praise, glory being given to God.

We heard earlier a quote of Psalm 115 which is a part of the group of Psalms called the Hallel which basically means, praise to God. It is repeated over and over and over again. Those psalms are dedicated to the Exodus when God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt. When we get to Revelation 19 John brings in this imagery from the Old Testament of God delivering His people and them giving Him glory as a result saying God has delivered us and He is worthy of all of our praise and all of our glory. So it repeats over and over again hallelujah, praise the Lord. He is Savior, He is glorious.

Third, He is omnipotent. "*Salvation and glory and power belong to our God*" (Rev. 19:1). In light of the picture of Babylon and evil and suffering in Revelation 17 and 18 that the world has, Revelation 19 exalts God for His power. Who alone has the power to conquer evil and suffering in Babylon? Who alone in the world can conquer evil and suffering? He can. He alone has the power to do that. He is omnipotent.

Next, and these next two go together, He is true and He is just. It says, "*For true and just are his judgments*" (Rev. 19:2) in verse 2. He is true and He is just. This is where it is really interesting. "*True and just are His judgments,*" and it says, "*He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of His servants*" (Rev. 19:2). That is what God is being praised for in Revelation 19. God is being praised for His vengeance on those who had killed His people. Revelation 17:6 says that the woman, Babylon, "*was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus*" (Rev. 17:6). Babylon had taken the lives of many of God's people. So in Revelation 19 He is actually praised in His truth and His judgment for the vengeance He brings on the nations.

Now that's strikes us as a little unusual that God would be praised for His vengeance. I remember the first time I preached here at this church, I was quoting some from Psalm 149 and the beginning of that Psalm is just majestic, "*Praise to the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the assembly of the saints*" (Ps. 149:1). God has given us salvation. It just is a psalm where you are saying amen after every single verse. Then it gets about mid-way through and it says He inflicts "*vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples*" (Ps. 149:7) and all of a sudden the amens kind of slow down. Then it says He binds "*their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints*" (Ps. 149:8-9). Then everyone is

like...Okay??? Then you jump into Psalm 150, "Praise the Lord, Praise God" – oh yes, amen, amen. So we've got this little piece of the character of God emphasized in Psalm 149 that says... Am I supposed to say amen to vengeance on the nations?

What I want you to see is that what is being emphasized in Revelation 19 is not the suffering that people will ultimately experience because of their sin. What is being emphasized is that we have a God who does not turn a deaf ear to injustice and evil. He does not pretend like it is not there. He does not pretend like it is not real. He doesn't pretend like it doesn't hurt. He is a true and a just Judge. This is big for us to see in our worship. What would it do for our evangelism in the church today if we realized, if we really realized, that the people around us who are without Christ in our neighborhoods, our communities and our nations, that if they are without Christ they right now sit under the judgment of God? Would that propel us? God help us. Would it propel us to make the grace and mercy that He desires them to know, make known to them the gospel He has entrusted to us? His justice, His truth at the center of worship in Revelation 19.

Next, He is eternal. Verse 3 says, "*Hallelujah the smoke from*" His justice on Babylon "*goes up forever and ever*" (Rev. 19:3). His justice is eternal. His truth is eternal. His power is eternal. All of these characteristics that we have seen in Him will last forever and ever. Now this is solemn news. Something I would urge every single person within the sound of my voice to consider, I would urge you to realize that the adversary would delight in nothing more than to convince you that your sin really is not going to matter in eternity, and that you can play around with sin of no consequence. That is not true. The judgment of God on sin is irreversible. It is final. Yes, His grace is eternal too. Praise be to God, His grace is eternal, but so is His judgment.

This also is very encouraging to see His eternality, especially in light of this last week. Isn't it good to know that in light of what happened at Virginia Tech, isn't it good to know that there will be a day when there will be no more senseless acts of violence and injustice and evil and suffering. There will be no more because He is eternal in His justice and His truth. We praise Him because He is eternal forever and ever.

He is mighty. You get down to verse 6, "*Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns*" (Rev. 19:6). I love this phrase here in the Book of Revelation. You have to know a little background here. Domitian, the emperor of Rome, had actually declared that he should be addressed as lord and god. So if you were going to address the emperor of Rome, Domitian, you would call him lord and god.

So here is John. He is sitting in exile on the island of Patmos and he is writing to the mainland that is under the emperor's rule and he decides I'm going to show him who is God. Again this is one of the only times in the New Testament where this is emphasized, John, and he does it nine times in the Book of Revelation, he says it is not just "Lord God" it is "Lord God Almighty" and that is what separates you, Domitian, from my God. You may have me on the island over here, but He is still almighty. Isn't that good? That takes some guts right there but John just laid it out there. What's he got to lose? He's over here by himself, isolated. Almighty, He is mighty. He is above every god, every idol that could be worshipped in this world. He is mighty.

