

“The Worship Service”

Psalms 148 -150*

Pastor Peter Hiett

August 12, 2012

**All scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted.*

Opening and Prayer

Today we announced Michael Bennett as our new Worship Arts Pastor and so the following text seemed appropriate for the sermon – Psalms 148-150. They’re the last 3 psalms of the book of Psalms which is a collection of songs used in worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. The last five psalms all begin and end with the commandment, *“Praise the Lord”* - in Hebrew *“Hallelujah.”*

Sermon

Psalm 149

¹Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. ²Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. ³Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre. ⁴For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. ⁵Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. ⁶Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, ⁷to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, ⁸to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, ⁹to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 149 (NRSV)

¹Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! ²Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! ³Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! ⁶Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Psalms 150:1-6 (NRSV)

Now, I don’t know about you, but from that, I get the impression that we’re like supposed to *“Praise the Lord.”*

To the modern American mind, I think that is something of a foreign concept and people wonder *“What is praise and worship?”* They think of ancient cathedrals, complex liturgies, or weirdoes on TV.

So what is Praise? What is Worship?

I don’t know if you’ve seen this floating around the Internet, but this is a pretty good example of Worship.

Clip from Cat video on YouTube (to find video on YouTube, type in Cat Video and eHarmony)

Debbie: *Hello, my name is Debbie. This is my first attempt at an eHarmony video. So I’m just going to start talking about what I like and hope I get some replies. So I am a recent MBA grad from Villanova. I love cats. I just ... [tears up] sorry I’m getting emotional. I love cats. I love every kind of cat ... [tears up and wipes her eyes] sorry I just really love cats and I just want to hug all of them but I can’t because it’s crazy. You can’t hug every cat, but I want to; I just want to. [continuing to wipe tears from her eyes] I want to. Sorry, I just get ... anytime I hear cats, I get ... I just love cats. Woo! I promised myself I wouldn’t cry. So anyway, I am a cat lover and I love to run. [begins to cry again and wipe her eyes] I’m sorry, I’m thinking about cats again. I just ... I*

think about how many don't have a home ... and how I should have them ... and how cute they are ... and their ears, and the whiskers, and the nose. [continues to cry and wipe her eyes as she's talking] I just love them and I want them and I want them in a basket and I want little bow ties and I want them to be all rainbow and in my face and I want a house full of them and I just want us to roll around. I can't ... I can't.

She likes cats. She meditates on cats. I think she'd like to send some songs about cats ... and meet other people that like cats ... and even become a cat. There's nothing wrong with cats or loving cats but I think she may worship cats.

It's not just cats ... I could've shown you a video of:

rabid football fans

or a screaming crowd at a Rock concert

or the Democratic or Republican National Conventions

or a man buying a \$100,000 dollar car that he won't drive

or a woman spending a fortune on shoes she doesn't need

or a Crack addict breaking into a mini-market to steal some cash.

I'm just saying we all worship something. In fact, it may be what makes us "human" – Worship. We're born worshipers. So, in the Bible the problem isn't that nobody Praises and nobody Worships; the problem is that we worship the wrong things.

Romans 1:25 describes humanity. Paul writes, *"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator."*

That's called Idolatry – worshiping a created thing.

Idolatry, divides, depletes and desecrates.

Debbie is making a video for eHarmony.com but she may have a hard time finding Harmony ... or a husband ... 'cause few will want to serve her idols and they'll probably have a different idols (like cleanliness or dogs).

Idolatry divides and depletes and desecrates. We become what we worship and Debbie seems a bit cat-like. We become what we worship and then we kill what we worship – that is:

Idols kill us and even as we kill idols.

- If you worship alcohol – it'll kill you and you'll kill alcohol (a gift from God).
- If you worship sex – it'll kill you and you'll kill sex (a profoundly deep and meaningful gift from God).
- If you worship your husband or wife – it'll kill you and you'll kill them.

So Debbie may be the least dangerous kind of idolater on eHarmony.com 'cause most aren't looking for cats to idolize, but men to idolize and the men are looking for women to idolize. See? Some brides are gonna turn some grooms into idols and then they'll consume their idols. I mean there's gonna be some broken bodies and blood shed and some folks are gonna get crucified.

Now let me say I'm not picking on women who love cats! (I did some research and it turns out that Debbie, the cat girl, is probably an actress.) So I'm not picking on Debbie, or women who

love shoes ... or guys who love sports cars, or singles on eHarmony.com. I'm pickin on all of us, 'cause we're all sinners.

