

Divine Desire

Slide -

Today we are going to explore the things God truly desires from us beyond the rituals of public worship.

Slide - Psalm 50:13-15 "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls Or drink the blood of male goats? "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving And pay your vows to the Most High; Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me."

I was talking with a church member recently who was describing certain changes in the worship services taking place in their congregation where they lived.

Not a member here but somewhere else, actually down in Ft Myers.

The church there, that person went to had 3 services on Sunday mornings:

There was the Early Service – which was as describe to me as the Traditional service.

Singing, preaching like what we do here.

Then later on they have the Progressive Service, at the progressive service they had,

Praise Team

Hand Clapping

Lots of Interaction

Women Serving Communion and Making Announcements

Then the third service and the person who was describing this for me was searching for words

Traditional, Progressive and the third service was Anything Goes Service – that's how they described it

Experimenting with new ideas

This member said that the church was growing so it didn't matter if they were changing things around – maybe even a good thing? And I could tell they ended that sentence with question mark.

I replied that when it comes to the church, God is more interested in faithfulness than size.

If anyone thinks that God is not interested in orderly devotional services, in religious ritual, in symbolism and

If anyone thinks that God is not interested in organized public worship –

If they think that it does not matter and anything goes

Then they need to re-examine the Old Testament and the history of the Jews.

Because if anybody says that to me tells me that they have not read the Old Testament.

Not carefully anyway.

From the beginning of time man has been given religious practices to carry out in order to express his **faith** and **respect** toward God:

The patriarchs-built altars and offered animal sacrifices as a way of adoration and making vows.

They served as priests for their families and tribes.

All under the direction of God.

When the nation of Israel was formed God instructed Moses, who taught the people how to:

How to build the place to worship.

How to prepare the furnishings for the place of worship.

How to make the special clothing for the priests.

How to select, train, and anoint the priests who would conduct the worship services.

There is explained the elaborate details of when, how, why, who, and what should be done to worship God properly.

Believe me the Bible shows us the God is very interested in how we worship Him.

The nation was blessed or punished based on how meticulously they followed these instructions, and this system stayed in place for 15 centuries, these instructions stayed in place without change.

Then in the New Testament, God, through Jesus, gave new instructions for public worship that maintained the attitude of reverence and faith

but changed the externals to reflect more accurately the new realities made possible by Jesus Christ and what he had done.

Slide - For example, in:

II Corinthians 6:16 – Paul teaches us, we are now the temple. We don't have to build a temple, we're the temple

Revelation 1:6 – John tells us we are now the priests. We don't have to go out and pick priests, we're the priests.

We don't have to pick the priests or dress the priests

Galatians 3:27 – Paul tells us Jesus is our clothing.

The special clothing is Jesus who we wear. We don't have to fabricate elaborate clothing for the priests

Mark 16:16 - Priests are selected through obedience to the gospel.

Not selected for a particular tribe, or have no physical defects and so no and so forth.

Selected through obedience to Jesus Christ

Acts 2:42-45 - The manner of worship now includes prayer, singing, teaching, giving, and the Lord's Supper.

Instructions for these things are given in the New Testament just as instructions for Old Testament style of worship were given to Moses 1500 years before Jesus.

I'm saying this to emphasize the point that public worship has always been important to God.

He designed it.

He commanded it.

He explained it.

He receives it.

He will punish those who ignore it, change it, or participate in it with a bad attitude.

It will always be a part of a believer's life and activity.

Because it is important and highly visible in the history of the Jews and prominent in the New Testament, we seem to think that public worship is the only thing God wants from us.

Some people think, "I go church to take communion on a semi-regular basis and I've given God all of what He wants from me".

After all we are doing it right and it is important to do it right. Right?

I'm not saying that we are all as callous as this, but sometimes it seems that many people have a very one-dimensional spiritual life.

By one-dimensional I mean that their only contact with God is in public worship, and their only satisfaction in spiritual things is the satisfaction that comes from offering public worship on a regular basis (they feel good spiritually because they went to church).

But God desires more than this in His relationship with us.

Despite the fact it is important to Him and it is important how we do it, He want more from us.

He desires more than the formal relationship that develops between a person and their Lord in organized public worship.

He desires the kind of relationship that two friends have.

The kind of relationship that is personal, felt, productive, important, intimate, and deeply satisfying.

