

What's The Deal At Stone Creek Church Part 3

Authentic Worship

Romans 12:1-2

Memory Verses: Romans 12:1

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Hey, let me ask you a question; what's the deal at Stone Creek Church? Two weeks ago we began this series by taking a thorough look at our vision statement and our core values. Our vision statement is clear, if you know it say it with me; **depending on Christ we will reach our world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed.** In order to accomplish this vision we hold fast to six core values; **We depend on Christ through a reliance on the word, consistent prayer, and authentic worship.** We reach our world through **relational outreach and strategic missions.** And we hope to see people's lives completely transformed through **intentional discipleship.**

Last week we began going through these six core values and how they are seen practically in the way we do church here at Stone Creek. And so, as we took a look at our first core value, we learned that we depend on Christ through a reliance upon His Word. We believe that the Bible is our standard, not a suggestion. It is not a collection of anecdotes and sage words of advice which we can take or ignore if we choose to. Rather we believe that it is the very Words of God which are mandatory for living. Because of that we must read it regularly, obey it fully, and preach it whether it is popular or not. What's the deal at Stone Creek Church? Biblical Teaching & Preaching! If we didn't make it clear enough last week, be assured, here at Stone Creek, regardless of who is preaching, we will be preaching the unadulterated, unfiltered, infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God!

Now, whether you are reading the Bible and therefore the Bible itself is preaching to you, or you are in a church worship service and a preacher is preaching to you; preaching is the way the Bible & God speaks to us. Worship on the other hand is how we respond to what He says. We depend upon Christ by relying on the Word because we have to know what Christ is saying to us; how he wants us to live. But, we also depend upon Christ through authentic worship because we show our dependence to him by how we respond to his commands. We depend by listening to Him, and we depend by responding to Him in obedience.

Now, I know exactly what you are thinking; isn't worship just singing songs and stuff? Well, I'm glad you asked. The answer isn't as simple as a yes or no. It's both. You see, when we use the word, "worship," we try to tie it to one act or several acts done during a portion

of a service we've deemed the worship time. Those acts are generally singing, praying, communion, or repeated liturgical phrases. Of course all of these acts are worship because they are how we respond to God's goodness, mercy, grace, and love in praising him. But, those acts do not even come close to encompassing all that worship entails. There are so many other ways to respond to what God has done for us and commanded of us.

If we were to look at the Old Testament saints and observe their praise and worship time what would we see? Would we see singing and playing instruments? Look with me at **Psalm 150**. Would we see lifted hands? **Psalm 134:2** says, "lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord." Would we see prayers rising up before the throne of God? **Psalm 66:17**. Yes, you would see all of this back then as you will today. But you would have also seen something else which had much more priority for the Israelites in the way they worshipped God; sacrifices. In **1 Samuel 1:3** we see this verse concerning Samuel's father Ekanah who worshipped as he sacrificed. In **2 Chronicles 32:12** we see that Hezekiah led Israel to worship God and burn sacrifices to Him. Isaiah prophecies in **Isaiah 19:21** that one day when the Egyptians come to faith in God that they too will worship and sacrifice to our God. 285 times the ESV uses the term "sacrifice." 9 times the Bible connects the word for worship with the word for sacrifice. The primary way they worshipped God before Jesus was through sacrifice. So what was the Old Testament sacrifice?

The Old Testament sacrificial system was a way for everyday people to repent and make recompense for their sins. It was their way of saying; "God, we love you, we are sorry for what we did, and we don't want to do it ever again." But, just like us, they were prone to wander into sin a lot, and so they had to sacrifice a lot. What they would do was take an animal, usually a goat, lamb, or cow, and they would slaughter it on an altar. The blood of the animal would be a pleasing payment for their sins and the wrath of God would be appeased. Why such a brutal and bloody payment? **Leviticus 17:11** tells us. **Hebrews 9:22** reiterates this; without blood there is no forgiveness for sins.

But, this system was flawed. No matter how many sacrifices they made, their sin always returned and the cycle repeated itself. So God, in his infinite wisdom, sent His son Jesus to be the final blood sacrifice. He became the sacrificial lamb that paid for the sins of the whole world once and for all. After Christ's death there was no need for anymore sacrifices; His sacrifice was enough. Now we are saved through a faith in his death and resurrection as the final payment for our sins. **Ephesians 1:7** tells us clearly that in Christ's blood we have redemption and forgiveness for our sins.