- We're all idolaters – desperately looking for something to praise – cats, dogs, football teams, cars, leaders, Obama, Romney ...
- We're all idolaters worshipping the wrong things in the wrong way.

An idolater worships a created thing in order to praise themselves. So the Psalmist cries out, *"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord"* and it's ironic – 'cause Worship isn't about us and yet true Worship

Unites Us Empowers Us and Creates Us.

All Israel would come to the Sanctuary – the Temple and worship. And the Worship was to create Unity. Idolatry creates uniformity:

Everyone becomes a cat person or a Republican or a Democrat or a Presbyterian or a Lutheran. But true Worship ... creates Unity, the way a song creates a dance

... a dance, in which, no two dancers are just the same – each is unique and yet all are united by one Rhythm, one Reason, one Logos ... one Word of God.

True Worship unites and empowers. Did you catch 149:6 – *"Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged words in their hands."*

Remember how the Israelites sang and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down?
Remember how they would pace the choir in front of the Army as they would march into battle.

Remember how David would play music and the Evil Spirit would flee from Saul?

Remember how Elisha would call for musicians and then he'd prophesy.

Remember how Paul and Silas were beaten, chained in stocks, in the Philippian prison but they began to worship ... singing songs and praising God? And the earth quaked and the prison doors flew open and that's how the Gospel invaded Europe.

Psalm 149:6 *"Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands."* (High Praise is a sword.) (The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.) *"a two-edged sword in their hands to execute vengeance on the nations [His vengeance is redemption in Isaiah 63:4.] and punishment [it means correction] on the peoples"* and to bind *"their Kings."*

Verse 9 *"To execute on them the judgment decreed."* Well what is the *"judgment decreed?"* We just read the decree – Psalm 148:11. *"Praise the Lord" ... "Kings of the earth and all peoples"* - that's a decree ... it's God's command. So we go to battle with Worship, that all would be set free to worship.

Worship unites, empowers, and creates. In the now and finished Creation, Revelation 5:13 every created thing worships and we're not fully created until we freely and fully worship. All creation will worship or even now worships.

Psalm 19 *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims His handiwork."*

And we just read *“Praise him, sun and moon, praise him all you shining stars!”* And then it says *“Let them praise the Lord.” “Let them, let them, let them ...”*

When I read that this week I thought, *“Lord, am I not letting the stars praise you?”* How bizarre. Well maybe creation praises and I just can’t see it ... or maybe I actually keep all creation from praising the Lord, somehow.

Paul wrote *“The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of glory ... to be set free from its bondage to decay.”* Remember we said *“Idols kill us and we kill idols.”* We try to own all the kittens. We try to control and possess all creation. It’s almost like humanity was to care for creation but we fell into idolatry and now all Creation is imprisoned in futility until we begin to worship.

Whatever the case, we are not fully created and our world is not fully created until we (the sons and daughters of Adam) *“Praise the Lord”* and *“Let all creation praise the Lord [including cats].”* I’m guessing you really can’t love cats too much; you can only love their Creator too little.

Well true Worship Unites, Empowers, and Creates all things. Everything is to be Worship and that’s why we hold Worship Services – to help idolaters worship the Lord. It’s the same reason married couples have a date night – it helps unfaithful hearts remain faithful ... but they’re to be faithful all the time ... like we’re to worship all the time and so we have Worship Services each week.

And so the Psalmist writes in Psalm 150

¹*Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!*

²*Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! [What’s that?]*

³*Praise him with trumpet sounds; praise him with lute and harp!*

⁴*Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!*

⁵*Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

⁶*Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!*

Now we don’t have trumpets, lute or harp. But we do have guitars, drums, and synthesizers. And so every week we have a Worship Service and we want to have a good one. So under each seat, we have a *“Worship Service and Evaluation Form.”* [Found at the end of the transcript in the Appendix.] Take it out and let’s read it [Peter asks everyone to take out a pen or pencil and reads the directions.] I want you to fill it out at the end of the Service, but I want you to follow along now. [Peter reads the questions.]

Now for decades, as a pastor and as a parishioner, at the end of every service – in my head, I’ve been filling out some version of this form. And I thought: *“Hey maybe everyone should fill one out too.”*

But I have this question: *“If we scored a perfect 390 on every Worship Service and Evaluation Form ... would that mean*

That we had just produced a good Worship Service?

