The Nature of Christian Corporate Worship

Today may be the most important thing we do this side of heaven: Worshipping Jesus together as a local body of believers. What makes us most worship God is not creativity, sound volume pleading the right song, but our understanding and appreciation of God’s character and Christ’s work. We are looking at: the object, subject and nature of the Biblical Theology of Christian Worship.

When looking at the nature of worship we ask, “How are we to engage with God in worship?”
Do we follow all biblical patterns of worship?
Most OT patterns were for specific people for only specific times.
Now that Christ has come, what can we learn from the OT?
Christian worship does not worship a greater God than that which was shown in the Old Testament, but a greater revelation of that God found in Jesus Christ.

Do we come to God on our terms?
What is acceptable worship to God? As we saw last week it is by the means of Jesus, and without a correct disposition of spirit and truth, worship will be rejected. Jesus leads us and when our hearts treasure Him the result is worship in spirit and truth.

What is the role of song, emotion, silence, physical gestures, tradition, culture in worship?

What does worship look like? In my personal, my public, my church life, on Monday? Casual worship? Is that a contradiction, an oxymoron?
If we see the true beauty of God, how could our worship be casual?

This week we will be looking at corporate worship and then the next 2 weeks Individual worship.

PRAY

We are in II Chron. 29  After personal and all the cleansing the people, they are ready for corporate worship II Chron. 28:25-31 Here we see the beauty of corporate worship.

There are two aspects of worship: the vertical and horizontal.

The vertical aspect and exercise of worship: God is the main focus, God is the main priority, and God is the most honored. His fame and glory is the main goal of our lives.
We are all about the object of worship and it must glorify God.
Worship is a response to God the Creator and Savior.
This I have spent most of the summer talking about.

Worship also has implications for those who worship together.
In a secondary / corollary way, worship is for us. And this we would call
The horizontal aspect of worship: Corporate worship functions to equip and strengthen believers to have authentic Monday worship.

“Corporate worship is intended by God to inform and elevate a life of worship, and corporate worship is central to (living) a life of worship” Hughes

Heb 10:19-22
This passage is about applying the blessings of the cross into the daily lives of living for Him in Community. The author urges the community to act upon corporate worship.

What are we to do in the context of believers?
We are to have a variety of biblical elements: song, prayer, edification, communion and baptism. Which may have:
- Raising hands – Neh 2:8, Psalm 28:2, I Tim 2:8
- Clapping of hands Ps 47:1
- Falling down I Cor 14:25

Here are a few things we are told to do in the context of believers:

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
We affirm the truth together
  Listen—The Word is to be read, preached and sung.
  We participate together and help each other take truth to heart.

Martin Luther saw that gathering together was important to awakening his spiritual fire:
  "at home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when
  the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through."

Christian corporate worship plays a vital part in our sanctification, our growing to be more like Jesus.
  4 times in I Cor 14 – do things that build up the church- that edifies one another
  When we behold Jesus together, "we all . . . are being transformed into the same image
  from one degree of glory to another" II Corinthians 3:18.
We then take these truths and apply them and work truth into our lives the following week.
  Holy Spirit takes the Scripture that is read, the prayers that are spoken, the chorus we
  sing, or the truth preached and the fellowship we have with our church and works it
  "to the point of our need, and not merely informs our Christian walk, but heals us in that
  moment." Piper

not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.

Mutual edification
  God has made us to have deeper enjoyments and more intense encouragement in
  worshiping as a congregation "rather than individual devotion". Rayburn
  A complaint about modern songs: “Songs are too individualistic.”
  “It is all about first person singular pronouns.”
Yes there are songs like that, “It’s all about me”. This would be a human focused worship.
  God is to be the leading role in the drama of worship, instead many songs have the
  tendency to define salvation “based upon the terms of our response rather than the
  divine initiative” McKibbens

On the other hand worship should have many first person pronouns.
  Ps 34
  Types of Christian songs out there. Declarative, sermonic, renewing, affirming our faith,

When it comes to mutual edification we are to be a worship community, not worship consumers.
Unlike some who may think that corporate worship is too cluttering and want God by
themselves, worship is to remind our congregation that we are a part of the people of God.

We praise God as a community Heb 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually
  offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.
How does our worship reflect and communicate our unity in Christ bridging our
gender, race, generational, and our growth in sanctification differences?
  Rev 5 shows diversity

Many passages speak of unity and “accepting one another” or “address to one another in
  psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” Eph 5:19 Matt 5:23-24; John 13:35; Phil 4:2-4
Hebrews 13:15-16  Unity and acceptance of one another
Where there is selfishness, no reconciliation and love, it is hard to worship.
“God is not truly glorified by us, unless the hearts of all agree in giving Him praise, and their
tongues also join in harmony...for the unity of His servants is so much esteemed by
God, that He will not have His glory sounded forth amidst discords and contentions.”
-- Calvin

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds*
Spur one another to love and good deeds
God made us for community and we are not to live our lives alone.
You must be plugged into our community - Small Groups

We are a local church that is a part of this specific local and global community
Christian worship in the local church points us to the worship of universal church that one day
will include every nation Revelation 7:9.
In this we celebrate as part of our worship Sacraments – communion and believer’s baptism

I believe it is ok for different churches to have different styles, as long as they are not bound to
style, but bound to having the Word and Christ the center.
No one style has ever been, or can ever be, sufficient to serve effectively
as the only and permanent church style.

Our specific style should express the richness of our past biblical traditions and the freshness of
present expressions of biblical worship as we grow and expand our musical styles.
It should also show the giftedness of our congregation
We as a church should learn from our specific Wisconsin cultural context within our own
community (reggae music from Jamaica or Latin on the readings) and our own historic
tradition at MEFC, and from the church history in which we come.
That is why we have the word Free in our church name.
We are separated from, free from what the State or any High Church decides for us
or how we are to govern or church workings.  Free and autonomous within our
denomination.  Free to hire and determine our leadership in congregational governance.
Not like an Anglican clergyman who reads and plans the service from a printed Prayer
Book.  Pastors were free to dress like the congregants.

As I stated in the beginning of my sermon-- today may be the most important thing we do this
side of heaven as we worship Jesus together as a local body of believers.
“There’s an element of worship and Christianity that cannot be experienced in private
worship or by watching worship.  There are some graces and blessings that God gives
only in the ‘meeting together’ with other believers” (Spiritual Disciplines, 92).
As the Swedish proverb says, a *shared joy is a double joy.* In corporate worship, the benefits we
uniquely enjoy are heightened deeper and richer when we magnify him together with others.

You cannot worship corporately on Sunday or at a Bible study if you have not been worshiping
throughout the week.  Thus we encourage individual devotion, family worship, and when we
come together Christian corporate worship: this is “continuous worship”.
When it comes to songs  Revelation with Dr Osborne “All hail the power of Jesus name”
last Christmas local choir group sang

Let us always as a local church here called Maranatha, never neglect the meeting together and
lifting up the name of Jesus as we corporately worship in spirit and truth.