

Community And... Worship

Various Texts

Speaker: Pastor Mark Schindler

Oct 20, 2019 PM



Community and...
Worship

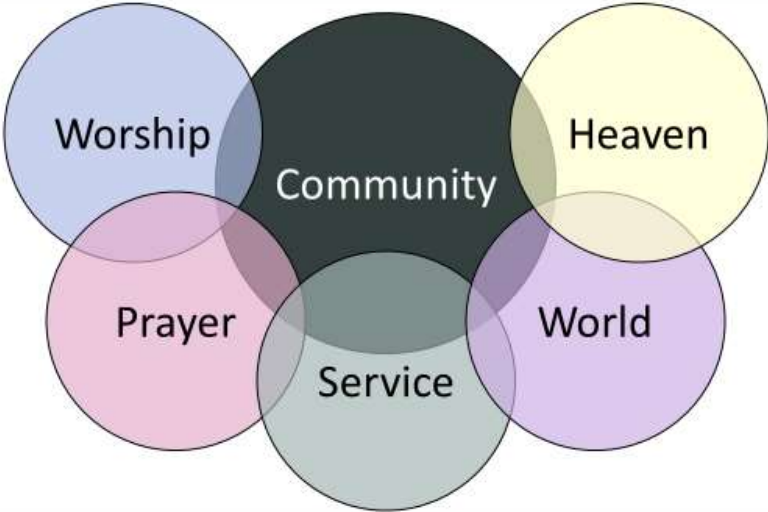
COMMUNITY AND... SERIES

OCTOBER 20, 2019

Clearcreek Chapel Pulpit Ministry



Community And...



Worship

Prayer

Service


Heaven

World

Community

COMMUNITY AND WORSHIP

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This evening we begin a new series that takes a look at the intersection of community with five key aspects of our lives and ministry together in Christ. We will look at how community impacts what we do in the context of worship, prayer, service, the world, and heaven. Each message will consider how our community is affected and shaped by one of these key areas. Through this series it is my hope that we will appreciate our community more deeply.

Too often it is thought of as just fellowship and hanging out with each other. But community is God-designed and an essential part of being God's people. It is deepened and sustained through relationships that are developed over time and by being together. And it is something that we should be willing to prioritize and even to contend for. A commitment to community is simply not an optional part of being a believer.

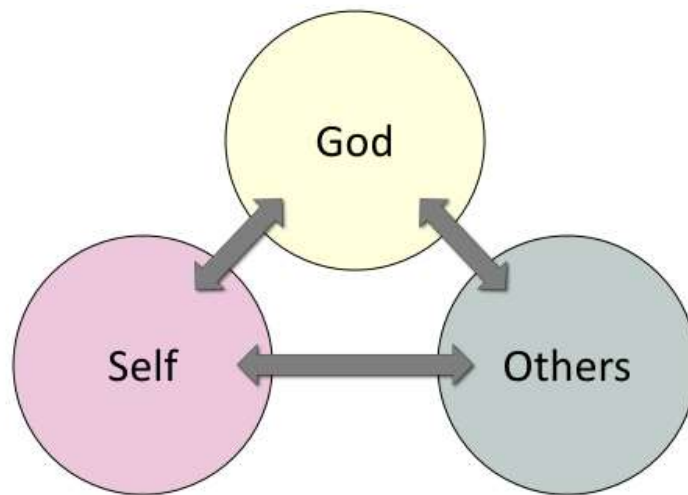
Why is this topic so important? First, it is clear from scripture that community is not a peripheral or sidebar teaching or truth. Rather, it is something that is central to the working out of God's purpose and mission for all believers. So it is important because God says it is important. Second, God is glorified when His people collectively reflect His character, dwell in unity, and live in harmony together. So it is important because it reflects God's glory. Third, God uses community as a means to strengthen, encourage, and sustain us as we become intertwined and involved in the lives of others in the church. So it is important because it is a vital source of power and protection to live for God in an evil world that is at war with us.

Another reason community is so important, is that our community is patterned after the triune nature of God. The God we worship and obey is a God who has existed in community for all eternity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have always dwelt in perfect unity, harmony, and love. They have never been out of perfect community and it is essential to the nature and character of God.

