

We Do Not Come To Church; We Come To Worship

By Kent Heaton

“And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the Lord spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified” (Lev. 10:3).

The church of the Lord in Corinth faced many challenges and Paul's letters to the saints exhorted the brethren to understand the true purpose of worship. There were divisions, carnality, immorality and a chaotic public worship that brought shame upon the church. Worship had become a place of confusion and losing its design for the glory of God. The assembly had turned into whatever people wanted to do allowing the world to creep in destroying the spirit of worship. Lost in the confusion was a façade of reverence and respect for the holiness of the Lord. Imagine the memorial of the death of Jesus Christ as just a common meal. The pride of possessing spiritual gifts created divisions among the church. Prayers were not from the heart, singing was lifeless and the spirit of worship was suppressed. The Lord was not pleased with the worship of Corinth.

Problems face all churches in worship. The world has a great appeal to the heart and often worship services become dull, boring and without life. Sometimes the period of worship becomes a challenge to focus because of the distractions that multiply through the audience. Key to understanding the nature of worship is to remember why we are gathered. Boredom and distractions originate from ourselves. Gathering on the first day of the week is a command and there is no choice about the matter. Failing to assemble on the first day of the week is a sin that can deny one eternal life. Aside from the obvious, failing to worship God in spirit and truth can also bring judgment from the Lord. The problem at Corinth is not isolated. If we fail to remember the purpose of our assemblage is to praise the Lord God then we will easily be distracted. We are not there to sing a few songs, amen a couple of prayers, eat some crackers, drink some juice and listen to a man drone on for thirty minutes. It seems that eternal life is like getting a ticket punched on a train that we ride in mundane silence hoping the ride will end soon so we can go home and eat lunch. Checking my name off a list is about all worship means. Worship has a purpose and must be done with purpose.

It is hard to imagine how blessed it is to come together as God's people to worship Him – read that again – worship Him. What an honor. What a privilege. What a glorious time. And then it happens. The singing starts and we do not sing because we do not have an operatic voice. A prayer is murmured and we have no idea what the man is saying because our minds are worrying about what we will do for lunch and if it will be better to shop at this store or another. The singing begins again and then the Lord's Supper is passed around. We laugh and whisper to our neighbors, look around and play with the little folk. Our minds are so far from Calvary we might as well be living on the moon. The contribution is passed around sometime and we throw in our two-cents. Another song. What time is it getting to be? The preacher stands up. Okay. Time to get comfortable. Play with the children. Read a book. Do some homework. Make faces at the kids again. Draw a picture. Eyes close in slumber. Three hours later (at least it seems that long) the invitation hymn is sung and freedom is moments away. The crowd hears the 'amen' and the hinges on the door fling open. Worship is done. Checked that day off. Praise the Lord. Can't wait to be in Heaven where we get to do that in eternity.

In the book of Nehemiah, it tells of a time Ezra opened the book of the Lord and the people stood up. The sons of Korah declared a day of worship as filled with glory and being the doorkeeper in the house of God was an honor. There is a need in the church today to rekindle a proper attitude toward the worship of the Almighty Lord God who dwells in righteousness, holiness and glory. What we do in our worship is an act of holiness toward the Living God who gives us life and breath. It is NOT a time to allow children to play, talk and disrupt the sanctity of the worship. The purpose of the worship is to focus attention on God. School homework needs to be left at home. Reading magazines, books and secular material insults the Lord. Allowing children to play on electronic devices teaches them that worship is a time of play. At what age are you going to tell them they can no longer bring their electronic devices to worship? Parents make a serious mistake when they allow their children to use the worship time to play because they are teaching their children to disrespect God. Children can be taught to sit quietly and participate in the worship by singing, bowing their

heads in prayer and taking notes of the sermon. They must be taught to respect the Lord's Supper in remaining quiet and paying attention to what is going on. Worship to God is worshipping God. Adults who use their smartphones for other purposes than a Bible program disrespect the Lord. If you cannot resist the urge to check Facebook during the service – leave your cell phone in the car. It will be better to go through worship without your smart phone than to lose your soul.

The book of Malachi describes the modern plight of worship. The people were wearied with worship to the Lord and offered Him their leftovers. He was not pleased and He is not pleased with the kind of worship that allows children to disrupt services, parents allowing children to play instead of pray and adults who are bored out of their minds doing work from their jobs, texting and surfing the internet. What we do in worship is holy. Failure to engage in worship that is with spirit and understanding creates an atmosphere of unspiritual and ignorant pew sitters. We do not come to church – we come to WORSHIP!

Of Hummingbirds and Freedom

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Someone, who had put one of those humming bird feeders into his yard, told this story about a particular humming bird. At first, several humming birds used the feeder. Later, however, one humming bird began to guard the feeder and chase all other birds away. The little bird sat days on end guarding his self-claimed feeder, so much so that he became a slave to it. He could go nowhere and do nothing but sit and guard his feeder. Thus, what was supposed to be an aid became a hindrance to this one bird. Isn't this the case with many of us when we become overly occupied with things which hindrance us in our service to the Lord? The owner of the feeder decided to bring the bird feeder inside so that the humming bird could once again run free. Let us free ourselves of all slaving hindrances and truly put the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in our lives.

A Moments Wisdom

--A liar needs a good memory.

--The two best times to thank the Lord are when you feel like it and when you don't feel like it.

--It is easy to be optimistic when things are going your way.

--A fool is known by seven things: denying God, anger without cause, talking without profit, change without progress, questions without a purpose, putting trust in strangers, and mistaking foes for friends.

--Good leaders never set themselves above their followers, excepting carrying out responsibilities.

--A gem cannot be polished without friction, and a man cannot be perfected without trials.

--The dictionary is the only place where reward comes before work.

--The world is full of willing people: those who are willing to work and the rest who are willing to let them.

--You can measure the health and progress of a society based on to whom they give their applause: the clown or the thinker.

--Triumph is just “umph” added to “try.”

--Ideas and opinions are like children; we think ours are wonderful.

--Open your Bible prayerfully, read it carefully, and obey it joyfully.

--When you speak, be sure to speak the truth, for misleading is halfway to lying, and lying is all the way to hell.

--The less a fellow knows, the more eager he seems to prove it to anyone who will listen to him.