



Michael's Musings (July 2021)

So Much Better!

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VOICE
OF TRUTH
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People in Bible times were so fortunate; the LORD spoke to (some) people audibly and led others with signs and wonders; for instance, God led the people of Israel with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. It was so visible! They knew exactly where to go. But somehow, they didn't do it. They didn't obey. Instead, they often complained. They didn't have faith. How come? I wish the LORD would lead ME like He led them; I would be different. And I wish He would speak to me in an audible voice and tell me what to do! I wish.

But if God was really telling me what to do, I would have to listen very carefully. And then I would do it, right? Or maybe not. Maybe I would have to say, "Excuse me, LORD, could you please repeat

that? I think I missed some details." And then God would repeat it. Again. And again. And then He would say "Just write it down!" And I would. But it would be a lot to write down. Too much. Too complicated. And then I would say "LORD, would YOU please write it down?"

Ha! Done! He actually asked some other people to do exactly that. Now it's SO EASY. I can just read it. Again and again. Much better. More reliable. Do I really need to hear God's voice in order to know what He wants? Do I really need some cloud to guide me? No, it's actually better to read His Word. It's much more precise! Not in one ear and out the other. Now I can read, reflect, remember and share it...the possibilities are almost endless. What a BLESSING!

Who needs 'miracles', pillars of cloud or fire, an audible voice, when you can have the BIBLE? THAT's A MIRACLE!!! If I forget, I can read it again. What a BLESSING!

So next time you read about people in Scripture and you begin to ENVY them because they heard God audibly, or saw His guidance visibly, remember that we have it so much better. It's really a wonderful blessing. So go back to your room. Get THE WORD. Open it, read it, reflect on it, and remember it, and then apply it. ☺

憐恤人有福

涂文麗



弟兄姊妹平安今天我要分享的是馬太福音第五章第七節憐恤人有福了因為他們必蒙憐恤

憐恤對我來講，有什麼樣的意義呢？我覺得憐恤就是將神賜給我的愛，用我的行為表現出來。憐恤不但是神對我的仁慈，也包括神對我的寬恕。不只是一種同情心的表現，也是一種你是否願意進入你所關懷的那個人，去感受他的痛苦，並且甘心樂意幫助他，鼓勵他靠著主耶穌基督的愛，從他的痛苦當中給脫離出來。

憐恤不光只是用愛來陪伴，也是要幫助你所關愛的人，替他想辦法解決問題。而且解決方式就是把耶穌介紹給他，若是對方已經認識耶穌基督，那就要用神的話來安慰他，讓他對神的話更有依靠，在耶穌基督的愛裡頭重新得力。

在馬可福音一章40到41節有提到一個故事，「有一個長大痲瘋的，來求耶穌，向他跪下說：你若肯，必能叫我潔淨了。耶穌動了慈心，就伸手摸他，說：我肯，你潔淨了罷！」

這個故事啟發我，這個長大痲瘋的人，沒有問耶穌說，如果你有能力的話，必能叫我潔淨，而是向耶穌祈求說，「你若肯」什麼是你若肯呢？那就是你若願意。這個長大痲瘋的人一定聽說過耶穌，知道祂行了許多醫病趕鬼的神跡奇事，所以他早就知道，耶穌有能力可以醫治他，但是他卻問耶穌說，你若願意的話，我就一定能夠被你潔淨。你知道耶穌聽了他的話之後，怎麼做了嗎？耶穌動了慈心，主動伸手去觸摸這個長大痲瘋的人，並且對他說，「我肯！」這個長大痲瘋的人，就被主潔淨了。一個被社會棄絕的人，就在主耶穌這裡，找到了尊嚴跟肯定。

經由這個故事我們可以反思自己，我們是否也願意去做主耶穌基督所做的？你可以問一問你自己？

（1）我願意讓耶穌基督重新修補我心中的傷口嗎？

（2）我願意讓耶穌基督再次給我應有的尊嚴嗎？

（3）我願意讓耶穌基督所賜給我的愛也能夠表現出來對人的愛跟憐憫嗎？

（4）我是否也願意將我的生活再次回歸到主耶穌那裡呢？

（5）我是否願意讓主耶穌解決我靈裏的乾渴呢？我願意每天讀他的話語嗎？

（6）我是否願意讓主耶穌來幫助我們，讓我們能夠在眾人面前做見證。主耶穌已經憐恤我們，我們是否也願意將主的憐恤分享給其他的人，來幫助他們呢？❶

虛心有福

涂文麗



弟兄姊妹平安，這一次我要和大家分享的是馬太福音第五章第三節「虛心的人有福了，因為天國是他們的。」

當我讀到馬太福音第五章第三節所提到的「虛心的人」有福了，我第一個反應就是覺得在神面前謙卑的人有福了，因為他們成為天國的子民，是理所當然的。可是，當我看到英文的翻譯把「虛心的人」解釋成為「靈裡貧窮的人」這樣的翻譯居然引發我的好奇心，想要深切的思考，為什麼靈裡貧窮的人有福了，因為天國是他們的。