As we have heard in our morning series on Genesis, it was this triune God who created the universe and established mankind as the chief of His creations as a reflection of that community. In the beginning, Genesis says it was not good for man to be alone. God chose the Israelites as a community of God's people to live in a way that reflected His character. Jesus prays before the cross for the unity of His people. The record in Acts was that community flowed as a natural result of the Spirit indwelling and influence upon the early church. And Revelations reminds us that our hope as God's people is to one day dwell in the presence of His glory in an eternal community in heaven. Community has always been and continues to be a necessary reflection of the image and nature of God through and in His people.

[opening prayer]

Me vs. We



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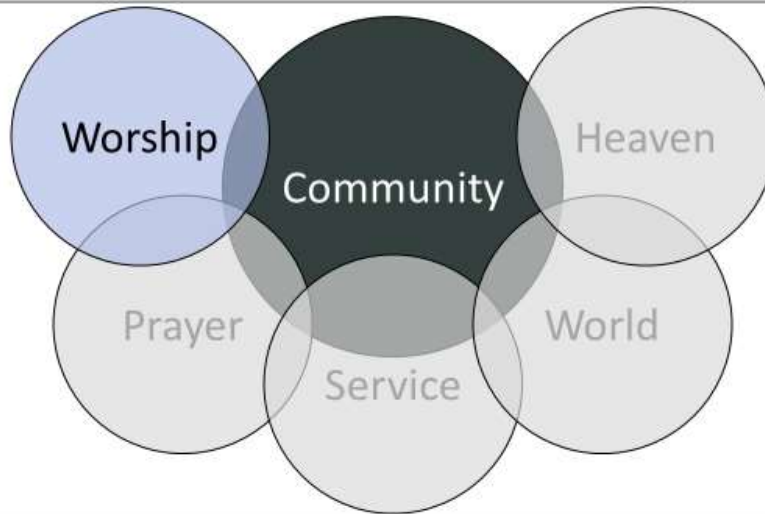


In principle, I think we would all agree that in each of these five areas there is both a personal and public element to our life in Christ. Yet even knowing this, our old nature can twist and turn us against community in ways that are not always obvious. We can easily corrupt good desires and goals and make these areas of our Christian walk less about others, and more about ourselves. This is the conflict of Me vs. We. It is a constant battle that we must guard against. And if we are honest, it is often at the heart of our inner push back against biblical community. This should come as no surprise, because Satan is at work through this world to keep believers from the power and joy that is found in deep biblical community.

As we will look at the intersection of community with each aspect of our spiritual lives we will focus on how Me can get in the way of We. There is no doubt that we must focus on our personal relationship with Christ and to live for His glory. But we were never intended to live in isolation or apart from the greater community of the Body of Christ. And we were never intended to focus on the Me and my relationship with Christ at the expense of others. If we do, we are missing the greater purpose and plan of our redemption which is self-sacrifice and service to others.

Through the Spirit, there is to be a natural growth and desire that flows out of our love for God, into a love for others that sees them to grow deeper in their walk with God. We must develop the Me and Christ in a way that enables us to love and minister to others that are a part of the We that is the community in Christ. Otherwise, our faith in Christ becomes a self-help project rather than a means to serve others. When the focus is only on Me, it leads to a pride and independence that does not reflect the God's love for His people. A focus on We leads to a humility and mutual interdependence that values community and makes others a priority.

Community And Worship



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Our focus this evening is the intersection of community and worship. Probably no surprise to most of you that that I would select this aspect first. An essential element of our life in Christ is the pursuit of God's glory through exaltation and praise. First, let me note that there is an important aspect to worship that is personal. There is need for private worship and it is important that it be a part of our walk with Christ. But although it is absolutely important, it is not the community aspect of worship that I am addressing tonight. Our study tonight is about the pattern and importance of worship in community as God's people.

And frankly, if you look at worship as a whole from God's Word, I do not think you can have one without the other. If your private life is empty of worship, you cannot simply turn it on when you gather together with God's people. Conversely, if there is no love for worship as a part of the body of Christ, you cannot bring a heart devoted to Christ to your private worship. As believers, the work of the Spirit, who is the presence of God in us, will necessarily orient our hearts to worship both privately and in community. Worship that is personal and worship that is in community must go hand in hand.

