

Crosswalk: How To Live As Followers Of Jesus Christ

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
(Romans 12:1 ESV)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
(Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV)

Worship: Elements And Attitude

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Exodus 19-24

Hebrews 12:22-29

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Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to Exodus 19. That's on page 60 in your pew Bible. We are starting something new this morning. We have spent the last 18 months working our way through the Gospel of Mark – we took a couple of breaks in there – but by and large we have spent the last year and a half together trying to figure out who Jesus is and what he has done to secure our salvation. And now it is time to talk about how we respond to that.

You don't just walk away from the cross.

You don't just walk away from the empty tomb.

You need to figure out what to do next.

You need to figure out how to put your life back together now that you see and understand what God has done for you through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

That's what this is about.

The question we're asking is this: how do we respond to who Jesus is and what he has done for our salvation?

And I think the answer to that question is really obvious: if Jesus is who he said he is – if he is who the empty tomb argues that he is – and if he has done what he said he would do then we should fall down on our faces and worship him. We should kiss his feet and claim him as Lord and Savior – that is the only WISE response to who Jesus is and what he has done for our salvation.

That is what the women did and that is what Psalm 2 tells us to do – we ended last week with this passage:

be wise; be warned... Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psalms 2:10–12 ESV)

That makes a ton of sense and so that's what we are going to talk about today. What does it look like to worship the God of our salvation?

Well thankfully we aren't starting from scratch when it comes to answering that question. In Hebrews 12 New Covenant worship is compared to Old Covenant worship. The Apostle says just like the old covenant people were saved and called out of bondage in order to gather together around the mountain to worship so have you been. They gathered around Mount Sinai, we gather around Mount Zion – figuratively speaking. But it's the same idea! Just like them – we have been SAVED in order to WORSHIP.

Do you remember that? If you have your Bible open to Exodus 19 just turn back a couple of pages to Exodus 7:16. Moses goes and says to Pharaoh on God's behalf:

Let My people go, so that they may worship Me in the wilderness (Exodus 7:16 HCSB)

Old Testament and New Testament people are SAVED in order to WORSHIP. Worship is about responding to who God is and what God has done to secure our salvation. So in Exodus 19 – after God has saved the people and brought them up out of Egypt he gathers them at Mount Sinai – by

the way – that’s where the word for “church” comes from. The word “church” comes from the Greek word “ecclesia” which means “called out”. God called them out of Egypt and then he gathered them at the mountain – that is the pattern for all subsequent worship within the people of God. The Apostle to the Hebrews picks that up and he says it’s the same with us – just a different mountain. We gather now around Mt Zion – the mountain where Jesus was crucified for our redemption. That’s our hill now. But the pattern is the same. We are called out – we are saved – in order to worship the God of our salvation.

Alright, so what does that look like? I want to talk this morning in very practical terms. I want to talk about ELEMENTS and I want to talk about ATTITUDE. And we’ll use the first story – the story in Exodus 19-24 and then we’ll use the New Testament version in Hebrews 12.

Let’s talk first about ELEMENTS.

Elements:

What is involved in worshipping the God of our salvation? Well the first thing we see is the people of God hearing and responding to God.

1. Hearing and responding

Let’s read Exodus 19:7-8:

So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. (Exodus 19:7–8 ESV)

Alright, so God saved the people – called them out of slavery and bondage – and then gathered them together at the foot of the mountain and then Moses set before the people all the Words of the Lord and then the people responded and Moses their covenant mediator took those words back to God.

That’s a very useful picture of the heart of the heart of the heart of covenant worship.

At it's heart – at it's centre – covenant worship is about hearing from God and responding through our covenant mediator.

In plain laymen's terms, its about hearing the Word of God and responding in corporate prayer.

Moses set before them the Words that the Lord had commanded him. What do we call that? We call that preaching. I read a portion of the Bible, I try to lay out what it means and what we should do. And then we respond. Pastor Jody comes up here and he leads us in a song of response. A song of response is a type of corporate prayer. It is a prayer set to music that we all sing and pray together. That is the heart of the heart of the heart of corporate worship.

We see this pattern repeated again and again in this foundational story. Flip forward a few pages to Exodus 24:3. There it says:

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." (Exodus 24:3 ESV)

You see this "one voice" thing is really important and it is all over this story. Singing is a way to get everybody on the same page. Yes, we all have to personally respond to the work of God in Christ – YES! But we are also called to unity of mind and unity of purpose. And towards that end God has given us the gift of corporate worship. You see it everywhere in this story. Just flip back a few pages to Exodus 15:1-2.

Right after the climactic act of their redemption – when the waters of the Red Sea came crashing down on the army of the pursuing Egyptians – what does Moses do? He writes a song! He leads the people in a time of corporate worship. Look:

1 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. (Exodus 15:1-2 ESV)

So at the heart of the heart of the heart of gathered worship there is hearing from the Word of God and responding to God in prayer and in song.