後來，我在路加福音18章9到14節中，我興奮的找到了答案。這是一個耶穌所說的比喻。「耶穌向那些仗著自己是義人，藐視別人的，設一個比喻，說，有兩個人上殿裡去禱告，一個是法利賽人，一個是稅吏。法利賽人站著，自言自語的禱告說，神啊！我感謝你，我不像別人，勒索，不義，姦淫，也不像這個稅吏。我一個禮拜禁食兩次，凡我所得的，都捐上十分之一。」

我們再來看看稅吏又在做什麼，聖經記載到，這個稅吏只是「遠遠的站著，連舉目望天也不敢，只捶著胸說，神啊！開恩，

可憐我這個罪人。」主耶穌在這裡告訴我們說，「這個稅吏回家去，比那個法利賽人，倒算為義了，因為凡自高的，必降為卑，自卑的，必升為高。」

其實法利賽人在這裏所代表是律法的持守者，也就是宗教人士。他們去聖殿禱告往往是彰顯他們自己的好行為給周遭的人知道，無形之中就流露出他們的驕傲，覺得他們的道德品行都是高人一等，這就是自以為義的危險，人在驕傲中，往往都會瞧不起別人。

相反地，這個稅吏自覺是靈性貧窮的人，他去聖殿禱告，為的就是祈求神的赦罪和憐憫。反思我們自己與神的關係到底是像法利賽人呢？還是像稅吏一樣。懇求神幫助我們，使我們真的能夠明白，我們的確是靈裡的貧窮的人，所以更要依靠主耶穌基督的愛，恩慈和憐憫來滿足我們的靈裏的需求。

在羅馬書12章3節提到說，「我憑著所賜我的恩，對你們個人說，不要看自己過於所當看的，要照著神所分給各人信心的大小，看得合乎中道。」我們若是真心實意地，願意在神的面前，承認我們的驕傲使我們成為靈貧窮的人，求神幫助我們摒棄

過去的驕傲，真正的謙卑順服接受神的帶領，我們就會發現只有主耶穌基督能夠給我們真正的平安滿足跟喜樂，我們才能夠真實的與神在一起，成為天國的子民。

我要感謝主，讓馬太福音五章三節「虛心的人有福了，因為天國是他們的。」使我更加明白以賽亞書57章15節所提到的神的應許。「因為那至高至上，永遠長存，名為聖者的如此說，我住在至高至聖的所在，也與心靈痛悔謙卑的人同居，要使謙卑人的靈甦醒，也使痛悔人的心甦醒。」當我的靈甦醒之後，我就明白神與我同在。

其實驕傲的人心靈不受管束，永遠都學不會感激，只有在主裏謙卑的人才會心存感恩。我要用雅各書4章10節與大家共勉，「務要在主面前自卑，主必叫你們升高。」神的話就是真理，真理叫我們得著自由。想想我們自己是否願意放棄驕傲的捆綁，原本是心不甘情不願的去服侍那些自己不喜歡的人，而發自內心願意成為一個謙卑的人，如此才能夠放下自我，用神所賜給我們的愛，去服侍那些不可愛或是社會上弱勢的人。❷

父愛如山

陳甦靈

今年是父親離世後第十個父親節，愈來愈感受到自己的一生，是如何地被他的愛所包圍！忘不了他的慈容，忘不了他的無奈，忘不了他的笑臉，忘不了他的沮喪！

「你認為你的爸爸如何？」他專門從樓上跑下樓，坐在我的電腦旁問。

「您是我世上最重要的人！」我毫不猶疑地回答。

他問得太深刻了！他被許多人所愛戴，但對他來說，我是多麼的重要！

「頭生的要獻給神！神悅納了我們的奉獻！」那是大概差不多五十年前，在我從香港播道神學院畢業的時候，他告訴我的。他還說，我滿月的時候，他寫了一本小紅書，代替紅雞蛋，送給親友們說：將來我要與他同工。

