

# 10.13.2024 Sermon

## Every Day Worshipping

### **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

gym series, spiritual fitness, praise and worship, David's mindset, Sandra's gratitude, Tracy's survey, broad definition, personal experiences, worship examples, spiritual growth, making a choice, listening to God, embracing learning, spiritual maturity, everyday lifestyle

### **SPEAKERS**

Elder Matt Kistler

Thanks so much. I don't have a clicker today. That's like the highlight of me preaching is clicking through the slides. What happened? I wrote my sermon yesterday. That was what happened. I was focused on working on our kitchen, which has been a multi-month progress process. We got the legs that hold up the island painted yesterday, and that should be it, so we are done. Praise the Lord, and I wrote my sermon after that, but today we're continuing in this gym series.

And I asked James, and I talked about showing that video again, because I think it really sets up the idea that I want to point to, that there are these different spiritual centers that help us improve our spiritual fitness, and we're starting with praise and worship as one of them. And one thing I hope that you notice that we're doing here intentionally is that we're having each of our speakers share about this topic, because this models our value as a church, that God speaks through all of us, that none of us has a 100% complete picture of who God is or what God is doing.

And so, extending the gym analogy in the same way, the same fitness routine isn't ideal for everybody. There are many factors within our body, within our time, the different constraints we have. Pull-ups may be good for me, curls may be good for you. Some people go to Planet Fitness. Other people take walks around the park each day. But what we have seen and what we have learned is that there are certain core areas that are important to focus on for our spiritual health, just like there is in our physical health, like cardio, legs, and body. Spiritually, one of those important centers is praise and worship, and so we're taking this time as a community to understand what praise and worship is, something we talk about, but maybe we don't always explain, and think about how we can use praise and worship to help each of us love God and love others fearlessly. That's our vision statement here.

So, I want to recap what we talked about so far. We've had three weeks. We started with James, talking about David as an example of worship, and David shows us how praise starts with a mindset. David's mindset was that God's goodness and presence is more important than the opinions of people around him. He made a choice to express his love of God without reservation, and that decision within himself, we labeled that worship, while the external actions, such as singing and dancing, writing poetry, praying, we call that praise.

So, worship was the mindset. Praise was the actions, and then Sandra's sermon. I mean, was it even a sermon? It was just praise and worship. It was just an extended example of this same idea. If you weren't here, you can watch it online. It was really beautiful. Her father was here, and he had just had a really terrible situation happen, and he made it through. And so, Sandra was so overwhelmed by that reality that her inner sense of gratitude and thankfulness was all she could see, all she could respond to, and that was more important than anything else. Her heart was set on worship. And so, we saw actions, praising God, through her words, through her emotions. She didn't have to sing a song or dance or do praise in a specific way that was pre-planned. Her heart for worship was what came through.

And then last week, Tracy reflected on what we all as members of the community had said in a little survey she sent out about what praise and worship is, and what she was pointing to was this broader definition of praise and worship. It's not just the things we do at church, it's not just singing. She called it the dance. She talked about how this dance can be integrated into any part of the day, any element of our lives, and can be shaped into the unique realities of our own style, our own culture, our own preferences. It's unique to us.

So today, I want to flesh out that idea of this broad definition of worship and praise, and I want to talk about first where I've seen praise and worship. I like when I'm thinking about defining something, I like to start with my experience. Instead of trying to, like, take a definition and force what I've experienced into it. I like to say, What have I seen as praise and worship, for example, and then, how do we then make a definition to kind of make sense of our experience.

Then I want to invite and challenge each of us to consider how we can make praise and worship an integrated part of our lives for our spiritual growth. So, I want to give you some ideas of what routines, what steps you can take to make praise and worship a part of your daily spiritual fitness routine. So, like I said, I want to start with my experience of where I have seen praise and worship in my life, in myself, through others.

And I wanted to start with a quick story about where it first kind of unlocked for me. I was in fourth grade. I remember this very clearly. I went to visit my brother, who was in college, and he went to a Christian Fellowship, and it was just completely different from what the church

experience I had ever experienced before. Yes, the music was like written in the past 10 years, instead of hundreds of years ago. That was part of it. But there was also this peace, there was an aliveness, there was a presence. People were pursuing God in a way that was unfamiliar to me, and that kind of opened my eyes, like, Oh, this is what people are talking about, not that, you know, singing hymns in church like I had been for every week as long as I could remember, not that that wasn't praise, but this is a new dimension of it.