The Lord is our strength and our SONG and he has become our salvation. This is my God and I WILL PRAISE HIM. My FATHER'S God – oh what a blessing to say that – and I will exalt him.

Can you say amen to that?

Amen! Thanks be to God!

But there is more.

Turn forward again in your Bible to Exodus 24:8. There we see Moses leading the people in a covenant ceremony. That too is part of what we do when we gather together to worship.

2. Covenant ceremonies

The text says:

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words. (Exodus 24:8 ESV)

If you are a Bible reader you know that this is carried forward into the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul says:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26. ESV)

When Jesus said this cup is the NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD he was obviously connecting this new ceremony to the old ceremony and let me just say off the top that I like the new ceremony better. Moses threw the blood on the people – Jesus tells us to drink the cup that represents his blood. I like that better – and so does our custodian. But the point is obviously the same. The ceremony is supposed to remind us of the price that was paid for our salvation and the unity that we now enjoy with our covenant Lord and Master.

We talk a lot about the former but maybe not enough about the latter but that theme is definitely

there in the original ceremony. In the Jewish JPS Torah Commentary it says this:

“The blood functions mysteriously to cement the bond between the involved parties. Through God’s sharing, as it were, of the vital fluid with Israel or with Aaron, the life of the recipient is thought to take on a new dimension and to be elevated to a higher level of intimate relationship with the Deity.”¹

So this is like when you were a kid and you and your best friend cut your thumbs together and mingled the blood and declared yourself blood brothers – that’s what is going on here. And not just in the Old Testament version – Paul picks that theme up in 1 Corinthians 10:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16 ESV)

The covenant ceremony of COMMUNION is supposed to remind us of our vital union and intimate association with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our BLOOD BROTHER. And through his life and death we have been elevated to a higher level of intimate relationship with the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. You should be thinking about that today when you take communion.

Thirdly, when the people are called out of Egypt and delivered from slavery and death they respond with generous giving.

3. Generous giving

Look at Exodus 24:5:

And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. (Exodus 24:5 ESV)

They sent the ushers around and they gathered up costly and generous gifts to offer to the Lord. There was a spirit of generosity in the group – so much so that at one point in the story Moses actually has to tell them to settle down. It’s sort of an amusing story – flip forward to Exodus 36:5. Some folks came to Moses and said:

“The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.”⁶ So Moses

¹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 152.

gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.” (Exodus 36:5–6 ESV)

We have more than we can use – we have more than required for doing the work that God has commanded us to do. That’s a good problem! That’s the problem churches should have when people are worshipping the Lord the way they should.

You see that too in the New Testament. In the early chapters of the Book of Acts several times you have these narratives about the overwhelming generosity that was characteristic of the early church. Acts 2:45 for example says:

they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (Acts 2:45 ESV)

Acts 4:34 says:

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet. (Acts 4:34–37 ESV)

People were going all in! They weren’t arguing over whether the tithe rate was 10% or 25% or any amount the Lord laid on their hearts – they were just selling stuff and going all in because they knew that God had gone all in for them through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Listen friends, there is no definition of worship – Old Testament or New – that does not involve generous giving. And there isn’t supposed to be. In Exodus 23:15 God says:

None shall appear before me empty-handed. (Exodus 23:15 ESV)

Generous giving is an essential way of worshipping the God of our salvation.

Now, I want to be clear, I don’t think we are supposed to interpret those words in a wooden, literalistic way. Most people in our church today give on some sort of bi-weekly basis, because most of us get paid every two weeks. My wife and I give on a bi-weekly rotation – because we get paid every other week – but we don’t skip church on the weeks between. I don’t think this

means that you can't come to corporate worship if you don't have something to give. I think what it means is that giving is an essential part of worship.

Giving communicates trust – because you probably need that money and if God doesn't replace it you are going to be in trouble. Giving communicates gratitude – think about it – where did these people get all this money? They'd just been slaves a few weeks ago. Where did they get all these possessions that they were giving to God at Mount Sinai? Do you remember?

God gave them those possessions. He said:

“I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.” (Exodus 3:21–22 ESV)

And that's exactly what happened! By the time the Israelites left Egypt the people were so glad to see them go – because they were tired of fighting with God – so they loaded them up with gifts and gold and silver and stuff – all the stuff that the people then returned to God as an act of gratitude and worship.

That's what giving is.

A sign and a signal that you know where your wealth is from. It is from God. God who gives you the ability to make wealth. God who gave you the gifts and talents necessary to earn money. When you give a portion of that back you are acknowledging your debt to your Creator and your Redeemer.

And that's why generous giving is an **ESSENTIAL ELEMENT** of covenant worship – Old Testament and New.

So when we gather together we are going to hear the Word of God and respond with songs and prayers.

We are going to participate in covenant ceremonies.

And we are going to give generously because God has given generously to us – in creation and specifically through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God!