Next, He is sovereign. He is sovereign. The "*Lord God almighty reigns*" (Rev. 19:6). He is in control. He is on His throne. He is reigning in heaven. This is a great picture the sovereignty of God is all over the Book of Revelation. How do you hold fast to your faith if you are a first century Christian and you are facing persecution all around you from Babylon? You hold fast to your faith because you know that God reigns over Babylon, that God reigns over Rome.

God reigns over every power, anything this world could ever bring us, God reigns. Satan is on a leash. That is the message of the book of Revelation. God is sovereign.

Finally, He is holy. We are going to get to this in a second where His bride is represented as bright and clean because of the righteousness that had been given by Christ. It shows the holiness of God's people.

Now, I want you to look at that list—He is Savior; He is glorious; He is omnipotent; He is true; He is just; He is eternal; He is mighty; He is sovereign; He is holy. If we have that kind of God then why would we not want to put the greatness of God in the center of our worship? Why would we want to focus on anything else when we gathered together?

It burdens me that in our desires to attract people into worship in the church today it has become a great temptation to dilute worship, to dilute the picture of the truth and justice of God and the sovereignty and might and holiness of God. It has been done in a desire to attract more people. I have news for you. People are not starved for the greatness of our music. They are starved for the greatness of our God. People are not starved for entertaining speeches and slick performances. They are starved for the Savior who is glorious and all-powerful and true and just and eternal and mighty and sovereign and holy. They are starved to see Him because if they don't see Him in our corporate worship where will they see Him?

On TV? In movies or DVDs? On the Internet? God help us not to in any way dilute this picture of greatness. When we see this picture of greatness we will worship like the multitudes in heaven, worship God for all of eternity.

See His greatness but then see the gladness of God's people in worship. See the people's response when you get down to verse 5 and 6 the church is called into this thing and the church begins to praise God. It says in verse 5 in a calling to the church, "*Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great*" (Rev. 19:5). Here is the first response of God's people to fear Him. We revere Him. We fear His name. In corporate worship we revere Him. Our corporate worship, don't miss this, our corporate worship will demonstrate what we believe about God. Our corporate worship will show if we are bored with God. Our corporate worship will show if we are casual with God. Our corporate worship will show if we revere and fear God. We revere His name.

Then it says, "Hallelujah for our Lord God almighty reigns." Verse 7, "*Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory*" (Rev. 19:7). Second, we rejoice in Him. Why do we rejoice in Him? You look at the whole chapter because sin is judged, because God is reigning, because the marriage of the Lamb has come. We have a lot of reasons to rejoice. What is interesting is these two words, "rejoice" and "be glad", the only other time in Scripture where they are used together like this, rejoice and be glad, anyone remember where it is? The Sermon on the Mount, Mathew 5:12 talking to some people about persecution, "Rejoice and be glad, when you are persecuted because your fathers faced persecution before." Rejoice and be glad in the middle of persecution. Why? Because God is glorious, because God is all of these things we have seen. That is why we rejoice in Him.

Then third, this is the best part, we are ready for Him. We revere Him, we rejoice in Him, and we are ready for Him. The "*wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself*" (Rev. 19:7)—what?—"made herself ready." Here is the picture of the bride and the wedding banquet. It is a picture we have seen in the New Testament all the way to this point. Everything headed to this.

Now, in the first century you basically had two main stages in a wedding. We get this picture two main stages. You had the betrothal, which is when a man and a woman are committed to be married, and they are almost looked at as husband and wife at that point even though they had not officially been married. You have the betrothal and then you have the actual wedding. Basically the way the wedding would work is that the groom would go with his attendants to the bride's house and take the bride from her house and bring her back to his house where they would have the wedding celebration. So you have the betrothal that is the commitment to each other, and then you have the groom going to get the bride and bringing her back to his house for a wedding celebration.

Now take that picture and let's put it in the New Testament for a second especially in the light of Revelation 19. A God who has said that when we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness when we confess He is our Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead we will be saved. We know that we have eternity in heaven, guaranteed by the grace of Jesus Christ. We are waiting, ladies and gentlemen, for the groom to come and to get His bride. There is coming a day when He will come for us and He will take us to His home where we will spend eternity with Him forever. That is why God's greatness is at the center of our worship because we are ready in this room. We are ready for our groom to come and to take us as His bride. As a result we will fix our eyes and our thoughts and our minds and our hearts on Him week after week, day after day, until He comes back because we will show ourselves ready. We won't be asleep when He comes. We won't be bored in our corporate worship. We will be ready in our corporate worship. Isn't that a great picture? See the gladness of God's people in worship. He deserves all of our worship.