文字事奉是父親一生的負擔，世上一切，沒有比這個更重要的了，包括他的家庭。從他開始服事神，直到意識還清醒的時刻，都面對著人生各種考驗，卻從來沒有

放下過對文字事奉的堅持。

我們五姊弟小的時候，家裏永無寧日，神為我們預備了在九龍紅磡區唐樓的公寓，有一個能關門的房間，在許多家務的忙亂中，他總能抽出時間來，在裏面安靜地領受神的話語。

有好幾年，媽媽病了，他要兼任母職，時間和精神上的壓力都很大難日月不知道他是如何渡過的，後來我才知道，在那時期，菲律賓華僑教會面對錯誤真理的危機，他為了要起草聯合聲明難日月曾七天沒有睡覺！後來在星加坡，他自己頸椎壓住神經，右手發麻有十年，段練自己用左手寫字，其間完成了新約書信講義。

在加拿大兼顧牧會約20年其間，右手癱瘓不治而癒，神給他力量再出版18本屬靈書籍，最後心臟病大發，神竟然存留他的生命，病癒後，又再出版10本屬靈書籍。

父親一直都是我的英雄我的驕傲，他不單在事奉的工作上全力以赴，對家庭也無微不至，可是當我在香港接受神學裝備的時

候，卻對教會牧養事工愈來愈有負擔，而對文字寫作有無從入手的感覺。

感謝神在加拿大的時候，給我兩度在教會與他一同事奉，他雖然期望我多安靜研經幫助文字事工，卻任由我為教會其他的需要花時間。當我想要再進修的時候，他馬上說要支持我。他對我的偏愛，是眾所周知，我也樂在其中，感覺自己很應得如此的寵愛！

現在當我在整理他遺留下來的文稿的時候，真悔恨沒有把握機會，更多協助他的寫作，回想他偶而的感歎：「你只關心我的健康！」換來的是我的反駁：「我能顧好您的健康就已經很不錯了！」原來，父親幾十年的寵愛，還沒有讓我明白他心底裏的重擔。

「我的書都交給你了！」我配嗎？他一生的心血，我們五姊弟只能盡力了，願主使用，叫那些願意領受神話語的人得到造就。

一顆微塵的自白

黎慧馨

耶和華是我的牧者，我必不致缺乏。
你的杖，你的竿掀起天上的片片雲彩環繞我。
杖與竿把你的愛，教導，眷顧，保守，幫助…
注入我心房，填滿我胸膛，充滿我口中
仍要充滿！仍要充滿！！
我就大聲呼喊：主啊你恩典何廣大！
讚美主！讚美主！！讚美主！！
不絕的讚美…… 哈利路亞！！！！

正期待享受退休生活又喜愛戶外浪蕩的我，買了 巴士咭，背包預備好，憧憬著可以各處漫遊的 美夢時，得悉母親要全時間照顧，幸好，我只須負責兩天，仍然有四天完夢呢！噢！… 天不造美，一個疫情—新冠肺炎一把所有人都困在家中，我也不例外，唉！… 好無奈，拍了一下心胸，不著急，等待疫 的過去了，再說吧！就在這時候，一個大發現—手寫字不受控，字体怪怪，雙腳行路失平衡，坐著時像在遊輪上，什麼事發生？是柏金遜症？家庭醫生不作正面答覆而轉介到專科醫生。那段時間胡思亂想越想越似！越猜越 吻合！這樣整個心被恐懼搜住了。我是懶惰基督徒！不熱心事奉。全腦子都是虧欠神的種種事，被懲罰了！但當仰望神，靠著祂的應許，憑著祂的慈愛，向神認罪悔改，主啊赦免我！更有教會、

團契、牧師、傳道、弟兄姊妹為我的禱告！

在這一年內領受神的恩典特別多，即使疾病發生，神大 能恩手扶持，祂賜下邦助。看！

一朵朵雲彩這樣的飄下來：

- 一個刮著冷風下著雨的正午，一位姊妹不吃午飯請了假，開車去到疫情高危的醫院裡作翻釋。到現在仍跟進著，作隨時幫助。
- 一個寒冷的晚上，一位姊妹為要接送我到醫院做CT掃描，剛在醫院放下我，回到家還未坐好電話響起又要開車來接，送我回家，我們家是一東南一西北相距十條街，醫院在中間。
- 一有空閒時間或百忙中只一小時的空擋也不為自己留下休息，行路快捷的她，放慢腳步，陪我操練行走。因此難日月使我行路大有進步。
- 兩位傳道，繁忙業務中的探望，禱告！
- 常常惦念，在每次見醫生或測試時，姊妹都為我禱告。
- 從網上視象聚會，看見我疲倦的容貌，發出的關懷。好窩心啊！
- 忘記自己身體的軟弱，切切的慰問。