Attitude:

That leads us to the final part of our discussion. We've talked about the elements now we need to talk about the attitude. For that I want you to turn forward in your Bibles to Hebrews 12:18 and following, that's on page 1009 in your pew Bibles. I mentioned already that a connection is made between the story we've been reading in Exodus 19-24 and our experience of corporate worship today as New Covenant believers. The author of Hebrews says that our worship is like that only better. It's better, he says because we get closer – you remember they had to stay back but Jesus brings us all the way in. The veil has been torn! There is no barrier now between us and God. If we are in Christ then we are all the way in. Jesus is a better Mediator than Moses and so we have even more reason than them to gather round this mountain in corporate worship.

That's the point he's making and this is where he ends. Look at verses 28 and 29:

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28–29 ESV)

Given all of what God has done, given all of what he has given to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ let us offer to God acceptable worship and he says three things about ATTITUDE that I want us to note carefully.

First of all he talks about GRATITUDE.

1. Gratitude

Therefore let us be GRATEFUL! Gratitude is the essential sign that you have properly apprehended what God has done for you in the person and work of Jesus Christ. If you

understand what you have then you should be thankful.

Are you?

Do you understand that all the promises of God are now YES and AMEN in Christ for ALL those who have faith in him?

Do you get that?

Find a promise in the Old Testament and land that on the person of Jesus Christ. He is the SEED of Abraham; he is the Son of David – that’s not my opinion, that’s Holy Scripture. The Apostle Paul says:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “*And to your Seed,*” who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NKJV)

So everything God ever promised to Abraham or his descendents – people like Isaac and Jacob and David – everything God has ever promised has now landed on THE SEED. Everything – every single promise has landed on the person of Jesus Christ.

He has it all and he shares it with all those who put faith in him. That’s what the Bible says:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26–29 NKJV)

So if you have faith in Jesus Christ, if you have been baptized into Christ then you are a JOINT HEIR with Jesus to all the promises of God.

Do you understand that?

Because if you did you would probably sing better than you do.

You would probably give more generously than you give.

Same holds true for me.

When we understand what we have in Christ then our worship comes a little freer. It flows a little faster and it runs a little deeper.

Gratitude comes from a proper apprehension of GRACE.

God has given.

We have received.

Therefore let us give thanks.

That is the rhythm and the essential attitude of Christian worship.

I think we'll treat the second and third attitudes together since they are presented together in the text. Hebrews 12:28 says:

thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28–29 ESV)

2. Reverence

3. Awe

The word translated as “reverence” means “fear” and even “dread”. It has the sense of caution in the presence of the Almighty. The word translated as “awe” means “timid” or “fearful” – now why in the world would the Apostle tell Christians to approach God in that way? That doesn't seem to be an appropriate description of how saved people should respond to the God of our salvation.

It seems WEIRD to us.

Doesn't it?

Almost as WEIRD as how the WOMEN responded to the climactic message of the empty tomb – that was WEIRD TOO wasn't it? Do you remember what Mark said about them?

they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16:8 ESV)

That's so weird!

Except maybe it's not.

Maybe it's US that are weird. Maybe our HAPPY CLAPPY SILLY and SLOPPY worship is what's weird. Because the Bible says:

be wise; be warned... Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psalms 2:10–12 ESV)

So if the Psalms say it – and they are supposed to teach us how to pray and worship – and if the Apostle to the Hebrews says it then maybe we should listen to it. Maybe we should re-evaluate the dominant tone and attitude of our worship. Because everybody seems to be talking about FEAR, REVERANCE, AWE and TREMBLING in the Bible – Old Testament and New.

Why is that?

Well the Apostle tells us. Look at the end of the passage; he says:

let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, **for** our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28–29 ESV)

Let me read to you what Philip Edgcumbe Hughes says about that verse. He explains that phrase saying:

“Those to whom this letter is addressed need to be warned of the dreadful consequences of abandoning the new covenant procured and sealed by the blood of Christ, lest they too, like their ancestors under Moses, should be

consumed by the fire of the divine wrath. Apostasy, as they have already been told, can mean only one thing: “a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries”².

Despite what you may have been told the God of the New Covenant is the same God as the God of the Old Covenant. He is HOLY, HOLY, HOLY and it is a FEARFUL THING to fall into the hands of the Living God.

So worship the Lord with awe and reverence.

Now I want to bring this down to street level – the whole emphasis of this series is on practicality. We want to know how to walk and how to live as the rescued, redeemed and restored people of God. That’s the point so I want to make sure that everyone has it. In street level terms what we are saying is that the dominant TONE when we gather to worship ought to be HUMBLE, RESPECTFUL GRATITUDE.

Jesus is not your home boy.

Jesus is not your boyfriend.

Jesus is not a wise man, a good teacher, a prophet or a sage.

He is GOD.

God over us and God for us.

Our sacrifice. Our Savior and our King.

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:28–29 ESV)

This is the tone, these are the elements and this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let’s pray together.

² Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary On The Epistle To The Hebrews*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 560.