Because He draws us to Himself in worship.

The greatness of God will get the attention of our worship because He desires our worship and because He deserves our worship and, finally, because He draws us to Himself in worship. Now before we see how this unfolds I want us to think about the opposite of Revelation 19. As opposed to God-centered worship, I want us to think about man-centered worship. It is part of what we see creep in here even in Revelation 19.

Beware the pitfalls of man-centered worship. First pitfall is the danger of misplaced devotion. Did you catch what happened in verse 10? John, the disciple of Christ, one who has been faithful all of his life, the one who is writing the Book of Revelation and a few other books in the New Testament, it says "*at this I fell at his feet to worship him*" (Rev. 19:10). The angel, the messenger's feet, John bows down to worship. "*But he said to me, 'Do not do it'*" (Rev. 19:10)! That's Greek for "John, what in the world are you doing? Get up. You don't worship me."

Do you see? Even here in Revelation 19, the climax of worship, the subtle temptation to let worship all of a sudden slip into idolatry and miss out on who is really the object of worship. Do you think if it was a temptation for John that it might be a temptation for us today? Sure we would not openly say we are worshipping idols. John would not have said that. But is it possible for us to begin to put so much focus on the forms of our worship that we forget the object of our worship even to put so much focus on the people who lead us in worship that we lose sight of the One we are worshipping? You look at the contemporary church landscape today, including us, it is very possible for us to begin to worship the worshippers, or even to worship "worship" itself as opposed to worshipping God.

We have got to beware of misplaced devotion in church. I want you to see what that can lead to the danger of, second, misdirected motives. What happens is when the angel, the messenger, sees John he immediately says "get up, what in the world are you doing?" But

there becomes, and this is mainly with preachers and those who lead in worship, corporate worship, there becomes a very serious temptation to begin to enjoy the honor, the respect, the glory so-to-speak that one has before God's people.

Certainly most preachers or musical worship leaders would not say I want to glorify myself. They would say, I want to glorify God but it is very tempting to also say I wouldn't mind being glorified in the process. John 3:30, remember what John the Baptist said, "*He must become greater; I must become less.*" I can speak from personal experience. It is very tempting to want to say, "He must become greater, but I wouldn't mind becoming greater too." That is not New Testament worship. It is not humility in worship. God guard me. God guard those who lead us in musical worship from any misdirected motives that everything is made to center around His greatness. When that happens we actually become less.

Not only selfish motives, but even good motives in the church. There is a lot of discussion in churches today about how we can accomplish this or that in worship. We worship to do this or we worship to do that. We worship in order to do this. What we have to realize in Revelation 19 is that worship is an end in and of itself. We don't worship God in order to do something else. We worship God period...exclamation point in verse 10. Worship God! That's it! You worship Him. He is the end of our worship. We don't worship God for some ulterior motive because when we do that and now we have exalted something above God. We worship God so that this can happen. No, we worship God period, exclamation point. He is our motive.

Beware of misplaced devotion and misdirected motives and finally the danger of misunderstood success. What happens is when we have misplaced devotion and misdirected motives we begin to walk away from worship and we ask, "Well how did you feel about the worship service today?" How did the people feel? Did everything go smoothly? Did we nail that song like we had practiced? Did everything come out the way the preacher planned for it to come out? Did we have a large crowd? These questions begin to overshadow the one question that is most important. What ultimately matters is not what you think about this worship service and not what I think about this worship service. What ultimately matters is what God thinks about this worship service. That is the question that sometimes get ignored in that whole picture. So we have got to be careful not to gauge success by anything apart from that question. It may not make us popular and it may not enable us to grow the church like everybody else says it should grow, but it is the question that is most important and it needs to be asked. What does God think about our corporate worship?

Now those are the dangers, the pitfalls, of man-centered worship. I want us to come to Revelation 19 and I want us to see the power of God-centered worship and I want you to see the Trinity involved in this thing. First of all, God the Father seeks us for worship. When you get to verse 9: "*Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb"'*" (Rev. 19:9).

The whole picture of the New Testament, even back in the Old Testament, is God taking the initiative, divine initiative, and calling people to Himself; inviting people to Himself. He is seeking us out. John 4, God the Father seeks those who will worship Him. That is what Jesus says. He is seeking us out. God the Father desires our worship and He seeks us for worship. He calls us to Himself is what Revelation 19 says.

Now it is at this point that we have got to measure that with one of the buzz words in contemporary worship today called "seeker sensitivity". We need to be seeker sensitive in our worship and basically what is meant by that is that we need to be sensitive to people, especially who are outside the church when we come together to worship so that we can

bring more people in. We need to gear things to be sensitive to those who are seeking, those who are interested in God.

