

## “Feeding the Pig”

How many of you have a GPS System? How many of you know that our government’s Enhanced 911 program, will soon require all cell phones to transmit a GPS signal so that police can locate callers in need? So far, only Nextel, Boost Mobile, and BlackBerry allow third-party companies to build software that uses that signal, but other carriers will follow suit later this year. Almost all of you will soon have a GPS system. Of course I am talking about The Global Positioning System (GPS). It is a U.S. space-based radio navigation system that provides reliable positioning, navigation, and timing services to civilian users on a continuous worldwide basis -- freely available to all. For anyone with a GPS receiver, the system will provide location and time for an unlimited number of people in all weather, day and night, anywhere in the world. The GPS is made up of three parts: satellites orbiting the Earth; control and monitoring stations on Earth; and the GPS receivers owned by users. To tell you the truth, that information creeps me out a little bit. That capability used incorrectly is dangerous. But as dangerous as that GPS system could be, there is another GPS system that is even more dangerous to do without. That is the GPS System we will be working on building into each of you this fall. But it’s not a Global Positioning System. We are going to install a God Positioning System in each of us. We need to understand how to position ourselves within the will, plan, and desire of God. In addition this series is designed to also help to position you among the people of God, and whether it is acknowledged or not everyone is a people of God.

This a journey that will involve the study into the character of some of the key people revealed to us in God's Word. It is also a journey into the concepts that God allowed to be written in scripture so that our position before Him and others is secure and rewarding. One very striking factor is common with each and every person that we will look at is that every one of them was a worshiper; their lives were centered on true and regular worship of God. That's where we begin today. If you want to be fully positioned before God you must be centered on true and regular worship of God. Now I have had a lot of people tell me over the years that they can worship on their own. And perhaps you can for a time but true and regular worship somehow is predicated on the need to be with others of reasonably like belief and behavior.

I want to look at something Paul wrote that gives us insight into his view of worship. We are admonished by Paul in Romans 12:1: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable [well-pleasing] to God, which is your spiritual [reasonable] service of worship." Romans 12:1 gives us a basic springboard for understanding of where true worship begins. As Jesus defined worship to the Samaritan woman at the well as recorded for us in John 4:20-24: "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship

the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

True worship is a total giving over of oneself in every aspect of our life to God. Think about the things that you give the most thought and consideration to throughout most of every day – personal comfort, personal pleasure, and personal well-being. That is why we work, that is why we sleep, that is why we eat and watch the shows and movies we watch. That is why we choose the entertainment that we do. Personal comfort, personal pleasure and personal well-being are the underlying motivations for what we choose to do and to not do, to give and to not give, to keep and to not keep, even to feel and to not feel. Our responses to life’s conditions and circumstances are also motivated by our sense of personal comfort, personal pleasure, and personal well-being...our bodies, as Paul reminds us. Some might instantly object and say, “Are you saying that I should just ignore my needs? That would be poor stewardship.” That’s crazy. The truth of it is that this is just another excuse for selfishness and feeding the PIG (Personal Instant Gratification). That is the greatest threat to a real God Positioning system, we want to and we most often do “feed the pig” And, the pig is Personal Instant Gratification.

Ignoring one’s needs isn’t really the issue at all. It isn’t the real question. No one with any real sense is going to ignore their needs. The real questions at issue are, “To what extent will we go to over-meet those needs? What are we willing to sacrifice in order to meet that ‘need’? Is it really a need, or simply a want?” We must also ask, “What is our focus and purpose in what we do and why?”

The unfortunate thing is that many of us approach worship with the same mindset and underlying motivation as the rest of life – we come to “worship” expecting to get something out of it, expecting to come away feeling good, feeling peaceful, feeling happy. We think worship is for us.

God’s economy is the opposite of the world’s economy. What we are supposed to do if we are worshiping God “in spirit and in truth” is come expecting to encounter, to come face-to-face with, the Holy, Almighty, Pure and Righteous, Omnipotent God who judges all. We need to come with the knowledge and understanding that we are sinners and that we are allowed to approach God only by His grace through Jesus Christ, not through any goodness on our part. We should come every time expecting to be broken.

We need to approach God from the standpoint that we are in desperate need of His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His cleansing, His purifying, His restoring, His strengthening, His equipping, His empowering, and His continued will in and for our lives. We need to come with the knowledge that we are rebellious by nature, that our hearts are deceitfully wicked, and that we are easily deceived and led astray, let alone rebellious and willful. We need to come to God in abject humility and poverty of soul. Anything else is pride, presumption, arrogance and self-exaltation; and, it is sin – dangerous sin.

Jesus and Paul both tell us that our focus is to be on God and on true and honest worship of Him, not on ourselves and our own comforts. When we look at the words the Bible uses that have been translated into the English word worship, we get excellent pictures of what worship really is. The Old Testament uses only two words for worship, one Hebrew and the other Aramaic. Both words carry the same meaning: “the act of

bowing down and prostrating in homage (reverence, devotion, service, respect, duty, honor) by an inferior to a superior.”

When was the last time you got on your face before God, let alone your knees? When was the last time you humbled yourself, swallowed your pride, forgot about appearances and really gave God what is His due from you? The might, the majesty, the power, the purity, the holiness, the greatness of God demand every being, human or spirit, to quake at even the mention of His name. His name is holy, His nature and character are pure and unattainable, and His majesty is far beyond anything that we can ever achieve. What things do we have and hold on to that we are holding back from being completely given over to God and His control and direction?