- 常常想念寄來慰問與祝福，並不厭煩的陪我走。這些身、心、靈的支撐，這樣的愛，乎復何求！！！----- 是主內‘活出愛’的團契彰顯的。

事到今日，做過了各樣醫學的測驗有磁力共振MRI，人體 掃描CT SCAN，超聲波ULTRASOUND，腸和二十多種 血液測試，專科和家庭 醫生所給的結論是懷疑是共濟失調ATAXIA，也有可能是隱形癌細胞作祟，醫治方法‘沒有！’由於未確定原因，還要繼續找，由此可見 ‘人是有限的’

不過！感謝神！我有你，你醫治，你差派天使來輔助，讓我經歷你大能的福氣！數不盡的恩典！！！！我算什麼！只不過在太陽照射下才看見的一顆微塵，你既捧在掌心像明珠般呵護著。主啊！感謝你！！！我搜盡枯腸找不到更高的讚美話，就衷心的向你說：‘我愛你’！

一顆蒙恩典微塵慧馨草 ●

2021五月



大獲全勝？還是徹底失敗？

楊揚

生氣卻不要犯罪，不可含怒到日落，也不可給魔鬼留地步。(以弗所書4:26-27)

有一個士兵在森林裡發現了一面銀色的盾牌，但是因為盾牌是在一個充滿荊棘的位置裡，他馬上起程回村莊找人來幫忙。回到村莊的時候，剛好在廣場碰到了一個冒險家在述說他在森林裡發現了一面金色的盾牌。描述的環境和他可看到的是一模一樣，不同的只是盾牌的顏色。因為這個原因，士兵就和冒險家爭論起來，最後還大打出手，兩人打到筋疲力盡的時候，有一個剛好從森林裡打獵回來的獵人，知道了他們打架的原因之後，就告訴他們那面盾牌其實是金銀兩色的，一面是金色，一面是銀色。

聽了這個故事，你覺得他們愚蠢嗎？你會不會覺得如果他們願意心平氣和地說，也不需要打到半死的時候，才搞清楚是什麼一回事。那是不是心平氣和地說清楚，就不會爭論起來呢？也不一定。有時候，爭論也不單單是為了對與錯。大多數的時候，是為了說贏對方，釋放個人的負面情緒。和陌生人爭論，吵贏了就離開，沒有太多後遺症。但是如果是和自己的配偶爭論，那就不是吵贏了離開就可以完事的。

我們和配偶發生衝突的時候，應該如何處理呢？我們要先想一想我們要解決些什麼

東西？我們除了想堅持自己的要求之外，還要處理雙方的關係。如果雙方都不想堅持自己的要求，也不想處理關係，就會變成冷戰，這是最糟糕的情況。如果雙方都想堅持自己的要求，但是不想處理關係，就會變成彼此攻擊。如果雙方都想處理好彼此的關係，但是不堅持自己的要求，就會變成彼此讓步。冷戰、攻擊和讓步都不是解決衝突的好方法。當雙方想盡量處理好關係和盡量堅持自己的要求，就會變成妥協。妥協是不是解決衝突的最好方法呢？我們來看看聖經如何解決衝突。

在以弗所書4章26-27節，說到生氣不要犯罪，不要含怒到日落，不要給魔鬼留地步。這裡提到解決衝突的最好方法。生氣不要犯罪，可以生氣，但是不要破壞彼此的關係。含怒不要到日落，可以有問題，可以堅持自己的要求，但是要盡快說出來，不要讓心裡充滿埋怨。這樣了就不會讓魔鬼在心裡頭留下一個懷疑的種子。當雙方都可以處理好關係和都可以堅持自己的要求，就可以解決衝突，就會變成化解。當我們可以化解衝突，這個衝突才能真正的從我們的心裡除掉，也不會變成下一個衝突的開端。

