

Why is worship so important? It's because there is a war for your worship. There is a literal war being waged for your worship. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" is not just a dusty phrase cast in old English absolutes. It's a statement of practical reality; we will worship something, the question is what? Or whom?



Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
Because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land:
There is no faithfulness, no love,
No acknowledgement of God in the land.
There is only cursing, lying, and murder, stealing and adultery;
They break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Because of this the land mourns,
And all who live in it waste away,
The beasts of the field and the birds of the air
And the fish of the sea are dying.

Hosea 4:1-3

Reflections

Because of this . . .

Three words, that can explain the dents in the car (there was hail!), or the motion of the planets, . . . or through which God himself can guide us.

The prophet Hosea certainly writes in a time remote from our own, at least in the matter of "religious" practice. He speaks to Israel, but these are a people far removed from the grand days of the Exodus, not much like the poet-king David. Utterly seduced by practices of their neighbors, they have abandoned the God of their history, and immersed themselves in a cult that we moderns would find downright abhorrent.

But it's curious how this passage steps right over the cult question. To be sure, Hosea will shortly thunder against its practices like, well, an Old Tes-

tament prophet. But he begins someplace else: with a scathing indictment of the whole of their lives – religious, daily, economic. There is "no acknowledgment of God," there is only "lying and stealing," the land "mourns" and all that sustains them is dying.

Why start there? The prophet here speaks for God at two levels, one more familiar, the other perhaps more profound. At one level he sees with eyes attuned to the God's ways, and strips away any veneer the people have laid over their lives and actions. He "tells it like it is." Murder, adultery, death, this is where you really are. To say otherwise is to deceive yourselves (but not God!).

But the more profound part comes with those simple words, "Because of this . . ." It is to lay bare the connections, to explain how we are wired, and where the root lies. *Because* there is

no acknowledgment of God, *because* of what you do and chase after, "the land mourns" and all that sustains you is dying. It's *all linked*: who you acknowledge as God, the life you lead, and any hope you may have. It is our whole life that is our worship, and what we worship shapes our whole life.

We live under a command: You shall have no other Gods. A command given by a God who loves us, who sent Hosea to call a people back to life from an alternative that was killing them. He calls us too. Back from what? A question we must continually ask. Enfolded in His love, let us take the risk in the weeks ahead to examine our lives, to ask what it may be that we truly worship, and to yield to His call. What can we possibly have to lose?

— Bob Henderson

Readings

Sunday, February 8 — Preparation: “Search me, Oh God.” Psalm 139:1-4, 21-22

As we prepare to examine our lives and our worship, and how they are bound together, let this psalm be a prayer. The psalmist yearns, as do we, to make his life a worship, but he yields to God the search through his heart. Where today might you need to yield to God as your guide?

Monday, February 9 — “Six days shall you labor...” Exodus 20:8-11

Your work does not miss being part of your worship simply by not being observably devoted to Bible study, prayer, and the healing of others. In what way might the simple act of doing your work be worship? What in your work this day might need a touch from God to align more with his ways? Stay with the psalm from yesterday: Let God lead.

Tuesday, February 10 — “Love one another” Psalm 15:1-5, John 15:9-12

How well the psalmist understands; to “dwell in the sanctuary” (sounds like “worship”) goes hand in hand with the way we relate to others. What relationship today needs to be yielded to God? How might you worship him today through love or understanding that you show in your home or to your neighbor? Search my life here too, Oh God.

Wednesday, February 11 — “To enquire in his temple...” Psalm 27:4-10; 1 Corinthians 13:12;

To know Him ever more perfectly is to be transformed. Can’t help it. Will happen. And will make for worship. How might you (re)dedicate yourself to the “inquiry” in order to know Him better? What step might you take today? (Note: He can never be fully known, so it’s not like you’ll run out of stuff to do!)

Thursday, February 12 — “The fool has said...” Psalm 14:1; Psalm 46:1-3

Might there be places in your life where you act, or think, or even fear as though He is not there and/or not to be trusted? What might you find if you simply keep this question running as you go through today?

Friday, February 13 — “...but on the seventh day God rested” Genesis 2:2-3;

Ah, the weekend. Yet we can stay so frantic. Not to rest can be not to trust Him. If all of life is worship, what might it mean if you can not ever rest? Where have you placed your hope? Banked your security? Searched for meaning? How might your worship (re)focus if you were to yield even your rest to God?

Saturday, February 14 — A living sacrifice. Romans 12:1-2

In two short verses, the Apostle Paul captures the heart of the issue. To present our whole selves is our worship. We allow ourselves to be transformed where He will take us. What might you be holding back from his touch? What might be holding you back? What step might you take to begin to yield? Search us all, oh God.

Don’t have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.