

Theme: Gloria – For This We Were Created
“Let Everything that Has Breath Praise the Lord”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

February 22-23, 2014 at First United Methodist Church, Durango

Scripture: Psalm 150

1 Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! 2 Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. 3 Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

6 Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, 7 for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.

VIDEO Gloria Week 2 Sermon Starter

SLIDE Let Everything that Has Breath Praise the Lord

As we begin I invite you to take out of your bulletin your Meditation Moments and Message Notes. At the top you will find a Scripture passage that we are referring to today and below are lines where you can take down notes. There is something to write with in the pews in front of you. On the inside you will find daily Scripture readings and we invite you each day to take some time to read them on your own. I think if you spend a few minutes each morning or evening reading the Scriptures and asking these questions and reflecting upon them, they can help your heart and your mind grow as you seek to understand worship.

I want to begin with a bit of a disclaimer. The truth is that worship is an intimate and personal part of who we are. We each have different ways that we experience God and so if you find that anything I say during this series doesn't fit for you, that's okay. I'm not trying to rearrange your holy furniture, but instead get you to reflect upon it and consider how you might worship more deeply and fully in your life.

I think most of us can agree that Worship is a central purpose to our life together as a community of faith. As we look at Worship, I thought it would be helpful to check out the different components of worship as we find them in the scriptures. Christians joined in worship from the very beginning and we find that

recorded in the book of Acts, which is the story of the early church. In Acts 2: 46b we read this about the first believers:

SLIDE 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day...

SLIDE Gathering

The first thing we do for worship is we gather together. We invite you when you come in to talk to each other and greet each other. We invite you to bring the yuckiness of life with you so you bring yourself to worship, all of you! The first movement in all of our worship services is this idea of gathering together to remember that where two or more are gathered, there is God.

We always have at least one candle up front, and maybe more, to remember the light of Christ is here in our midst. This light is meant to remind us to give the yuckiness of life to God as we prepare for worship through the prelude or the opening songs. Music prepares US for worship and reminds us that we are participants and not just observers. We don't just rely on the leaders. We read about this next part of worship as we continue in the book of Acts 2: 46b-47b:

SLIDE They met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

SLIDE Praising

Remember that the Psalms was the worship book of the Jewish People and it closes with the Psalm we read this morning, Psalm 150

SLIDE 1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heaven! 2 Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequalled greatness! 3 Praise him with a blast of the ram's horn; praise him with the lyre and harp! 4 Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with strings and flutes! 5 Praise him with a clash of cymbals; praise him with loud clanging cymbals. 6 Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord!

One of the main reasons we come to worship is to put things in priority and give thanks to God every day. Psalm 84 reflects this need inside of us.

**SLIDE 1 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven's Armies.
2 I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord.
With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the**

living God. 3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young at a place near your altar, O Lord of Heaven's Armies, my King and my God! 4 What joy for those who can live in your house, always singing your praises!

Music has always been an important part of worship. We don't have the exact tunes that were sung, but we know that the words in the Psalms were the hymn book of God's people. I realize that each generation and each culture expresses their praise through music differently and the truth is that none of them are better than others. As long as music reflects the Gospel, the packaging doesn't matter. This is why John and Charles Wesley had no problem stealing bar tunes in the 1700's and putting Biblical words to them. At one point in our history the organ was seen as an instrument of the devil because it was played in parlors and dance halls and circuses, and it would have been seen as sacrilege to play it in a church. Handel's Messiah was not even allowed to be performed in a church at first because it was too loud!

I'm not sure God cares about the tune as much as God cares about the heart and the intention. Praising and magnifying God helps us to focus on God, no matter how we choose to express that.

Some of us raise our hands, some of us bow our heads, some of us put our hands out in front of us, some of us lift our heads and all of these are appropriate ways of expressing gratitude to God.

SLIDE Prayer

We pray to connect to God. We take time, sometimes in the quiet and sometimes together, to commune.