So, then I started to look and think about, where do I see this? So let me just give you some examples, as I was just brainstorming of other things that I started to see as praise and worship, sitting on the barn roof of my grandfather's barn on his farm, and watching wind blow through wheat as the sun went down, that was worship, seeing my parents meet with friends year after year, decade after decade, every year, every quarter, to connect, to learn about life and to learn about God together, listening to water run over rocks on a stream, washing my friend's feet in a difficult situation, prophetic words spoken over me, through me, or around me here at Cornerstone, telling a friend that, yes, I would end a relationship that needed to be ended, because that was something he was speaking that needed to happen, and God was speaking through him, cleaning up my neighbor's yard, helping a friend visit their family by paying for a plane ticket, getting out of bed when someone's facing depression, watching yellow and red leaves fall to the ground in the fall, hearing somebody speak something that's deeply true, watching somebody perform to the best of their ability, holding a child's hand when they reach out to you, cooking meals when you're tired, but your family needs you spending extra time to listen to someone who just needs to be heard, listening to the waves pound against the beach for an hour, saying hard things in a kind way at the right time, finding the perfect gift for a friend, shoveling a neighbor's driveway when it's covered in snow, listening for God's voice in silence, writing a blessing for a newborn baby, giving abundantly towards someone else's medical bills, inviting neighbors to play board games on your deck, speaking a loving word over a neighbor as you watch your kids play together, watching stars come out as you're face up in a drift of snow, telling a kid on your son's baseball team that he's loved and that he's not alone.

You could call these little snippets of life all sorts of things, but where I've seen them, I call that worship. I call that praise. And if worship and praise can be all of those things, and can be as broad and diverse as that, I want to suggest that our definition has to match its broadness. So, here's what I say about worship: Worship is whenever any part of creation connects to the image of God within it for the purpose of reflecting and showing gratitude to God. Maybe make it a little easier. We should worship God whenever we dedicate our life to looking like who God is.

And as I was thinking about this, even this morning, I was thinking about the example that James gave about David. He gave the example when he was dancing when the Ark of the

Covenant came back. And I thought, there's another example that kind of reflects this broad definition of praise and worship. In First Samuel 24, he's on the run. He's in the desert. He's being chased by King Saul. He's running for his life with a bunch of randos. And he's in the back of a cave. And the king, you know, this is the Bible, the king needs to take a pass. And in the same cave, David, the people around him are like, this is your chance. God has set this up for you, for you to kill the king you should be king. You've been anointed to be king. This King's crazy. He was.

David takes up his knife and then just slits his cloak to take a piece of it, but he doesn't kill him. And later, as he's reflecting, Saul leaves the cave as he's reflecting, he's like I shouldn't even have done that. He was he saw the value that God was speaking through him in that moment, which was respect My Anointed One. He was connected with God, and He submitted his will in that moment to do what God wanted, rather than what was politically expedient. He made a choice that was worship.

Worship and praise can be all of it. It's all the steps we each take each day to purposefully center on God. God sees all of it. He knows each little sacrifice, each little course correction, each small death to self that we take to reflect and thank him. And in the same way, he knows every performance, every insincere word, every right thing we do, begrudgingly, every skin flint, ungrateful, selfish, demeaning me first, or even us first thought we have in opposition to the ways of His Kingdom. All those things that I mentioned as worship could just as easily be done in an un-worshipful way.

And we see that in our experience. Even here on a Sunday, you know, some people we're singing, some people are connecting in a real powerful way, and the person next to them, When do the evil start, or just this song doesn't mean anything to me. I'm tired, and it's like this realm of the spiritual world interacting with God through worship. It's like a totally different dimension that looks like a terrain that we're walking through, but we can't touch or see or smell, and it's hard for me to even put my mind around it, but the point is, worship is in every decision. It's in every moment. Am I interested right now in engaging with God, even if it cost me something?

Now, as soon as we get there, I want to put out this very large caveat. Now that I've defined a good thing in the church setting, our natural response is, let's make a rule. Let's make a rule. If worship is good, then I need to worship to be good, following that logic, if I'm not worshipping, I'm bad. This is the natural progression that we get wrapped up in, and it ends ironically with the end of worship. It gets you to shame that's not worship. And self-righteousness. That's not worship and performance. So, when I say worship is everywhere, I want you to hear this is an open invitation for you to engage in worship, rather than a growing expectation that you worship to measure up or to be fully Christian, or to earn church glory points, which I call

glorions. Yeah, no, I measure my job. I do a lot of measurement and like data analytics, so you know, you got to maximize your glory.

So, hear me, I am encouraging you to enter into worship as a part of your daily lifestyle, because I've tried it and it's good. The richest moments of my life have been the fruit of worship. I can't guarantee for myself or for you that there will be a specific feeling or an experience or sense of God's presence whenever you worship. Even today, I've been thinking about this. I was singing, and I was like, not feeling a whole lot. You know, I'm purposing to worship. I'm preaching about worship. I'm not feeling any great emotional thing, but I can say with confidence that worship as a lifestyle is the door that has granted access to so much life in the fold that I can't encourage you enough to jump in and make it part of your routine.

