

40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

DAY 28 – What is Worship?

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:14-15

It seems a simple question, doesn't it? "What is worship?"

I remember having a confused conversation with a man steeped in the Pentecostal movement. He was having trouble understanding what I was saying about worship when I said, "All that we do is worship." He quickly interjected, "No!", he said, "Praise are those fast boppy songs we sing and worship are the slow reflective songs we sing." I'm afraid the conversation just got more confusing after this.

Today, I'm NOT looking at worship in terms of reflective songs repeated 16 times with your eyes rolled back in your head as you hold up one arm with other so to make sure your shoulder doesn't ache. Np, we are going deeper than that.

So what is worship?

First, a little recap. Previously, a week or so ago we ascertained that the church is real. It actually exists and has a shape, a definite place in the world and that the church does not derive its life from itself. It is not sacramental in that it is not actualised by the actions of the priests, ministers or the congregation, but is actualised by the Word of God through Jesus, the Head of the church.

Well, you could say that worship is the epiphany of the church. Epiphany means to "shine forth". The season of Epiphany is about the Glory and presence of God shining forth in Jesus. So too, worship is the "shining forth" of the reality of the church, because it is through worship, as ordered by the promise of Christ, that His presence is celebrated.

So the church's worship is not for the church's sake, it is the means by which God receives from the world an echo, a response of praise and thanksgiving for all that God is and what God has done in creating and recreating the world in Jesus Christ. So the church's worship, representing the whole of creation in its cosmic dimension, is its response to God.

It is not what WE get out of worship. Worship is about God, not us. Yes, we want our time in worship to have meaning for us or we would never bother going to church. But we should not confuse our experience of worship with the truth of what worship actually is. If we loose why the church worships then the only god we end up worshiping is ourselves.

Hebrews 9:14-15 makes clear that it is Christ who worships and that we, in our worship are invited in Christ's worship. So true Christian worship is worship in Christ. It is as the worship offered to the Father on our behalf, in our name, by Christ, and in this becomes how the epiphany of the church shines forth. Christ's worship becomes our worship by grace.

PRAYER

Gracious Jesus,
You invite us to participate in Your worship
For Your worship is pure and without blemish.
We, who fall short of Your glory
Are given to offer our heart-filled praise
And through Word and sacrament
shine forth the love of the church to the
God who creates and sustains her.
We give praise and all honour to You,
the Head of the church.
Amen