A Pattern of Community Worship

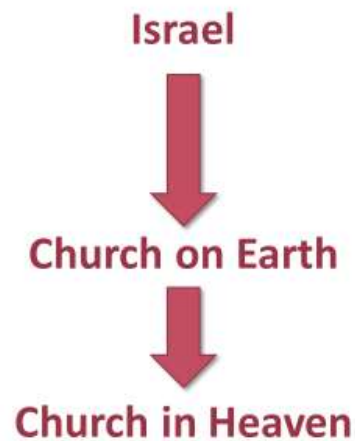
☐ 2 Chronicles 29:25-30

☐ Nehemiah 12:43

☐ Psalm 102:18-22

☐ Acts 2:42-47

☐ Revelation 19:1-8



If you step back and look at the pattern of worship through all of scripture, it becomes very clear that it is God's design for His people to worship in community. From the formation of Israel as a tribe and nation, we see numerous examples in the Old Testament of gathered worship. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to a time when true worshippers (*plural*) would worship in spirit and truth. As Christ followers, the early church was drawn by the Spirit to be devoted to their gathered worship. And Revelations speaks to our hope of being gathered together for eternal worship in the presence of the glory of our God. In fact, worship is one of the few aspects of our life in Christ here on earth that will continue as a part of our new and eternal life in heaven.

Let's look at several verses that establish this pattern of community worship throughout scripture's story of the redemption of God's people. We don't have time to work through each of these passages tonight. As we read these verses, let them encourage and strengthen your hearts to worship as community. Feel free to turn to these passages if you would like. Or if you would prefer, just listen with heart and mind tuned in to God's word.

2 Chronicles 29:25-30 – "25 And he (*Hezekiah*) stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets. 26 The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. 27 Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of David king of Israel. 28 The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. 29 When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. 30 And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites

to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.”

Nehemiah 12:43 – “And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.”

Psalms 102:18-22 – “18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: 19 that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth, 20 to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, 21 that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD, and in Jerusalem his praise, 22 when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.”

Acts 2:42-47 – “42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Revelation 19:1-8 – “1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” 3 Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.” 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” 5 And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.” 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

Psalm 95



Let us...

Sing, Make a joyful shout, Be thankful, Worship, Bow down, Kneel



Because...

He is a great God, He is a great King, He is the Creator, He is our God and Shepherd



A Warning

Heed God's voice and do not be hard of heart



So there is a consistent pattern of community worship throughout the redemptive story of scripture. Now let's take a look at two other passages that speak to worship in community. We'll dig into these two a little deeper. The first of these will be from the Old Testament and second from the New Testament. While each of these passages addresses worship within a larger context, our focus will be on making application to worship in community.

Please turn to Psalm 95. Here we have a call to Israel to come and worship the Lord. It tells us both how to worship and why we worship. Listen as I read God's word to us; Psalm 95. "1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! 3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." 11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest.""

This Psalm is a call to worship in community. Notice all the times the phrase "let us" is used. First note that the word "us" sets the context here of gathered worship. Each time we see this phrase, it is telling us how God's people worship in community.

How are we told to worship when we gather? We are to sing. There is music and lyrics that we offer as praise to God together. We are also to make a joyful noise, which literally translated is

a shout of joy. The sense of this is not a silent Amen in our hearts or downcast faces. Our worship is to be loud and joyful shouts of praise that are evident to all.

We are also to be thankful. Our hearts and our faces should reflect hearts full of gratitude. As we gather, we are to worship. We come to bring praise to our God. And as we worship, we are to recognize the authority and greatness of our God by being bowed down. The sense here is to be submissive in heart and mind before our Lord and the King of our lives. Lastly, we are to kneel. Similar to being bowed down, our hearts kneel in submission to the sovereignty and kingship of God in all that is in us and around us.

This Psalm also reminds us why we worship. We are reminded that He is a great God. He is far above us. His ways are not our ways. Worship is making much of God and His greatness. We worship Him because He is to be exalted above all others. This Psalm also reminds us that he is a great King. He rules and is sovereign over all. We are to bring him worship because He is worthy of our praise. We worship Him as well because He is the Creator. He has made all that is and is our Maker. He established the universe and by His will we take each breath. Lastly, we are encouraged in this passage to worship because He is our God and Shepherd. He will watch over and care for us. We are counted as His because He has made us to be a part of His pasture. Think of pasture as a reference to a community of sheep. An appropriate picture of God's people as they worship in community.

The last element of this passage to note is the warning at the end. We are to heed God's voice and guard against becoming hard of heart. What an interesting way to end a call to worship. Why is this a part of this Psalm? I believe this is here to remind us that worship begins with hearing. We worship as we reflect and respond to truths about God. Worship requires us to listen to God as he speaks to us in his Word and in the lyrics of the songs we sing.