在以弗所書4章28-32節，說到污穢的言語，一句都不可出口，只說造就人的好話。一切苦毒、惱恨、忿怒、嚷鬧、

毀謗、並一切的惡毒，都當從你們中間除掉。我們都想處理好關係，也想堅持自己的要求，但的我們總是忘記了對方的出發點是為了我們的好處。我們只要相信對方是為了我們的好處，處理關係和堅持自己的要求就不是什麼難事了。污穢的言語就不會隨便從自己的嘴巴裡說出來。

記得有一次，女兒生病的時候，發生了以下的一個衝突。當時太太問我，要如何處理女兒發燒的事情，我馬上就生氣了，她看我生氣，也沒有再說什麼。到了晚上，在我心情平復之後，太太問我到底發生了什麼事情，我告訴她因為我覺得她要控告我沒有照顧好女兒。當時我們夫婦二人坐下來，彼此說明了心裡的想法，她告訴我要相信她的為了彼此的好處，就容易看重彼此的關係，堅持自己心裡的要求。所以同樣的事情，就算再發生，我們也有辦法化解彼此之間的衝突。如果我們沒有能力處理好彼此的關係，堅持自己的要求，除掉心裡的不滿，我們就沒有辦法真正的解決衝突。化解衝突的最好的結果就是雙方都贏。如果只有其中一方贏，那就等於雙方都敗。

你解決衝突的方法是什麼呢？是大獲全勝？還是徹底失敗？❶



THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP

Noah Ha

Introduction

The worship of God is a perpetual activity that pervades the entire life of every true believer in Christ – essentially, it is a lifestyle. English clergyman and theologian William Nicholls asserted that worship is “the supreme and only indispensable activity of the Christian Church”. Humankind exists solely to worship and give absolute glory to God in every aspect of life (Is. 43:7) and Creation’s only natural response to God’s glory is worship, for He is the only One deserving of such a high order of praise, thanksgiving, and submission (Ps. 96:11-13). As Bob Rognlien describes it, worship is a “bidirectional encounter with God” (Experiential Worship, p. 31), existing as a divine initiative in which God reveals Himself to His worshippers, and they in turn respond to God with humility, gratitude, and faith.

The Purpose and Necessity for Worship

The first main purpose for worship is to pay homage and express submission before God. In accordance to

the Greek language of the New Testament¹, worship is a complete “bowing down” or “prostrating” as a gesture of absolute adoration and humble praise. In addition, the Old Testament contains numerous examples of prostrating oneself before another. Sometimes it was done to express respect for another, but more often than not it was done rather as an expression of inferior status and subservience to another. The bowing position does not allow for one to watch and observe the movements of another, thus exposing oneself to attack from any side. It is thus a position of trust and absolute reliance upon another. In the same way, the hearts and attitudes of a true worshipper must adopt such a position of humility and subservience before God as a pattern of life. It is an acknowledgement of His sovereign presence throughout all of Creation as well as His gracious rule over His children. Though true worship is not purely constituted by any particular posture or gesture, “the Old Testament makes it clear that faith, gratitude, and obedience are the essential requirements for acceptable worship” (Engaging with

God, p. 63).

The second main purpose for worship is to serve God. Another verb in the Greek Bible often translated “to worship” is *latreuein*². However, outside of biblical contexts, *latreuein* is more adequately rendered as “to serve”, and more often than not, the verb is readily associated with “master-slave” relationships rather than hired employment. Unquestioning subjection to God’s command and perfect will is at the heart of Christian worship. The writer of the book of James describes himself as a *doulos*, or “bond-servant”, both of God and of Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:1). In other words, James recognised his permanent position of servitude at the mercy and feet of the almighty Creator, and wholeheartedly committed himself to become a vessel for God’s love and a guileless reflection of His overwhelming glory. The lives of all God’s worshippers must serve as a reflective testimony to the indescribable greatness of God the Only True King. As His Chosen and loyal subjects, Christians are to live in unending faithfulness and joyful obedience under His authoritative

command (1 Pt. 2:9). It is only through such submission that Christians may fulfil the role of “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rm. 12:1).