That we had served worship to our Lord?

That we had praised the Lord?

Émile Durkheim was one of the Fathers of Modern Sociology. In the early 20th Century, he studied world religions; particularly those of Aborigines and Native Americans. He noticed that particular tribes and particular societies valued particular traits, which they desired to affirm and instill in their members. He postulated that over time they would associate certain traits with certain animals called Totems.

My tribe (my high school), Heritage High had a totem – an Eagle. So at every game the cheerleaders would lead us all in a chant, “*We are the eagles, the mighty, mighty eagles.*” My kids were all “*Bear Creek Bears.*” Now one’s a Roadrunner, 2 are Rams, and the last wants to be a Buffalo. If you’re an American, your totem is the Bald Eagle. If you’re like Debbie, the cat girl, your totem is a cat.

Well Durkheim postulated that over time these totems were lifted up and worshiped as gods. In the Pacific Northwest, he noticed that they placed their totems on trees – that’s where we get the term Totem Pole. The totem on the tree is the deity.

[Image of a totem pole]

Well if the deity is nothing but an animal that symbolically incarnates the collective values of the tribe, it follows that in worshipping such a deity, the tribe is really worshipping itself.

Durkheim suggested that all religion is totemic. I think Scripture agrees ... to a point

All human religion is totemic,

that is, all idolatry is totemic –

that is

a way in which we worship our own values and preferences;

a sneaky way in which we go about worshipping ourselves.

And that raises some questions about my *Worship Service Evaluation Form*. ‘Cause you know, most of those questions have to do with my values, my preferences, what pleases me.

So when I say “*Wow that was an awesome Worship Service!*” Maybe ... I’m actually worshipping the Worship Service because the Worship Service served me.

As if, I was being served worship – rather than – serving worship.

As if, it’s all about me and that’s idolatry.

And then whether I judge the service good or bad – it’s bad.

It is a particularly insidious form of idolatry.

I mean maybe I shouldn’t have shown you a video of the cat lady; maybe I should’ve shown you a video of me.

You know last week I messed up a line in my sermon and I obsessed on the sermon – went back and watched the video of the sermon. I obsessed on the sermon and I couldn’t let go of the sermon. And so the sermon was no longer worship and a gift.

See? I think it’s important that I give my best to the Lord, but when I obsess about the gift I gave, I don’t give it ... I hang on to it.

And I suspect that I'm not worshipping the Lord; I'm worshipping me worshipping the Lord and that's not worshipping the Lord; that's using the worship of the Lord – to worship me.

Now don't get me wrong. I do think that there's a place and a manner in which the Staff, the Board, the Band, the Worship Committee, and all of us ought to ask the questions on the *Worship Service Evaluation Form*. We need to ask, *"Is it too loud – too soft?"* We need to ask those questions. But if we think our worship is dependent on affirmative answers to those questions, we're clueless ... and we're idolaters.

The Psalmist doesn't say, *"Praise the Praise Band."* He says, *"Praise the Lord."* And he doesn't say, *"Praise the Lord if the lute sounds good enough and the harp is in tune"* ... Sure tune the harp, but *"Praise the Lord no matter what."*

I've heard people say, *"Pastor, after you shared that story, I just couldn't worship."* And I wanted to say, *"Wow – you're really bad at worship."* But they're not the only one. I've actually said, *"Guys, the music was so loud I just couldn't worship – I couldn't worship."*

See? That's like saying, *"I took my wife out to dinner and I just couldn't love her 'cause the chicken was too dry and the waitress was ugly."*

It's like a bride saying to her groom, *"I'm sorry but I just can't adore you unless you take me to a 5-star restaurant."*

Bride of Christ, do we hear what we're saying?

You know Paul and Silas sang and worshiped – beaten, imprisoned, and in stocks. They sang and they worshiped and I suspect that the Lord thought that that was a pretty good worship service.