SLIDE Baptism

We do baptisms in the church service because it is meant to be a communal act of affirming our faith. We do that as we gather and praise God so we do it early in the service. If it's an infant being baptized, then parents take vows for them and if it's an adult, then they say the vows out loud.

The community surrounds them because we recognize that this child is a part of God's family.

SLIDE Hearing the Word of God

We hear the word of God, sometimes reading it aloud before the sermon, and sometimes reading it in the sermon.

SLIDE Reflecting on the Word

This is the sermon or message then encourages you to love God with your mind and engage your thoughts.

SLIDE Responding

We respond to the hearing the word of God in numerous ways because we recognize that we are participants. Paul gives us an idea in Romans 12 what it looks like to respond to God.

SLIDE 1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

I want to point out two things we learn about worship in this verse.

SLIDE Worship is my response to God’s love.

Worship is just the way I react, I respond, to God when God loves me. That’s what worship is. Notice it says “because of all he has done for you.” God has made us to love us, so we worship God back. God takes the initiative. God always makes the first move. God doesn’t ever ask you to make the first move. God always makes the first move. God creates us. God saves us. God forgives us. God blesses us. God protects us. Then, because of all these things, we worship.

Notice what we do - we “offer.” That word describes worship. The second thing to notice about this idea of worship is that we then give back to God.

SLIDE Worship is giving back to God.

God gives to us, and we give back to God. Whenever you give back to God or whenever you offer anything to God, that’s called worship. We give back to God it brings pleasure to God. It brings enjoyment to God.

When your kids are grateful to you as a parent then that brings pleasure to you. When we’re grateful to our Heavenly Father then that brings pleasure to God. Now, the question is, when it says, “offer” – offer? What am I supposed to offer? I mean, what do you give a God who has everything? You think finding Christmas gifts is hard for some people? What am I going to buy? What do you give a God who’s got everything? God made the world. God made you. God made the universe. What do you give God?

It’s rather simple and beautiful. You give God your love. Jesus says this is

the first and greatest commandment in Mark 12.

SLIDE **29 Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. 30 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’**

We do that by being honest about those things that have kept us away from God. We all have things we have put before God which is why our response includes several things.

SLIDE **Confession**

After we have reflected on God’s power and grace, we recognize that we fall short. We bring our brokenness to God. Sometimes we say a prayer of confession together and sometimes we do it quietly at the end of the sermon as the preacher invites you to do this.

SLIDE **The Offering**

This was the first way that people worshipped in the Bible, as Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to God. We bring our gifts to God today, and the reason we make a big deal about the offering in worship, by me bringing the plates or baskets and holding them up to God, is because this is meant to be the culmination and a symbol of offering ourselves to God.

SLIDE **Communion**

Once a month we bring our offering forward and we receive from God the tangible gifts of grace in the bread and the cup. We then can come and kneel and bow down to receive that gift and commit our life to God.

SLIDE **The Lord’s Prayer**

We respond in prayer together through this prayer that reminds us who we are and whose we are.

SLIDE **The Benediction**

Worship is a verb and requires action. It is an exercise of the soul. Worship is offering ourselves, as a response to God, so I literally put my hand up and send you out.

As part of this sermon today I wanted you to hear from one of our newest staff members, Diane Bock, who is our Worship and Arts Director. She leads worship and our Praise Team at our contemporary services and she helps

coordinate all of our worship experiences, which is a bit like herding cats around here!

- Tell us about a powerful time of worship in your life?
- What made it powerful?
- How do you prepare and choose songs to share in worship?
- What dreams do you have for our worship at FUMC together in the future?

One of my dreams for worship each week is that you would remember this powerful truth from Revelation 4:11 which talks about worship in heaven.

SLIDE 9 Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever), 10 the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, 11 “You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.”

This passage reminds each of us that you were created for God’s enjoyment. God made you just to enjoy you. God made you to love you and the reason that you’re alive is God wanted you alive and He gets enjoyment out of watching you.