The third main purpose of worship is to respect God. Dotted throughout both the Old and New Testaments is the command to “fear the LORD your God” (Dt. 10:20) and “give Him glory” (Rv. 14:7). Although the Old Testament acknowledges that trembling in terror or shaking in dread may be appropriate responses to God’s presence in certain contexts (e.g. Ex. 3:6; 19:16; 20:18-19; Ps. 2:11-12; Is. 2:10, 19, 21), a “fear of God” is, more positively, a reverence or respect that arises out of acknowledgment of His unrivalled magnificence and sovereignty. According to Peterson, “to fear God is to keep His commandments (e.g. Dt. 5:29; 6:3, 24; Ec. 12:13), to obey His voice (e.g. 1 Sa. 12:14; Hg. 1:12), to walk in His ways (e.g. Dt. 8:6; 10:12; 2 Ch. 6:31), to turn away from evil (e.g. Jb. 1:1, 8; 2:3; 28:28; Pr. 3:7), and to serve Him (e.g. Dt. 6:13; 10:20; Jos. 24:14)” (Engaging with God, p. 71).

Such a lifestyle of reverent obedience is surely in order for the Only True King (Dt. 6:13).

The Trinitarian Foundation of Worship

Jesus, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, summarised the entire theological foundation of true and honourable worship in a single succinct statement: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24). Worship is Trinitarian by nature, for it is founded upon the Godhead, and all worship is directed towards the Trinity. When Jesus speaks of the “spirit”, He is referring not to the human spirit but to the Holy Spirit, who brings new life and confirms us in the truth (Jn. 15:26-27; 16:13-15). Worship itself is a function of the Holy Spirit, for Christians testify the indwelling of the Spirit and belonging to Christ, ultimately bringing praise to the One who has sealed their salvation through the Spirit (Rm. 8:16). It is only by the Spirit’s residence within their hearts that Christians are able to return to God in humble worship and subservience. We are in the Spirit as the Spirit is in us, just as Christ is in the Father and the Father is in us through His Spirit (Jn. 14:20; 17:21).

“Truth” is another critical

component of true worship as described by Jesus in His conversation with the Samaritan woman. In fact, Jesus was referring to Himself when He spoke of the Truth (Jn. 14:6). As “giver of the living water” (Jn. 4:10, 14; 7:37-39), Jesus alone proves the ultimate revelation and is the sacrificial lamb through which Christians receive the life-giving and life-sustaining Holy Spirit of God. As Peterson describes it, “Jesus is not the focus or object of worship in [John] 4:23-24 but the means by which the Father obtains true worshippers from every nation (cf. Jn. 12:32)” (Engaging with God, p. 99). True worship can only be achieved through the blood of Jesus Christ, which justifies and sanctifies those who place their trust in His redeeming power. This divine truth of salvation constitutes the entire Christian faith, and without it, worship is rendered baseless and meaningless (1 Co. 15:14). Such a misrepresentation of God undermines all understanding of His nature and being, and ultimately begs the question: “Who, then, is the God of Christian worship?” But by the surpassing grace of God, the Truth has been given to all who believe. Though anyone can “worship” God, the interference of sin has made it so that relationship with Him is impossible (Pr. 14:12). without the Truth of salvation. Jesus is truly the only Way, Truth, and Life. Meaningful worship, therefore, is built upon the foundation of salvation given to the faithful through Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of worship (1 Tm. 2:5).

God formed all of Creation to perfection through His sole power (Gn. 1:31a), and it is by His amazing grace that all Creation has breath and life (Jn. 1:3-4). But despite His overwhelming status, God is pure love (1 Jn. 4:8). and is eternally jealous to know and be known by humankind (Ex. 34:14). The culmination of all Christian worship aims to engage with God the Father. Mankind was once hopelessly separated from Him, but through Jesus Christ’s propitiation for sin, all true believers have free access to a relationship with the Most High. The Father seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, initiating the very communion Christians seek to have with Him. Since the inception of the universe, God the Father has been orchestrating an epic tale of redemption, for man cannot reach God by His own means or strength. In the face of such powerful grace and aweing

sovereignty, Creation’s only appropriate response is to “break forth into joyous song and sing praises” (Ps. 98:4)!

The Triune God forms the single immutable foundation for all Christian worship, regardless of form or style. Existing in perfect harmony with One another, all three Persons of the Godhead are equal in divine status and are deserving of immeasurable honour. True worship is an indescribable interplay and beautiful engagement between God and man. A worship life-orientation grounded in Spirit and in Truth is precisely what God is pleased to see in His chosen people.

The Practice and Diversity of Worship

The true worship of God can be expressed through a multitude of forms and styles. In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul makes a grand exhortation to all Christians. “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” (Rm. 12:1). Rather than watching in from the sidelines, all Christians are called to live worshipfully. Sacrifices usually require the use of dead bodies, but Paul makes it clear that true worship remains alive and breathing – spiritual stagnation is not an option.