And I think His all-time favorite worship service was when a fellow sang Him a song, while naked - beaten and nailed to a tree planted in the very pit of Hell. The song starts like this

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"

That's the first line of #22 in the Jewish Hymnal – Psalm 22. And then Jesus cried,

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

That's Worship

Rick Joyner says he had a vision of Jesus standing next to God the Father as they watched a little prayer meeting on some dark corner of the Earth. As these people worshipped, God the Father quaked and wept with joy. Joyner claims that he heard Jesus speak these words (recorded in his book, *The Call*). He heard Jesus say

"This is why I went to the Cross. Giving My Father joy for just one moment would have been worth it all. Your worship can cause Him joy every day. Your worship when you are in the midst of difficulties touches Him even more than all of the worship of heaven. Here, where His glory is seen, the angels cannot help but to worship. When you worship without seeing His glory in the midst of your trials... that is worship in Spirit and in truth. The Father seeks such to be His worshipers. Do not waste your trials. Worship the Father, not for what you will receive, but to bring Him joy. You will never be stronger than when you bring Him joy, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Psalm 148:4 *"The Lord takes pleasure in His people."* We serve worship to our Father to give Him – pleasure.

Speaking as a father let me tell you what has brought me most pleasure. It's the songs and dances my kids performed for me when they were preschoolers. I keep the tape in a special box in the closet in my bedroom.

My favorite sermon is a bunch of scribbles on a paper. One night 20 years ago – Elizabeth saw me struggling as I wrote a sermon. So, she wrote one for me – it's totally illegible. There's no way it would receive a passing grade in Homiletics at Fuller Seminary, but it's my all-time favorite – I keep it in a special place.

My favorite offering is a \$20 bill my daughter gave me on vacation to help pay for a speeding ticket (it was like all her spending money that she had saved up for vacation). I didn't need the \$20 and ... I never spent the \$20. You see? It wasn't important in the way she thought it was important. It was far more important – I still have that \$20 bill ...

To me, that \$20 bill is priceless.

See? God, the Father, has your artwork on His refrigerator. He keeps your scribbles in the bottom of his sock drawer.

Not because they are so valuable
... but because you are so valuable.

So the Psalmist writes

"Praise the Lord with trumpet, lute, harp, tambourine, and dance."

That is *"Praise the Lord with whatever you've got."*

"Praise Him" with scribbles; Praise Him with macaroni glued to paper – if that's all you've got. Praise Him with all you've got.

See? If my kids gave me scribbles and macaroni pictures today, I'd be disappointed 'cause that's not all they've got. *"So praise Him with scribbles and macaroni dioramas and songs and dance and well-tuned guitars and well-crafted sermons and well-run businesses and big offerings and great music."*

"Praise Him with all you've got."

But if it's not Praise ... All you've got is nothing.

Actually it's less than nothing – it's idolatry. Idolatry that divides, depletes, and desecrates.

So maybe you could do this for me ... would you take out your *Worship Service Evaluation Forms*. And with your pencil, put a huge "X" through all the questions. And then write this question in at the bottom (#40), which is really question #1 and Only, write

"Did I serve God my worship?"

In other words, *"Did I praise the Lord?"*

So the Psalmist writes, *"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord (over and over and over). Praise the Lord."*

Have you ever wondered why God commands all this praise? Do you think He's self-centered or insecure?? Have you ever thought that?

You know when my kids were little, I longed for their worship but I don't think it was because of my insecurities; I think it was because of my love for them. I don't think it was because I wanted to make it all about me; I think I actually wanted to make it all about them.

See, I know that they would worship something ... follow someone. And for their sake, I wanted it to be me ('cause I'm the one that loves them). And their delight in me

- Unified our family
- Empowered their lives
- And created them in my image.

And now they don't worship me – (thank God) – but they honor me. And I pray that they would worship their Father in Heaven.

But I hope you get my point.

Why does God demand all of our worship? Because He loves us ... and Worship

- Unites us with His Family
- Empowers us with His Spirit and
- Creates us in His Image

and it is His pleasure, to create us, in His image.

I mean, maybe it's not about you – 'cause it's all about you.

'Cause maybe you are most satisfied when God is most glorified.

So, maybe you have to lose your life in order to find it ...

Have you ever tried to lose your life? Ironically, I think that's what everyone wants. It's what every idolater wants:

to lose themselves in alcohol, sex, cats, nature, work, school ...even religion

lose themselves and find themselves part of something greater than themselves.

And it seems to work for a night or a season.

But in the end, you haven't lost yourself, 'cause what you were worshiping, wasn't greater than yourself ...

in fact – it probably was yourself.

And you know you can't lose yourself with yourself. And I know, you've all tried – haven't you?

You've all felt insecure or ashamed of yourself and told yourself *"Don't think about yourself."*

And so you think about your self's inability to forget yourself.