We know this is true because God has had this kind of relationship with others in the past:

Moses spoke with God face to face.

David was called the "friend" of God.

Jesus loved Lazarus, His friend, and John rested his head on Jesus' breast, and Jesus was a close friend with Mary and Martha.

The apostle Paul was often visited and comforted by the Lord when he was in difficult situations.

Different people who lived at different times, but each had a unique and deeply personal relationship with God.

I believe that they were able to experience this because they were able to get beyond the structure of organized public worship and learned what God truly desired.

Public worship is like a formal relationship with God, and like any relationship to become deeper and more intimate you have to get to know the other person and what they enjoy.

Becoming a "friend" of God, cultivating a deeper relationship with Him (and the rewards that come from this) requires each of us to learn what God desires from us.

Thankfully, we have the inspired writings of those who often described their feelings and the nature of their relationship with God.

In Psalm 50 we are shown some of the things that God truly desires beyond the rituals of public worship.

You see, we don't grow closer to God by eliminating or changing public worship - we grow closer to God by finding out what, in addition to this, He desires from us.

I am so perplexed when I see churches destroy or change the public worship that God has given to us and clearly described to us.

And their goal is to draw closer to God some how as if adding a 10-piece band

As if adding shiny color lights, as if jumping up and down, as if changing around the notion of male spiritual leadership in the Lord's church, as if clapping, as if this is going to make you closer to God.

It doesn't, It doesn't work that way.

So let's read some of the things Gods desires from us.

Because if we give Him what He desires, we draw closer to Him and get the thing we really want from Him and that is intimacy.

Three Things That God Desires: Psalm 50:7-12

Slide - "Hear O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you; I am God, your God.

Slide - "I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, And your burnt offerings are continually before Me.

Slide - "I shall take no young bull out of your house, Nor male goats out of your folds.

Slide - "For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills.

Slide - "I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine.

Slide - "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

In these verses God reminds the people that what the Jews were offering Him in public worship were simply things that God had already provided.

A. Their sacrifices are before Him and He doesn't reject them. He's not angry with them

It's not that He doesn't want their sacrifices, He receives their sacrifices.

He wants to remind them that they worship according to His instructions and that's a good thing.

That they do everything according to His commands - this is also good, and they should continue,

but they need to remember that God designed the worship style, He blesses it, and He gives it meaning.

He also blesses them because of it. Worship begins with Him and ends with Him.

Yes, go ahead and keep worshipping God the way He proscribe it,

just remember You didn't invent it, God invented it and God gave it to you.

B. The animals they sacrifice are acceptable in quality and quantity, but He reminds them that all they offer belongs to Him in the first place.

He is not stealing or browbeating them.

All animals are His and He provides them to His people for this very purpose.

So in case they are getting puffed up with pride because of the beauty and preciseness of their ceremonies or the value of their animal sacrifices,

God reminds them that as far as public worship is concerned, they are simply offering Him what He has already given them.

It would be like a young child becoming proud in front of his brothers and sisters for giving dad a Christmas gift that dad gave him the money to buy for him in the first place.

Remember that when you were a child.

In the next verses He tells them that if they really want to please Him, let them give Him something that is really theirs to give, something that they have that He really desires.

Slide - 1. True Thanksgiving - vs. 13-14a

Slide - "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls Or drink the blood of male goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving"

Something we have control over is sincerity.

We control the sincerity part of the worship.

Nothing builds better and stronger relationships between people than sincerity, and this is true with God as well.

God is an intelligent, feeling being and God responds to sincerity.

"Sincerity in thanksgiving" because of the nature of our relationship with God.

He is the primary giver; we are on the receiving end.

Our most repeated emotion is one of thanksgiving and God wants us to be conscious and sincere in this.

Lord I sincerely thank you, I get it Lord, it's all yours.

If I could list all the things that are yours, right down to my beating heart

You have given me all things and I am so thankful God.

What could I do without you Lord, who would I be without you Lord, where would I go without you Lord?

Again, He desires this not because He needs this,

Before creation, God was complete, not lacking anything, not needing anything, total completeness.

but because He knows what the benefits of true thanksgiving can bring into our lives:

Thanksgiving is the best way of acknowledging His influence in our lives.

Thanksgiving keeps us close to Him in a proper style of communication.

