

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups June 28th 2009 Empowering Worship! Ephesians 5:13b -20



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

This week we come to the seventh of our series 'More Love More Power' a series of teaching and preaching in which we have been engaged with the renewing of our vision here at St Paul's. Paul's letter to the Ephesians has been our starting point for focussing on key areas of our life as a church such as Leadership, World Church, Discipleship, Community and now Worship. This week we ask ourselves the key questions 'What does it mean for our life of Worship to be renewed?' 'What could it look like' 'How can each of us get involved?'

First and foremost a basic question for all of us – What is worship..why do we do it? Michael Jackson's death this last week has been accompanied by a mass outpouring of singing, sharing, dancing, emotion and idolisation. We have seen profound adoration and affection, honouring and respect – many of these terms come straight from the dictionary definition for worship! An essential part of what it means to be human is the capacity to worship something or someone other than ourselves and at the heart of that ability is our response to our creator God. Worship is essentially about relationship with God. God calls us to worship him out of his love for us and we can choose to respond to that love with our praises, our prayers and our whole lives. "Our greatest claim to nobility is our created capacity to know God, to be in personal relationship with him, to love him and to worship him. Indeed we are most truly human when we are on our knees before our creator." – John Stott.

To worship is to acknowledge God's worth, to draw close to him and if we choose not to acknowledge him we will inevitably direct our worship elsewhere – which is idol worship. It is worth reminding ourselves that the first three commandments deal exclusively with God's desire for us to worship him and him alone! Read Exodus 20:3-6. Our first challenge then is who or what are we worshipping? What comes first and foremost in our lives?

The second challenge is How should we worship....what should our worship look like? If we go back to the Bible it is clear throughout the OT that God is primarily interested in what is at the heart of our worship rather than the form that our worship will take – read Psalm 51: 16 - 17. Psalm 51 is a Psalm of David and one of many that were an aid to worship for the people of God. They were meant to be sung joyfully 'sing for joy..shout aloud..'....instruments used included cymbals, tambourines, trumpets, rams horns, harps and lyres. Chronicles 15:16 and 23:5 report that David appointed 4,000 professional musicians to provide their services to the temple! There would have been a lot of improvisations and rousing rhythms and impromptu dancing! David even shocked his own wife by breaking out into a spontaneous dancing!

But what about the first church? Early Christian communities would have come together to worship and in fact Eph 5:14 is thought to be part of an Easter or baptismal song that Paul was probably singing to himself even as he was writing his letter!! "Wake up O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." So Paul writes – read Eph 5:19 -20. Paul envisages a life of worship that involves singing both out loud and inwardly, both when we are together and on our own separately in our hearts. Read 15:15 -18 – and it is the injunction of those last five words "instead be filled with the Spirit that hold the key. Whether it is formal liturgy or informal singing our worship is dead unless 'spirit filled.'"

So to our third and final challenge and here it gets close up and personal! What does it mean for our life of worship here at St Paul's to be renewed? As Jesus said at the heart of the commandments we are called to "love the lord your God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength" Mark 12:28 -34. This relationship of love needs to be checked out in terms of priority! Is God still number 1? We then need to be open to God's Spirit filling and empowering our hearts, minds and imaginations. What might this look like? The world is our oyster! Using the rich resources of our Christian Tradition to help us...poems, pictures, liturgies, hymns, songs, texts, stories.etc to help us we have the opportunity to Worship God in a myriad of ways.. Lets explore out of the box and maybe out of our comfort zones! Our Vision Document speaks of **Empowering our Services** so that they might be "*more relevant, more biblical, more adventurous, more interactive, more intergenerational, more awe and wonder, more creative, more equipping for life, more welcome and inclusive, more belonging and commitment, more provocative, more personal*"

How can you get involved? Simply put ...take three steps! 1. Renew your love for God. 2. Be filled afresh with the Spirit 3. Sing a new Song!

Witness: choose from these questions to discuss...This week you might decide to begin with the word and finish with worship responding to questions 6 & 7

1. What/who else are you tempted to worship apart from God? What are the potential idols in your life?
2. Whether it is formal liturgy or informal singing our worship is dead unless 'spirit filled.' Spend some time focussing on why we get so hung up about forms of worship.
3. What do you think it means for our life of worship here at St Paul's to be renewed?
4. Spend some time discussing how our services can be "*more relevant, more biblical, more adventurous, more interactive, more intergenerational, more awe and wonder, more creative, more equipping for life, more welcome and inclusive, more belonging and commitment, more provocative, more personal*"
5. What forms of worship do you think are 'out of the box' 'out of your comfort zones?' Why do you think this is?
6. How can you get involved? Simply put ...take three steps! 1. Renew your love for God. 2. Be filled afresh with the Spirit 3. Sing a new Song! Spend time as a group responding to this 'call.'
7. You might decide to spend some time singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, or speaking or singing to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.