See? Maybe our greatest need is to forget our needs. In other words, our greatest need is to worship. But if I just tell you to worship – will that really help you to worship?

I mean if you just sit through a whole worship service asking

"Am I serving God my worship?"

"Am I praising the Lord?"

"Am I worshipping?"

You're still not worshipping the Lord.

You're worshipping your service of worship.

You're worshipping yourself trying to worship.

I mean if you're thinking about your dance steps, you're not really dancing. You have to lose yourself in the music ... to find yourself dancing.

You can only lose yourself in something greater than yourself and the only thing greater than your self ... is the Lord and the music in His heart ... His Word.

So the Psalmist writes, *"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord."*

But maybe they had not yet seen the Lord.

You know God destroyed that old Temple because Israel didn't worship. They had great looking Worship Services but nobody worshipped. Through the Prophets, God said, *"You honor me with your lips but your hearts are far from me."*

"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord," but maybe they hadn't seen the Lord.

Maybe they had seen His mighty deeds (as the Psalmist says), but

Maybe they had not yet seen His surpassing greatness. They had not yet seen His heart – The Father's Heart. *"Jesus from the bosom of the Father He has made Him known,"* wrote John.

Maybe Creation and Fall and the Command to Praise the Lord and the Covenant and the Temple ...

Maybe it's all a stage for the revelation of His "surpassing Greatness." So great, it might sweep us off our feet and set us to dancing so we can't stand still, but must dance.

In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi prophesies saying,

"Behold... the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.

... But who can endure the day of His coming and who can stand when He appears."

500 years later, the Lord did come to His Temple saying, *"destroy it and I will rebuild it in three days."* And you know the story.

We loved the Temple and we didn't love Him.

We loved the giant stones and the priests and the choirs and the trumpets and the lutes and the harps.

We loved the Worship Service, but we didn't serve worship to Him.

AND YET – we did idolize Him – we tried to worship Him like we worship cats, cars, politicians, and Pop stars.

Massive crowds met Him at the City Gates chanting *"Hosanna. Hosanna"* just 5 days before the crowd chanted, *"Crucify. Crucify."*

We idolized Him – we tried to control Him and use His mighty deeds to save us – but only the way we wanted to be saved.

We tried to make Him in our image so we wouldn't be made in His image.

We tried to make Him into one of our Totems.

In fact, we nailed Him to a tree – a totem pole

[Image of totem pole next to an image of Jesus hanging on the cross]

And He let us ... For there, (as planned from the Foundation of the Earth) – the Lord ambushed us with His "surpassing Greatness" – His relentless Love.

And there He offered up His Spirit – the Spirit of Worship.

And 50 days later on Pentecost, that Spirit fell on a New and Living Sanctuary

And They all began to worship,

And The worship was a gift.

The Worship united them like a body united in a dance – like dancers united in a common song. And the worship empowered them – it was the Spirit in them. And when they worshipped, they became a new creation.

See? You can't simply make (with human power) real worship happen, but God is making it happen as we wait on Him and look to Him.

And so I hope that you do evaluate your Worship Service, asking yourself that last question on the evaluation form: *"Did I serve worship to the Lord?"* But if the answer is *"No"* – don't beat yourself up and don't blame the Band, don't blame me and don't just try harder...

Look to the Lord (Crucified and Risen).

Look to the Lord – confess and call on the Lord – and behold the Lord and then you're already beginning to worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Use the Band, use the songs (sing the songs), meditate on the sermon... use all of these things – but call on the Lord. Behold the Lord!

Communion

On the night Jesus was handed over, He took bread and broke it, saying *"This is My Body."*

Hey, do you remember question #39 on the *Worship Service Evaluation Form?* – *"Was I fed?"* What are we doing when we ask that question? And What is God doing when He answers that question? God is so good.

He took the bread and He broke it and He said, *"This is My Body. Take it; eat it."* And in the same manner, after supper, He took the cup and He said, *"This cup is the New Covenant, in My Blood; poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of Me."* ... Surpassing greatness.

And so He calls you *"His Sanctuary"* ... to come to the Table and surrender your Worship; receive His Grace; and serve Him the Worship He deserves. You are most satisfied when He is most glorified. He's your father.

In His name, believe the Gospel and worship.

