
SHAKING HANDS WITH GOD

There's a story about a little boy who knelt down beside his bed to pray on a Sunday evening.

- As he bowed his head he said, "Dear God, I had a good time at church today. I wish You had been there."

I like today's gospel.

- I like it because of what it says in v. 16: "On the Sabbath day HE went into the synagogue, as was His custom."
- I like that. With all the examples of how we are to live as followers of JESUS, one of those is that HE went to church regularly.

As a rabbi, when JESUS got to the synagogue in Nazareth, His home town, HE was invited to bring the message to the congregation.

- So, HE was handed a scroll of scripture from which HE got to choose a passage, and then HE read it and interpreted it for those gathered in worship.

In the Old Testament reading, we are told how the people gathered in the town square to worship and the passage that was read was from the Law of Moses.

- Here too, the passage is interpreted for the people.
 - As a result of that, the people turned their faces to the ground and grieved for their sins.
 - But then the leaders told them not to mourn; instead, rejoice on the LORD'S DAY.

We who live on this side of the cross and the resurrection, come together, not to be convicted of our sin—or not only—but to celebrate what GOD has done and is doing.

- Remember last week when I talked about Jesus at a wedding party?
 - JESUS liked to celebrate, and I believe that was not just at parties, but also in worship.

Today I want to spend this time talking about worship—what it is and what it means for us.

- Why do we worship?>>>Or perhaps the better question is, "Why do you worship?"
- Personally? What is your reason for coming to worship week after week?
 - I think this is a very important question, because the better we understand the purpose of worship and the deeper we think about why we come, the more we will get out of worship.
 - I believe that worship fulfills a very special purpose in our lives.
 - Today I want you to think about worship as shaking hands with GOD.
 - And to more fully understand worship we need to go back to the beginning, to the book of Genesis to the place where I believe GOD created worship.

1) If you go back to the first two chapters of Genesis, how did the first human beings spend their first day of existence?

- You may recall that humankind was created on the sixth day, so their first full day of life was...?
 - The seventh day—the Sabbath day—a day not to rest, but to spend time with GOD.
 - Their first week of existence, and every week for that matter, began with time with GOD.

Now what do we call Saturday and Sunday?>>>the weekend?

- Many calendars go from Monday through Sunday for a week.
 - But as we look at their week and at ours, it will be tremendously valuable to think of Sunday as the "week-begin," rather than the weekend.
 - And this change in thinking will completely change how we approach worship and its purpose.

2) In Genesis 3:8, after Adam and Eve had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, we are told that GOD came looking for them.

- In the cool of the day, meaning the evening, GOD came.
- Now we're also told that Adam and Eve had covered themselves, because they knew GOD was coming.
 - That suggests that this was a regular, daily occurrence>>>that GOD came and spent time with Adam and Eve every evening.

For the Jewish people, the day begins at sundown>>> evening>>>the cool of the day.

- So the model set forth in Genesis is that not only does the week begin in time with GOD, each day begins in time with GOD>>>
 - walking and talking with our Creator. (Make sense?)

3) Genesis 1:26 tells us that we were created in GOD's image.

- The word "image" can also mean "impression."
 - We were created with GOD's impression or imprint on us.

Steven Curtis Chapman has a wonderful song called "The Fingerprints of GOD".

- The chorus goes like this:

*I can see the fingerprints of GOD when I look at you.
I can see the fingerprints of GOD, and I know it's true:
You're a masterpiece that all creation quietly applauds,
and you're covered with the fingerprints of GOD.*

- I want to suggest, that we consider being created in GOD's IMAGE as having the imprint of GOD's hand upon us>>>a great big God-sized, hand-shaped hole in who we are. (Hold up handprint.)
 - This leads me to the conclusion that worship is a time of filling the hole.

How many of you have heard others talk about having a void in their lives?

- This is the hole that I'm talking about>>>the impression of GOD's hand on us as GOD's creation.

And how are we going to fill that hole?

- Will my own hand fit? No.
- What about work? Maybe I can fill that void with more and more work.
- Or food, or alcohol, or other drugs?
- Or relationships?
- Or things? Maybe if I can just find the right thing, this emptiness will go away.

The truth is, only GOD's hand will fit into that hole, isn't that right?

- So, our worship, our time with GOD at the beginning of each week and at the beginning of each day is the only thing that will fill this void.
 - Worship is shaking hands with GOD and inviting GOD to fill the hole.

So then, how does worship connect to our weekly walk, to how we live our life the rest of the week?

One of the challenges we face as human beings is the tendency to compartmentalize our lives.

- Worship, family, work, fun>>>each of these is a separate thing that mostly does not influence or impact another area.
 - Yet it is GOD's intention that worship should connect with every aspect of the rest of our week.

If we come to worship thinking of it as the end of our week, worship merely becomes something to patch us up, especially after a difficult week.

- But if we think about worship as the beginning of our week, it then becomes the thing that will equip us for what is coming.
 - GOD knows what lies ahead for us in these next few days, so GOD wants to equip us for what we will encounter.
 - GOD not only is filling the hole in who we are through worship, GOD is also getting us ready for what is coming and who GOD needs us to be.
- We will work better this coming week because GOD has filled this hole.
- We will love better this week because GOD has filled this hole.
- We will play better this week because GOD has filled this hole.
- And we will choose better because GOD has filled this hole.

Worship is an opportunity to bring our hopes, our expectations, and our fears about the week ahead to worship so that GOD fill those things as only GOD can.

- Each day we can be filled by GOD for what the coming holds by spending a few minutes in prayer, Bible reading, and devotions>>>shaking hands with GOD.
 - We can choose a verse or a song from worship that can be an anchor for what may come, keeping us close to GOD.

GOD wants us to make an impact in our world in the name of CHRIST each and every day.

- This can best happen if we make the commitment to shake hands with GOD each and every day, and at the beginning of each week.

Do you feel now like you might be more ready to face the coming week?

Do you feel like you've been better prepared for what may come in the next few days?

- Good, because that's what God wants to offer to you every time you come to worship, and today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.