Worship must reflect the truth of the Word of God that is within our hearts. Therefore, we must hear and heed God's Word. Second, we must believe it with willing obedience. We must *not* become hardened to God's word and His authority. We cannot come and worship when our hearts are far from God. To obey is better than sacrifice. It is only when we submit to His authority that can we fully bring praise with hearts of joy in our God.

Ephesians 5:15-21



Addressing

Worship that is aware of others
Worship with words that
encourage and teach
Worship as an example



Submitting

Worship that prefers others and
submits to leadership
Worship that is considerate of
others




The second passage we will take a deeper look at tonight with respect to community worship is Ephesians 5:15 to 21. Again, while this passage looks at our gathered worship from a broader perspective, I want to focus in on what it says about or worship in the context of community. Please follow along as I read these verses. “15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

For the sake of time tonight, we are going to jump to verse 19. Notice that that the direction of our psalms, hymns, and songs is toward one another. We are to address one another which in the Greek is means literally to speak to each other. This aspect of our community worship cannot be duplicated in private worship.

First, this means that we are to think of and be aware of each other. There is an aspect to or worship that flows as encouragement to others. As we lift the lyrics of songs to the Lord, we sing them to one another. As parents, we address our children in worship both to teach and as an example to them. As brothers and sisters in Christ, our worship reminds each other of God’s faithfulness and goodness. We worship to lift Christ to those who are in the midst of suffering and hardship. And we worship as a means to teach one another through lyrics that reflect truths from the Word of God. In every aspect of our gathered worship we offer praise to God even as we sing to one another.


Second, this means that submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. In our gathered worship, I believe this means that we are to prefer one another in terms of musical styles and songs. It also means that we submit to the godly leadership of those who serve and lead us in worship. Even when it is not what we prefer or the way we might do things. Submission to one another in our gathered worship means being considerate of others. We do not worship in a way that is intentionally distracting to others or seeks the attention of others. We are to offer our praise to God with an authentic joy and gladness that draws others into deeper worship.

Reflect and Respond




Me

About what I get
About songs I prefer
For my good
I am aware of self



We

About what I get and give
About songs others prefer
For the good of all
I am aware of others

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Let me pull this all together by reflecting on the Me vs. We contrast that we looked at earlier. Worship has a clear community or corporate aspect. We gather not just as individual believers, but as one body – the body of Christ. As we sing praises, our hearts resonate as one. Our voices unite, joined together to God as one. But in the midst of this, we can still struggle with attitudes and desires that focus on Me rather than We.

So what does Me oriented worship look like? This is not an inclusive list, but here are few examples to help you assess your own heart. When worship is about Me, it becomes more about what I get and what I experience. It is absent of a concern for the needs or situations of brothers and sisters gathered with us. When worship is about Me, it becomes more about the songs and music I prefer. We may never openly complain, but inwardly we resist and grumble against styles of music we don't prefer. When worship is about Me, it becomes more about my good and what I have to gain. And when worship is about Me, I am more aware of self, my worship, my voice, and what I am bringing to God.

Contrast this to worship that allows the Me to serve the We of worship in community. When worship is about We, it is about both what I get and what I can give to others *through* my worship. There is an awareness of others and consciously thinking of them and addressing

them with an awareness of their lives. Parents, you especially have an opportunity and responsibility to set an example of authentic worship before your children. When worship is about *We*, there is delight in singing songs that others prefer. It seeks to draw others into worship with musical styles that *they* will connect with and enjoy. When worship is about *We*, there is a focus on the good of all and not just my personal needs. And it is actively supportive of the direction of those who lead in worship as they serve us. And when worship is about *We*, it is aware of others, their needs for worship, and how God is true and faithful to all.

Our worship as a community is an essential element of our gatherings. Just as in private worship the goal is God-glorifying, Christ-exalting praise. But corporate worship allows us to celebrate what God is doing both in us and among us in a special way. We reflect as the gathered people of God, that His truth applies to us not just individually, but as a community. He is not just *my* Lord and *my* Savior. He is *our* Lord and He is *our* Savior. We respond *together* in His presence as we reflect on Him and His word.

Let us be mindful to make the *We* of worship a priority in the midst of busy lives. When we consistently absent ourselves from gathered worship, we take away not only from ourselves, but from our brothers and sisters as well. It is simply untrue to think that missing our gatherings has no impact. The fact is that you are missed when you are not here. May God help us to make the most of our time with wise choices about gathering together in worship. May the Spirit draw our hearts together like the early church, that we would be devoted more and more to Christ and to others, than we are to ourselves.

[Let's pray]

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