Benediction and Prayer

Hey, we have a lute or kind of like a lute. So that is why we come here – to Praise the Lord. I ended with this, *"Look to the Lord. And Praise the Lord."*

So I just want to be very specific about what I mean by that because sometimes I really have trouble getting into worship and praising the Lord. Usually because I'm asking myself, *"Are people praising the Lord? Oh yeah, I'm not praising the Lord. I'm thinking about everyone else praising the Lord."* And so this is what I try to do:

A. I think about His Mighty Deeds. You know He's the Creator.

- And so you go out this afternoon and the sun is shining down and you think “*What a beautiful day!*” Don’t worship the sun – worship the one who made the sun.
 - And you go out on a moonlit night and the moon is beautiful. Don’t worship the moon – worship the one who made the moon.
 - And then you know what happens? You somehow set the moon free – to be what the moon is meant to be – an instrument praising and glorifying God.
 - And so I think about His Mighty Deeds and sometimes that doesn’t even do it for me.
- B. I try to think about His Surpassing Greatness. And what is His Surpassing Greatness? (I wanted to preach on all the last five Psalms, but that was too much.) Let me just read this one from Psalm 146:8-9

Praise the Lord

... the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; ... the Lord watches over the strangers; he [the Lord] upholds the orphans and the widows.

And then I thought why do they have to be blind in the first place? Why do they have to be strangers? Outcasts in the first place? Why do you have to have widows in the first place? As soon as I asked the question, I knew the answer... so I could watch Him give sight to the blind; so I could watch as He lifts those that are bowed down; so I could watch as He comforts the widow ... shows her that He is her groom; so I could watch His exceeding .. His Surpassing Greatness.

You know people don’t get crucified in Heaven ... they get crucified here on Earth, because here on Earth God shows and God tells and God exhibits His Surpassing Greatness – the story of Redemption.

So why the bad? So God can show you the Good. And forever and ever and ever – you can worship – in Faith, Hope and Love. Those things are eternal – they don’t pass away. This old world passes away; this age passes away; but God remains.

And so check this out. I think most people in this world tend to think this world is about a test to see if you’re good enough for the Kingdom of Heaven. I think a more accurate term for this world is that this entire world is a call to worship so you can join the Kingdom.

So come to worship every Sunday and praise the Lord. Think about His Mighty Deeds – thank Him for that. And then think about His Surpassing Greatness. Think about your darkness; your shame; your struggles and then look to the Lord (Peter points to the Communion Table) ... for He descended to this place to cover you with Grace ... and make you in His Image. That’s His Surpassing Greatness.

In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.

Appendix

My Worship Service Evaluation Form:

(In your mind answer each question, then rank that answer on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 signifying a response that is the most positive in that particular area and 1 signifying a response that indicates this area needs the most improvement.)

1. Did people greet me and make me feel welcome?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. Did strange people invade my private space?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. Did the sermon have any meat?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. Was the sermon too hard to follow?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Was the message simple (KISS—Keep it simple stupid)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Was the message simplistic?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Did the sermon have a practical application for my everyday life?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Was the sermon some sort of “self-help” formulae?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. Was the pastor’s apparel overdone or pietistic?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. Did the pastor dress like a slob?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11. Did the pastor “yell” at me?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12. Was the pastor’s presentation dispassionate or boring?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13. Was the morning prayer spontaneous, heartfelt and in “my Language”?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14. Did the morning prayer express a proper degree of intention and reverence?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15. Were the announcements worshipful?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
16. Did they disguise the announcements as worship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
17. Did they arrogantly assume that I should give to their ministry?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
18. Did they have the courage to call their people to sacrifice with giving?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
19. Did I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
20. Were they just into “feelings”?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
21. Did I see manifestations of the Holy Spirit?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
22. Did they seek signs (“An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign.”)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
23. Was the music too loud?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
24. Was the music too soft?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
25. Did they sing songs that I know?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
26. Did they sing new songs or just old songs?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
27. Was the worship traditional?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
28. Was the worship contemporary?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
29. Were the musicians accomplished?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
30. Were they just into performing a “show”?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
31. Was the worship leader too trendy?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
32. Was the worship leader too stuffy?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
33. Did the worship leader have tattoos?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
34. Did the worship leader have tattoos?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
35. Is the new worship leader as good as the old one?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
36. Why are all the pastors losing their hair?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
37. Additional criteria: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
38. Additional criteria: _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
39. Was I fed?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Worship Service Evaluation Form Composite Score: _____