If that's you and you want to know how to begin today, here are some ideas I have on how to engage in worship. The first one is around making a choice. It's interesting, worship is kind of elusive in some ways because we experience it spontaneously, that emotional part. But to build a lifestyle of worship, to foster those moments of spontaneity, we need to put the work in, which includes affirming our desire to reflect and thank God.

Think about it this way, you might do exercise going back to the gym. We might do exercises to improve your balance. And it's not that you need to do the striking crane pose in your real life, but when you trip on the pavement, that time you spent in the pose prepares you to catch yourself. So, in the same way, if we intend to worship, we need to prepare ourselves and think about making that choice and saying, "Yes, God, I do want to worship you." I'm not doing this just because I get the glorions. I'm doing this because it's what I intend.

Spiritual growth doesn't happen by being a spiritual spectator or by doing the right thing. That's just the false options that distort our truth. One of the fundamental messages of Jesus is that doing the right things by itself does not help you navigate the spiritual reality, the spiritual dimension. In fact, it leads you into that self-righteous spiritual blindness. So, if you want to center your life on worship, you need to make a choice and say, "God, this is what I intend to do."

One exercise to help you prepare for worship is to find ways that you best connect with God. Find the easy wins to build your spiritual muscles. Do you connect to God in nature, through song, through movement, through encouraging friends, through service, through words, through cooking, through writing, through perseverance, through patience, what part of your day already feels like God's near start by paying attention to how your heart already is tuned into following God.

And as you begin a new task, simply talk to God and say, "I want this to be honoring to you. I want this to be worship." But following God isn't just about doing what's comfortable and what is easy. And so, the next part of this exercise is listening before church, before service started. Tracy and I were talking about, in some ways, it feels like a prayer and worship you. A big piece of it is listening and responding. So, when we say, "God, I want to dedicate this to you," we need to be ready for him to talk back and say, "Okay, think about this. Try it this way. Maybe stop this."

So again, as I was living up preparing for this sermon the other day, I was doing a task around the house, and I thought, hey, this is a great example. This could be worship. So, I said, "God, let this be worship to you." I completed it and felt good. And everyone came downstairs, and nobody thanked me, nobody even noticed the good things that I was doing, and I was sort of trying to encourage people to notice. "Isn't this looking so nice?" And then I remembered, is this really worship? If I just wanted to earn myself some gluons? God was speaking to me. That was the listening. You know, here I had kind of said this to myself. God came back to me a few minutes later and said, "If you want it to be for me, you have to let it go for you," committing an act of praise to God means releasing your right to the glorious so talk about making a choice, finding things that you can set aside as worship, listening to what God says as you do that.

And the last piece is, be a learner. One of our core values is embracing learning and discovery. It's one of the things we're about. And the freedom there is. We don't have to be perfect. Imperfect is the beginning of every learning journey. So, if learning is something we embrace, that means we embrace our mistakes, our forgetfulness, coming late, to church, our distractions, our perceived failures. So, walking out worship means maybe dedicating one element of your day to God and seeing what happens. Or starting a day by asking God, "how can I worship you today?" Or ending your day by reflecting on what was worship today for me, and how could I, which should I do more of or less of?

Over time, you'll begin to recognize what worship looks like for you and how you can cultivate that, and you'll begin to open your life to God, hear His voice and draw closer. So, the last piece I wanted to talk about today, we talked about what is worship. We talked about how we do it. I just wanted to touch briefly on why. Why should we do this? Because Tracy kind of hit this last week, and I wanted to talk about it again.

It can be easy to feel like worship is the demand of a childish, power-hungry narcissist whose identity is only solidified by the affirmation of others—that we're doing this so God knows who God is, right? That can be a mindset. I'm worshiping God. I'm telling him he's great. Because, I guess if I don't, he doesn't know he's great, you know? It can kind of get into a weird—it kind of starts to paint a weird picture of God.

But God's nothing like that. He doesn't need our worship. He didn't need to create anything at all. We believe in a God that was complete from the beginning, but delighted to create as an expression of God. Because of that, there's a hardwiring within each created thing, where there's a multiplying, a fullness, like life explodes when we reflect God, when we create like him, we carry God's image.

So like God, we find delight in the true essence of God when it's being expressed through us. It's a pathway to life, not because it earns us currency with God. It's a pathway to life because that's how the universe is, and that's how I've started to understand verses that talk about nature praising to reveal God. Like Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands." Psalm 66 says, "all the earth bows down to you and sings praise to you." Isaiah 65:5, "you'll go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

What does that mean? It means all of creation has this capacity to worship. The Earth is made to worship, and so are we. As one who has followed God, I can't encourage you enough to worship as part of your everyday lifestyle.

By building rhythms of worship into your life, you can find spiritual life, and spiritual maturity, which is deeper and richer and more fulfilling than anything offered elsewhere. Amen.