“I don’t have a good singing voice.” “I’m not an eloquent speaker. I wouldn’t know what to say or how to say it.” “People might laugh at me or think poorly of me – they might even ridicule me.” The focus of every one of these excuses is “I” and “me”. Who is worship to? Who is worship for? Who is worship about? Is worship for you? Is worship for me? Clear back in the Garden of Eden the desire to be worshiped caused the Fall of Man, just as it had caused the fall of Lucifer. God is the only one who is worthy of any kind of worship.

In the New Testament, the words used for worship carry even stronger pictures of humility and deference. One of those words, which I have heard some say means blowing kisses, actually means “to kiss, like a dog licking its master’s hand.” Quite a different type and manner of kissing, wouldn’t you say? It means a humbling of oneself to the point of

prostrating oneself in reverence and awe and in abject humility and lack of self-pride -- complete and total subservience and submissiveness.

Okay, let's look at this in the context of today. Most often, when we speak of worship, the idea of certain types of music and songs come to mind. Why is that, do you think? Music impacts on several levels simultaneously. Music has been used to enhance learning, to boost healing in severely ill patients (especially those suffering from emotional and mental disorders), and just to either excite or calm those listening – depending on the goal and purpose of those playing the music. Praise and worship music are impactful in the same ways.

The basic difference is that a praise song focuses on what God has done, while a worship song focuses on who God is. This is what the lyrics are about and where they put our focus. Think about the songs that you like the most. Do they help you focus more on who God is, or on what He has done or will do for you? A song that gives a true and honest sense of the real gap between God and us and helps us realize our need of Him is a worship song, and is spiritually true and accurate. A song that acknowledges God's ability and desire to fulfill His promises in our lives is a spiritually true and accurate song of praise because it focuses on God and what He does, not on what we get.

Worshiping God has nothing to do with how we sound or how we look. It has everything to do with what we say to and about God. Worship is to and for God, not to or for us. It doesn't matter how it makes us feel; what matters is how it makes God feel. If we do right, we will feel right. God said that in the very beginning to Cain in Genesis 4:7, "If

you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

The modern English word, worship, is derived from the Old English word, worthship. The meaning is the amount and degree of worship that someone is "worth". How much is God worth? Perhaps the best way to understand that question is simply to listen to scripture. Try this for me, humor me a bit, close your eyes and relax just a bit, get your mind off the clock, the room, where you're going when we finish. Close your eyes and imagine Jesus as I read this passage, Psalm 103, focusing on Whom this is for.

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. <sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, <sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. <sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.<sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: <sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. <sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; <sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

The best worship of God is a dialogue with God. It is our response to God's revelation. God reveals and has revealed Himself to us in a multitude of ways, and our response is also somewhat varied. God reveals His presence to us through the eyes of our

faith. It is something that we perceive in our spirit, not in our minds; yet, because of the limitations of our humanity, it is first through our mind that God reaches our spirit. He does this through our five senses: hearing, sight, taste, touch and smell. The old faiths had it right with the candles and stained glass and banners and music and wood and marble and the wine and the bread for as long as the purpose was focusing those who were coming on the might and majesty of Almighty God. As with anything, however, the flesh can and did take over and it wasn't long before all of the accoutrements to worship became points of pride and bragging rights. One had to have the biggest steeple, the finest altar, a bigger or more statues.

God reveals his person to us so that we may worship Him in truth. We are to worship God for who He really is, not for who is He is not. In Matthew 28:17, we read, "When they saw Him, they worshipped Him." We come to know who God is through the descriptions of His nature and character and attitudes and deeds as revealed to us in Scripture. The Word of God is an integral part of any true worship. We begin crossing the line of worshiping a false God when we do not keep to the truth revealed to us in the Scriptures.

God reveals His power through the deeds He has done and the works He has performed in the midst of His people. Worship is this remembering and repeating the mighty works of God that moves us to respond to Him in awe and wonder, in thanksgiving and in praise.

God reveals His purposes on a regular, ongoing basis. His Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are either in or out of His will. In His will, and we are fulfilling His purposes for us. Out of His will, and we are rebelling against His purposes for us. Which do you think

is conducive to worship?

Finally, God reveals His plans when His purposes are translated into specifics, the specifics that He speaks about through Jeremiah the prophet in Jeremiah 29:11: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord; ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.’” This is God’s disposition toward us in worship, and our disposition toward Him is to be adoration, repentance, reverence, awe, wonder, and obedience. We are to come to our time of worship as Isaiah did, with a deep sense of our own uncleanness, our own sinfulness, our desperate need for protection and salvation from God’s wrath and judgment. We are to come with the hope and the desire to be forgiven of our sin, cleansed of the stain of our unrighteousness, allowed to bow in His presence and be invited to join the hosts of heaven in adoring worship. We are to come in complete and utter humility – no pride, no self-assurance, no self-reliance, no presumption. All access to the Father has been given us by and through the torturous death of His Holy Son. We have no right to be there in His throne room separate and apart from that.

For now, the key to our GPS system is to remember that worship is about and for God, not about and for us. Only then can we approach life with the attitude of worship that will carry us through every day positioned in the center of His will. Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then worship is to be part and parcel of your grateful life in Christ. Let’s pray.