Worship is not limited to the space of a building. Rather, submission to God can take any number of forms. In his book *Ancient-Future Worship*, Webber states that “music-centred worship has indeed become a common way of thinking about the presence of God. However, it is an extremely limited understanding of God’s presence.” (p. 133). God is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-8), thus perpetuating the need for worship to exist as a lifestyle rather than mere music. Paul extends the definition of worship, exhorting God’s worshippers to do everything for the glory of God (1 Co. 10:31). The prophet Micah effectively summarises the concept of worship as a life-orientation, asserting that God is pleased by those who “act justly”, “love mercy”, and “walk humbly with [Him]” (Mi. 6:8). These three fundamental pillars of worship function as testimonies to the glory of God, for it is truly in the everyday tasks of life that Christians are called to worship the true King.

Much of today's liturgy is originally derived from the Catholic church's seven sacraments, and were it not for Martin Luther and the Protestant movement, today's Evangelical churches may have ended up keeping all seven sacraments. However, "where the Catholic church originally recognised seven sacraments, Luther initially recognised three (baptism, Eucharist, penance), and shortly afterwards only two (baptism and Eucharist)" (Christian Theology, p. 404). It is for this reason that most of today's Evangelical congregations generally observe the rites of baptism and Eucharist.

Baptism exists as the paradigm of cleansing – an outward proclamation of an inward conversion. This sanctification through water may have originated from Levitical practice, as the Levite priests were commanded to undergo a symbolic cleansing in water both before and after performing their priestly duties (Lv. 16:23-24). Though this act of cleansing in the Old Testament was not specifically labelled "baptism", it does highlight the importance of holy ceremonial cleansing with regards to pleasing God. In the same way, John's "baptism of repentance" (Ac. 19:4). retains its significance as the pinnacle of cleansing. All who are baptised do so unto Jesus' death and resurrection (Rm. 6:3-4), symbolising a lifelong commitment to the will and service of God – a life of perpetual worship.

Observance of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, is constituted by the eating broken bread and the drinking of wine. A rite instituted by Jesus Christ during the Last Supper, Eucharist serves as a powerful symbol, remembrance, and proclamation of His sacrifice until His eventual return (1 Co. 11:23-26). Eucharist's ultimate purpose is to remind God's worshippers of His immeasurable love, grace, and yearning for unity with humankind.

The Role of Spiritual Disciplines in Worship

The purpose of all Christian worship is to glorify God through exaltation and praise. However, the convoluted ideals and constructs of humanity have, throughout history, enslaved all people to self-interest, superficiality, and fear. The book of James warns against such amity with the world, stating that "whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an

enemy of God." (Jm. 4:4). Liberation of the inner spirit from such ensnarement comes to all believers in the form of Spiritual Disciplines, tools with which worshippers may overcome the world's misguided ideals. Disciplines such as Discernment help to provide clarity into the will of God, whilst others such as Fasting serve as reminders of human dependence upon an almighty God. Attuning oneself to the omnipresence of God is essential for engaging with Him on a personal level. A heart of intentional worship must be present and actively receptive to God within all believers, fostering a genuine desire and power to do what pleases Him (Ph. 2:13).

The Context and Implications of Worship

Many of today's churches struggle to maintain their congregation attendance. In an attempt to counteract declining numbers, some churches resort to flashy services and mainstream music to attract a larger audience. However, "when trying to develop culturally relevant worship, there is a dangerous tendency to substitute creativity and innovation for solid biblical content" (Experiential Worship, p. 90). The fundamental issue at hand lies within the congregation itself, whose tendency is to adopt a "passive" habit of worship and be "acted upon". No motion is made to intentionally engage in worship, mostly due to the fact that the Gospel has been made to seem "mundane" and "inapplicable" by the present worldly context.

Moving a congregation from "passive" to "participatory" worship involves an experience of worship in which God's worshippers engage with Him on a deeper, more intimate basis. The foundation upon which experiential worship stands is found in the book of Deuteronomy, which reads, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Dt. 6:5) The collective superordinate goal of loving God wholly in Spirit and in Truth supersedes a cold doctrine of individualism with the welcoming call of community and acceptance. Worship leaders have the responsibility of forming and curating worship services that "stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (He. 10:24-25) People feel more inclined

to act of their own volition when others in their immediate community are living the Gospel themselves as well. In this historic time of cultural and contextual revolution, recovering the biblical paradigm for experiential worship is one of the keys that will enable an inversion of worship from passive to participatory.