It is at this point that I come to the realization that I want to admit to you, to all of you, I am not that good, and I don't believe we are that good. I'm not that good of a speaker to draw the crowds to hear me speak, and I don't believe we're that good, with all that we can put forward to draw the crowds to hear us speak. But here is what I am convinced of I am convinced of the fact that when God almighty is exalted in this room through His Word, when God is the center of our corporate worship and everything is centered around Him and if we are able to give a picture of His greatness, that He will do the seeking for us. He will draw people to Himself. Who are we to think that we know how to draw people to Him better than He does? Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost. He is the divine seeker so corporate worship ultimately is centered around the divine seeker pleasing Him and letting Him do the work.

I want to show you this 1 Corinthians 14. You have got to see this. This is a passage that is talking about corporate worship. It is a passage we mentioned last week. It talks about "amen-ing" in church in worship. I want you to look with me at 1 Corinthians 14:24. This is talking about somebody who doesn't know Christ coming into corporate worship. Look at the picture: "*But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying*" (1 Cor. 14:24), in other words, proclaiming the greatness of God and His word. If they come in while that is happening, "*He will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you'*" (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

Isn't that a great picture? That is the picture. People would come in to corporate worship in the New Testament, see the greatness of God being exalted in His Word and the result would be they would see their need for God, fall on their faces and say, "the Lord God is among you." Isn't that the goal of worship? Not so that anybody, seeker or not, would walk away saying "what a great worship service!" The goal is so that every single one of us from this room would walk away saying, "What a great God!" He has called us to Himself and we have responded to Him and everything is centered around Him. God seeks us for worship.

Then, don't miss this, Revelation 19, God the Son He enables us to worship. The picture of the bride of Christ that "*has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear*" (Rev. 19:7-8). Now the emphasis is not, here, on the fact that the bride has put fine linen, bright and clean, on. The emphasis is on the fact that these clothes were given to her that the brightness and the cleanness and the holiness that is symbolized in them was something that was given to her so that she could worship. This is a picture of the righteousness of Christ that robes all of us by the grace of God when we trust in Him to forgive us of our sins. He puts His righteousness and His holiness on us.

In corporate worship we do not come before God on our own merit. We come before God on the merit of Jesus Christ and that which He has bought for us. Jesus enables us to worship. Apart from His righteousness then how can we worship? We can't. He enables us to.

Then God the Spirit directs us in worship. You get to the end, "*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev. 19:10), definitely a picture of the Holy Spirit. It is understood that way in the first century as these Christians read that and the whole purpose of the Spirit of God is to lead us to see the glory of Christ, to point us to the glory of Christ.

Now if God the Father seeks us for worship and God the Son enables us to worship and God the Spirit directs us in worship then if we minimize the greatness of God, where will that

leave us? It will leave us at a point where we can have fun in worship and we can be entertained in worship and we can even draw large crowds in worship but ultimately our worship will be hollow because He is the one who is acting in worship, seeking us and enabling us and directing us by His Spirit. Do you see why the greatness of God must get all of our attention in worship? We must humble ourselves toward that end.

I want to bring back Tozer. He said this quote: "It is delightful to worship God but it is also a humbling thing and the man who has not been humbled in the presence of God will never be a worshipper of God at all. He may be a church member who keeps the rules and obeys the discipline and who tithes and goes to conference, but he will never be a worshipper unless he is deeply humbling."

The Bottom Line ...

The primary question I want to ask across this room of primarily church people, the primary question I want to ask is, "Do we really love the glory of God?" Do we really tremble at His holiness? Are we really captivated by His greatness? Are we really enthralled with His beauty so that when we walk out of here what is on our minds is not how good or bad the sermon was or how good or bad the music was? What is on our mind when we walk out of corporate worship is how great our God is and how much we love Him and how much we enjoy Him and how much there is nothing we will face this week in this world that can even compare with the satisfaction we have found in Him. That is humbling ourselves and seeing His greatness being captivated by His greatness in our corporate worship. It is something we need to desperately become.

I believe the greatness of God is more than enough to hold our attention in worship not only to hold our attention but to incite our affection and to lead us to humble adoration of God in worship.

Dear God, I am overwhelmed by this text and the responsibilities it even puts on my life and my leadership. God we pray as your community of faith this morning that you would make us a people that fix our eyes on your greatness. Make us a people that are enthralled with your glory and are captivated by your majesty. God we know, we have seen it in your Word, that your majesty and greatness is enough to captivate us. God deliver us from misplaced devotion and misdirected motives and misunderstood success to see you in our worship and to glorify your name in our worship. God humble us, we pray, across this room so that we can sing with the multitude of heaven, "Hallelujah for our Lord, God almighty reigns." He is sovereign, He is eternal, He is powerful, omnipotent, He is our Savior. He is worthy of all our praise.

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