God is God and the normative and most pleasant form of communication with Him is that of praise and thanksgiving.

To our buddies, fishing buddies, golf buddies, hunting buddies, and the like, you joke with each other, you rag on each other and so on and so forth, that's your buddies.

God is not like your buddies, we don't joke about God, we don't rag on God, we don't bug God

That's what we do with our buddies, we show our love to our buddies by taking them down a notch of two.

But not with God, the normative conversation with God is thanksgiving and praise.

Need I remind you to look how Abraham, David or Paul and the normative conversation with God is respect, thanksgiving and praise

It is also good for us emotionally because it helps us avoid negativism and depression.

What the first sin Paul talks about in Romans that begins the tumbling downwards, they forgot to give thanks.

Slide - Romans 1:21 – “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts”

They forgot in their primary relationship to be thankful and that neglect moved them in a downward moral, spiritual psychological spiral

God desires our sincere thanks because this is the purest and most joyful kind of communication with Him while we are separated by this flesh and this world.

Slide - 2. That we Fulfill Our Promises to Him - vs. 14b

Slide - “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.”

God always fulfills His promises, it's our promises that get abandoned or it's our promises that get broken:

Promises to our spouses to be faithful.

Promises in society to do good work, to take responsibility, to uphold justice, to be a good citizen, to be a true friend.

It's not just the promises we make to God, it's also the promises we make before God.

He desires that we keep our promises.

Promises to our families to be there for them.

Promises to God about being faithful to Christ and to the church.

Keeping our promises demonstrates righteous living, honesty, and dependability.

It reveals a person who can be counted on in this world of broken contracts and disposable relationships.

Wanting to keep our promises is a hallmark of a Godly character and it says to God that,

in a quest for a deeper relationship with Him, we are ready to be like Him in a very important way.

Do we want to be like God? I do.

I don't want bad things to come out of my mouth, I don't want evil things to come out of me.

I want be like God in this important way, I want to be a promise keeper.

I want to be a person of my word.

Slide - 3. That we Trust Him - vs. 15

Slide - “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”

More than anything else, God wants us to trust Him.

He wants this because trust is our most precious gift to Him, our trust.

It is the most precious because it is the most difficult to give since we naturally want to trust what we see or feel and what we can count.

In times of trouble (sin trouble, physical trouble, social trouble, economic trouble, emotional trouble) He wants us to trust Him first, not ourselves or other things or people.

The entire exercise between God and the Jews in the Old Testament was to get the people to trust Him, not just "in Him" (the idea of God) but in the very real person of Almighty God.

Offering God our trust is to test our relationship with Him and find out how good it is, how good and sincere a friend He is.

To trust God for your life here on earth and your resurrection to eternal life is to offer Him an exclusive relationship with yourself.

And you know what, you control that, God doesn't control that.

God has created us in such a way where we are able to say to Him, almighty God, yes or no.

Yes I trust you or no I don't trust you.

In the end this is what God really wants, He wants to be your only Lord, your only God to the exclusion of all others.

When you've given Him this, you've given Him all you have and are able to give and He will enter a deep and eternal relationship with you.

Summary

In the final verse of the Psalm 50, we see that God wants the same things from all of us...

Slide - "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God."

Slide - What does God want?

Slide - Sincere thanksgiving.

Slide - The keeping of promises.

Slide - Absolute trust, **Slide** - because He offers the same thing to all of us - salvation.

Forgiveness of sin.

Resurrection from the dead.

An eternal relationship with Him.

So I ask this morning - How is your relationship with God?

I know our public worship is OK, we sang, took the Lord's supper, some fellowship, read God's word

our public worship is good but how is our personal relationship?

Is it stiff and formal? Hello and goodbye on Sunday and Wednesday?

Or is it warm and rich and satisfying like that of a best friend and confidant?

If you want a relationship with God, it begins with faith in His Son Jesus Christ as the Son of God followed by a sincere repentance from sin and baptism to a new and faithful life.

And if you want to renew your relationship with God because you have strained it through sin or neglect.

We are here to pray for your restoration or if you need some one on one time, I am here for you.

If your relationship with God is too formal or too far away why not develop a stronger prayer and thanksgiving life.

Embark on a greater effort in obeying Him and make a new commitment to trust Him no matter what.

If we can help you draw closer to God in any way please come as we stand and sing

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