Conclusion

Worship is a privilege; it is an unprecedented engagement between God and mankind initiated by the surpassing grace of God. Fully submitting ourselves to the will of God, worship is defined by becoming slaves to the Gospel as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to Him who brought us out of darkness into His wonderful light. What an overwhelming joy it is to live and breathe worship as children of God!

"Amen!

Blessing and glory and wisdom and
thanksgiving
and honor and power and might be to
our God forever and ever!

Amen."

(Revelation 7:12)

(Written on May 6, 2016 in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for
Worship and Spiritual Leadership 12)

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Bible Translations/Versions

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)

Footnotes:

- 1 προσκυνέω (proskuneó): I go down on my knees to, do obedience to, worship.
- 2 See Luke 1:74, Acts 7:42, and Hebrews 9:14



尝尝主恩的滋味

何晨星

去年疫情持续到现在，大家都没有想到，新冠肺炎的病毒持续那么久，让很多人失去家人，失去健康。

我在这一年当中，上了一年的门徒培训，参加了十周的孙毅博士的属灵操练进阶课程，今年三月我又开始背诵圣经，已经背完雅各书第一章。神的话语让我的信心增加，神的话就像甘露，蜂蜜，滋润我的肺腑，我也更加喜乐平安。

其实现在北美的疫情和去年相比反而更严重了，变种病毒更加厉害。虽然疫苗出来，但是也出现一些隐患。到底疫情何时结束？我们是否求神将疫情快快止息？神借着这次疫情让我们学习什么功课？

我在背诵雅各书第一章开始就说，「我的弟兄们，你们落在百般试炼中都要以为大喜乐、因为知道你们的信心，经过试炼就生忍耐，但忍耐也当成功，使你们成全完备、毫无缺欠。」这句话背完之后，我反复在心里默念，神告诉我，落在百般试炼中也要有大喜乐，「患难生老练，忍耐生老练，老练生盼望，盼望不至于羞愧。」我是否有喜乐的心来面对眼前的环境呢？我公公和婆婆身体状况与去年相比，更加不好。但我感谢神，我先生因为疫情拿EI，他就有更多的时间照顾父母，陪他们

看医生做检查，我们空余时间多做些好吃的给他们送去。我婆婆喜欢吃素包子，我们就上网查如何做，尝试几次，越来越成功。


在中国我妈妈2月份晕倒去医院救治，开始我很担心，教会弟兄姐妹不断祷告、神也医治了她。之前我妈妈心很刚硬，和她讲福音她都听不进去，自从这场大病后，她内心开始软化，我把《零点凡星》的节目链接发给她，让她对我的节目提些建议，我妈妈真的开始听进去了，并告诉我说采访的嘉宾分享和使用的诗歌都很好，很喜欢。感谢主！神借着各样的环境来改变人心。

当我开始转换角度来看问题，看环境的时候，我慢慢体会神的话，学习体会神的心意，相信神的应许，这样心中的烦恼会渐渐消失，取而代之的是内心充满喜乐和对神的感恩。

在背到雅各书1章22-25节，「你们要行道、不要单单听道，自己欺哄自己。因为听道而不行道的，就像人对着镜子看自己本来的面目，看见，走后，随即忘了他的相貌如何。」神让我用「温柔的心领受那所栽种的道」就是能救我灵魂的道。并且提醒我要行道不要单单听道。

前天温东有一个十岁的自闭症男孩走失，群里有很多人发帖，我也转发了。后来打给我们教会的桑姐妹，她说她负责两个区去找那个男孩子。警察也出动了。我在朋友圈发信息，但我没有出去，只是默默为孩子祷告。后来下午看到群里说孩子找到了。我马上打给桑姐妹。她说警察在22街找到了那个男孩。很感谢桑姐妹的热心相助，她看到消息第一时间就是去帮忙找那个自闭症的孩子。我的爱心不够，需要向她学习。25节说：「唯有详细查看那全备使人自由之律法的，并且时常如此，这人既不是听了就忘，而是实在行出来，就在他所行的事上必然得福。」

感谢神借着背经，对神的话有了更深的认识和理解。而且透过背经，我也认识了美国，加拿大，还有中国的弟兄姐妹。我也制作了一期节目，鼓励大家把神的话藏在心里。

最后给大家增加免疫力的良药就是「要常常喜乐，不住祷告，凡事谢恩。因为这是神在基督耶稣里向我们所定的旨意。」感谢神！

2021年5月7日