I was serving Communion one Sunday at my last church just after they had completed a remodel of the Sanctuary. The remodel included replacing an old brass prayer rail with a beautiful new wood one that could be removed when it was not Communion Sunday. Unfortunately, it had not been put in properly, and as we got near the end of serving Communion that day, I heard a crash and then a thud behind me. I was holding the cup of juice, and as I turned, all I saw was the backside of 85 year old Francis Edwards, sitting on all fours on top of the prayer rail that had dislodged as she tried to push herself up from the rail.

The usher came down quickly to me and asked, “What should we do?” My only response was, “Well, you can start by helping her up!”

Before he could do that however, the laughter started. Not from the congregation, but from Francis! She began to giggle as she simply sat on the floor. You could hear her laugh over the nice quiet organ piece that was being played by our organist. After the service, I made it a point to seek out Francis and apologize. She just laughed some more and said, “I’m sure God got a kick out of it, seeing me on my knees and all!” Our only hope is that God has a sense of humor...and it’s

good to know that you were designed to bring pleasure to God. And that is worship.

This tissue box holder was a gift to me from Francis. I had the privilege of being with Francis through her final days as she battled cancer. She made me these items and they're very special to me because Francis was one of those people whose life truly was worship. She brought pleasure to God in her daily living, as testified by these simple items I use every day. I will never forget her Memorial service, showing pictures of her life on the video screen that she helped to purchase with her gifts. We saw her as a devoted mother, grandmother, wife, great grandmother, great-great-grandmother, and even a Motorcycle Mama—riding a Harley. I have no doubt that on that day we gathered to worship God and give thanks to her life, God had great pleasure. That's why we call our funeral's here Worship services—because you were planned for God's pleasure—you were made to know and love God.

So I challenge you to make as the No 1 goal of your life before everything else—getting to know and love God, because that brings God pleasure, and it puts life into perspective.

“Let Everything That Has Breath”

Theme: Gloria-For This We Were Created

Scripture: *Psalm 150*

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:

Meditation Moments for Monday, February 24 – Read Isaiah 6:1-8 - Isaiah’s account of his vision all but leaped off the page. He saw God—a God of awesome power, unstained holiness, abundant grace and readiness to cleanse a flawed worshipper. That encounter changed Isaiah’s life. His account reminds us that, every time we worship, we too are coming into the holy, life-transforming presence of our awesome, gracious God.

- Isaiah’s stunning vision came, he said, “In the year that King Uzziah died.” Uzziah ruled for 52 years, and most of his time in office had been good (see 2 Chronicles 26:3-5). His death must have triggered fear and uncertainty. In what ways can worshipping God’s eternal holiness and compassion strengthen your heart in today’s uncertain times?
- The Hebrew word “seraphim” literally meant “burning ones.” A “burning one” brought a live coal to cleanse Isaiah after he confessed his “unclean lips” before God. Has a worship experience ever affected you something like being touched with a burning coal from God’s altar? Are you open to letting God cleanse and change you in worship?

Tuesday, February 25 – Read Psalm 100, 146 - Why do we sing in worship? The psalmists saw music, not as performance, but as a way to express what is in our soul. We sometimes think music is just for the talented few,

but the psalmists invited every child of God (at any level of vocal quality!) to join in songs of praise. In worship, our audience is God—and regardless of our skill, he hears our heart’s song.

- Reading these psalms, you may think, “I don’t feel happy every time I come to worship God.” But the Bible talks about joy in persecution (Luke 6:22, 23), extreme poverty (2 Corinthians 8:2), unjust imprisonment (Acts 16:22-25) or “trials of any kind” (James 1:2). Pastor Eugene Peterson wrote, “One of the most ... remarkable things Christians learn is that laughter does not exclude weeping. Christian joy is not an escape from sorrow.” Are you able to sing “Blessed be your name” even when you’re “found in a desert land”? Will you let God teach you to sing “O joy that seekest me through pain,” because you trust that, no matter what your circumstances, God’s love will never let you go?

