

Wow!
Isaiah 40:21-31

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

What a wonderful day. Isn't it great? All around the world today people will or have gathered together in buildings like this one. Some arrive in formal clothes, others in more casual attire. Some arrive in their beautiful shiny cars, some come walking miles on foot, Some meet in high arched cathedrals of hand cut stone, some gather in little chapels of wood, some in stores or others schools while still others may be meeting secretly in a home. Some attend churches where there is a huge crowd; others attend gatherings with just two or three people present. Some find worship is way to long, while others say it was to short. Some arrive to help people for the service; some to lead in the service in some way; others to participate as one of the congregation. Some have arrived to the sound of an organ playing softly or loud; others have entered churches where a rock group is beating out body shaking songs. Some are attending services where a minister leads the service; others where lay people will lead the worship.

In spite of all this variety within the church of God today, people have assembled for one reason – to worship God.

In some places the organist will play the hymns too slowly; in others the music is too fast. In some places the preacher will be dull and dry and long winded; in others a lively drama will present a powerful message. In some places people will feel uncomfortable with certain newer parts of the service, in other places people thirst for change in worship. Today some use the familiar old book, some use a newer book, some no book at all. Today some people will enjoy meeting up with their fellow Christians, others will sit alone and leave straight after the service with hardly talking to anyone.

Around the world all these things, and more are happening as people come to worship (some may have even happened here this morning). But in spite of all the circumstance and the difference from one congregation to the other, from one member to another, they have come for one reason – to worship God.

I have heard a lot of excuses why people don't attend worship – "I'm too busy" "It's the only day I can sleep in" or "I had a problem with that church so I don't go" and of course the classic "Why do I need church, they're full of hypocrites". This past week I even had a conversation with someone about God and faith. She was of a different denomination, but no longer attends. Her line was that she "believes in God and as long as you good and believe in God then you don't need church, right Pastor"

So what do you all think? Was she right, as long as you're a good person and you believe in God then you don't need to be at worship or attend, there is no reason to be a part of a church or come to worship, isn't that right pastors? What would you say to her? Perhaps we could ask her if she can you grow in her relationship with God if she didn't attend to it in worship and a healthy prayer life? Can you receive the forgiveness and the gift of grace that is offered each time we come to the communion table of the Lord's meal? Can you learn more about the Bible, law and gospel, the blessings of the Lord? Can you interact with other Christians, talk, hug, care for each other? Can you learn from each other, support each other, pray for each other, and challenge each other without being in worship. And perhaps the most important question is whether you can truly worship and praise the Lord rightly without being in worship?

The word itself "worship" comes from an old English word "worth-ship", meaning that God is worthy, deserving of praise. Worship is our response to all that God has done, and all that God is doing and all that God will do. When we come to truly believe in God, then we come to know that we are to be giving God our praise and worship. It is simply a matter of attitude and priorities. There are plenty of reasons people can come up with for not to be at worship, to dislike church, to find fault and complaints about it, but if our attitude and priorities are centered on God then it is all about worshiping the one who gives life, no matter what.

Look again at Isaiah chapter 40:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? To whom then will you compare me or who is my equal? Says the Holy One. Have you no known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God; the creator of the ends of the earth.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the EVERLASTING GOD!

The writer of Isaiah is telling us what kind of God we have. Using human limitations, human words hinders him in so many ways, because God is beyond our human description, beyond our limited language and expressions. God is simply worthily because God has done and continues to do such a blessing in our lives. We come here because we want to thank and praise the one who has done so much for us. We come here and worship because we know here we can find the help and knowledge, the support and comfort, the relationships and growth in our Lord through each other.

Many times out there in the business of our lives, in the worries of family, in the concerns of bills and finance, in the news of wars and sickness and death and separations, divorces and abandonment's, we so forget that we are God's people. This time is the one time during the entire week we can put away all worries and doubts, fears and angers, resentments, and troubles

handing them over to God in our prayers and our songs. Yes even here amongst us today, we carry things that will pull us away from God. Because of this sinfulness we forget about God and God's glory and we miss the wow moments in life.

You know what I mean those moments when a Gold medalist spins and leaps and bounces to impossible height and with amazing speeds and yet stops on a dime. We say WOW!

- When we are standing on a mountain top or at the beach and the sky is just right, the clouds rippled and turning shades of pinks and reds as the sun sets, and we say WOW.
- When we look at the tiniest face of a newborn child, with the tiny toes and tiny fingers and the light breathing – and we say WOW!
- When we are amazed when we know we have done wrong, hurt someone, treated them poorly and yet because they love us they forgive us and we see only beauty and say WOW!
- Or when we are depressed, anxious, upset, or worried and a friend or loved one stops by just at that right moment and offers a word of support and hope – and We know it is a WOW moment!

WOW! What a wonderful day. You can say it WOW! What a wonderful God and Savior! Worship is coming here to be strengthened, nurtured, challenged, and reassured by God. Worship is coming here to express that WOW in the best way we know how. This kind of worship comes from the heart. That's where worship starts and takes place. It is that true Epiphany moment, to be in worship of God and praising God with our entire soul and mind.

As the psalmist wrote: "Sing to the lord with thanksgiving; make music upon the harp to our God" God is not impressed with a mighty horde or a fast runner, but those who await God's love, those who come seeking and praising the Lord. Thanks be to God that we have that opportunity to be in worship and give our thanks. Wow what a gift. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, you have sent Jesus Christ to overcome all hardships and all temptations, even satan and death itself. He overcame all these things to win for us a place in your eternal kingdom. Continue to bless us with that hope and assurance, so that all stumbling blocks may be removed from our journey of faith. Send your spirit of knowledge and guidance to taken away all worries and temptations so that your creation may do as you will.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer..

O Heavenly Father, we ask that you bless us with the mind of Christ so that we may be his partners in welcoming others into your lift of grace and forgiveness. In a world of violence and war, we need your blessing of peace. In a world filled with hatred and envy and guilt, we need your forgiveness. In a world filled with disasters both manmade and natural where so many are suffering we need you to tend to us and keep us. Lord Bless us this day with your Love, grace, forgiveness and peace.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, Hear our Prayer.

God, stretch out your saving hand to those who are sick. With your strong love, comfort the lonely, the oppressed, and all who suffer. Give courage to those facing surgery. Give healing to those who are afflicted. Give peace to those troubled both physically and mentally. Impart your Holy Comforter to be with them in their times of need. Especially we remember today our hospitalized, our homebound and all those we name now in our prayers to you....

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for this community of faithful; teach us to use the many gifts you have given us for the common mission of your Church. Take and use us as your witnesses, as your servants in this community and beyond to spread your word, to share your good news, to welcome the stranger and lift up those torn down by hatred and sin. Lift up your face and shine upon us and send us forth as your witnesses of that glory now and forever.

LORD IN YOUR MERCY, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, o Lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.