Wednesday, February 26 – Read Mark 12:38-44, 2 Corinthians 8:9-21 – The earliest worship meant building an altar, and sacrificing a lamb or other animal on it. For agricultural people, devoting that animal to God showed love, awe and worship—and was a real sacrifice. God’s people ever since kept giving willingly. They gave not just to pay the church’s bills, but in order to honor God as supreme owner and source of all they had.

- An eager young man, the story goes, texted his girl, “I luv U so much I’d climb the highest mtn, swim a raging river, cross a burning desert to B with U. C U t’nite—if no rain.” To what extent is your giving done from a willing heart? How can you make your giving a way to praise and honor God, rather than just another financial duty to meet?
- Paul gathered money from Gentile Christians in Greece to take to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, who faced economic need. He took pains to handle things so no one could even suspect him of “skimming” any of the money. What makes it important for Christ’s servants today to avoid even the appearance of financial fraud or deceit?

Thursday, February 27 – Read 1 Kings 8:22-54 – Private personal prayer is how we connect with God. But praying as a group during worship is also vital in our worship heritage. King Solomon’s great dedication prayer for the temple in Jerusalem modeled a humble spirit, honesty and trust. In that same spirit, we can all speak directly to God through the words of one who leads us in prayer as we worship.

- King Solomon was powerful and rich—but he was also spiritually wise (see 1 Kings 3:5-12). He knew his limitations, and even those of the splendid temple he was dedicating. Go through his prayer, and note all the places where he freely recognized God’s greatness, and the limits of even the best he had to offer the God of the universe.
- It’s tragic that the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is today a central point of tension among Christians, Jews and Muslims. Solomon’s prayer asked God to listen and respond to the prayers of “foreigners who do not belong to your people Israel” (verse 41). How can we include in our prayers, not only us and ours, but all of God’s human family?

Friday, February 28 – Read **Acts 15:30-35, 2 Timothy 4:1-8** – As a young man, the apostle Paul studied to be a rabbi. He would have learned Scripture from a very young age. Probably, like many devout young Hebrews, he even

memorized long passages and whole books. It makes sense, then, that when he led worship, and when he taught others like his young protégé Timothy, preaching the Bible was a major focus.

- Acts 15 said, “Paul and Barnabas ... and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.” The leaders of the early Christian communities (and healthy ones ever since) focused on preaching the big ideas of the Bible. In what ways do your times of worship deepen your understanding of the Bible?
- As Timothy preached, Paul wrote, he would “correct, rebuke, and encourage.” Paul knew he would soon preach no more (verses 6-8), and passed the torch to Timothy. Has the Bible’s message, preached in worship, ever moved you to live in God’s way? Have you ever shared Jesus’ message with someone, and sensed Jesus’ presence with you?

Saturday, March 1 – Read **Hebrews 13:20-21, Ephesians 3:14-21**– As these Biblical blessings show, worship is not limited to one hour (or even one day) each week. At the end of each service, in one way or another, the worship leader asks that God will “equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ.” When that happens, every day and hour of our week becomes an ongoing part of worship, and worship truly becomes a way of life for us.

- In the Lord’s Prayer, we repeat, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We pray that prayer to a God “who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:20). Will you live a life of worship to the God who can do immeasurably more than all you can ask or imagine, and who calls you to the privilege of being a person through whom he can do his will on earth every day?

Family Activity: Create a special worship box or chest for your home. You can use a shoebox or other container and decorate it. On the outside use words, pictures and symbols representing your family and faith. Inside, place objects that help your family worship together. You might include a Bible, a prayer cloth, art supplies, a candle, nature items, pictures, a Christian music CD, etc. Each week spend some time worshipping together at home. You might also try taking a nature walk and praising God for creation, serving in a nursing home or soup kitchen, or even giving another family a worship box to design and use. Thank God for the privilege of worship!