So hopefully you are still with me because I'm about to bring all of this together. First, we hear the Word of God and we must respond in

obedience. Secondly, our response of obedience is worship whether in song or some other display. Thirdly, in the Old Testament, they primarily displayed their worship to God through the sacrifice of an animal where the blood of that animal would temporarily pay for their sins. Fourth, Christ became the final blood sacrifice for us and now by believing in his sacrifice we can be saved. But that leaves us with a question doesn't it. If the primary means of worship in the Old Testament was sacrifice, what is our primary means of worship now, post Christ?

Look with me at our key passage this morning; **Romans 12:1-2**. Do you see it now? Have all of the puzzle pieces been connected? Our primary means of worshipping God today is in the same way the worshipped in the Old Testament; through sacrifice, but where as in the Old Testament something had to die, here we are called to be living sacrifices. We don't need to shed our blood, Jesus has already done that, but now we simply need to live for Christ. Do we still sing, yes! Do we still shout praises to God? Yes! Do we still have a time of worship in our worship services? Yes! But understand, that worship is not just reserved for what we do here on a Sunday morning. Worship is for every believer at all times. It's not some contrived act that you have to get in the mood for. If you are a Christian, it's who you are all the time as you constantly respond to what Christ has called you to do! It's in a word, authentic. We depend on Christ in authentic worship not religious rituals. In fact we say it like this; **authentic worship is a lifestyle of joyful obedience not reluctant observance.**

We hope you walk away knowing this reality this morning. Worship is way more than a song. **Worship means living an authentic sacrificial life in response to Christ's life and sacrifice.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we see here in **Romans 12:1-2** is that... **Authentic Worship Means Living Set Apart**. Because of the mercies of God (salvation through Christ's death and resurrection) we are to worship by being living sacrifices. And, to be a living sacrifice means to be HOLY & Acceptable (**vs1**). Holy means sanctified or set apart. In **vs2** we are told to not be conformed to this world but to have our minds transformed to the mind of Christ. Holy means that we are to be so set apart that it's obvious to those around us that we are a Christians. Now, does that mean we dress differently? Well, maybe a little. We are to dress in a way that does not draw attention to our sexuality. Technically speaking, Christians should dress modestly, but it doesn't mean that we should look religious or wear Christian t-shirts. If you think you have to wear a certain uniform; a suit and tie, overalls and a black hat, robes and dresses, or whatever, in order to look Christian just think of this for a bit, the most evil

people who have ever walked the planet dress like preachers. Hitler wore a suit, Stalin wore a suit, every slimy embezzler on Wall Street wears a suit and tie. It's clearly not about the way we look.

And, it's about the religious things we do. Going to church, saying a prayer before meals, going to confession, saying the Lord's prayer... there are many people who do religious observances reluctantly. They may simply want to appease their family or Christ through a few religious actions but then they turn around and live lives completely opposed to Christ – they are misguided. Christ isn't impressed by your religious worship void of obedience. Listen, **you can look like a Christian and you can do Christian things and still not be a Christian!**

So how do we worship God by living lives set apart for him? **1 Peter 1:15** says that just as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Living a lifestyle of authentic worship and being set apart has very little to do with how you look or what religious things you do – it has everything to do with righteous conduct. You may ask, what is righteous conduct. Well, that's why we have the Bible. The entire New Testament gives us a litany of ways we can conduct ourselves in a way that shows us set apart for God. Here are just a few of the passages which teach us how to live set apart lives. **Mark 7:21-23, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Luke 6:35, Isaiah 1:17, and Galatians 5:19-24**. Some of these lists are what conduct to refrain from and some of these lists are conduct you should be engaged in... and of course these are not exhaustive. There are plenty more things you can refrain from and things you can engage in in order to show that you are set apart for Christ; to show that you are living sacrifices living in authentic worship.

The point is this... a living sacrifice is spiritually dead to sin and spiritually alive in Christ. Look at **Galatians 2:20**. We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live... he lives through us. **Romans 6:6-11** agrees, we must not live in sin any longer, we've been killed to it with Christ and now we live as living sacrifices dead to sin and alive in him. Living a life of authentic worship means being set apart. **Worship means living an authentic sacrificial life in response to Christ's life and sacrifice.**

The second thing we see here in **Romans 12:1-2** is that... **Authentic Worship Means Living According to God's Will**. According to **verse 2** we discern God's will and then we live accordingly. You don't get to live according to your will anymore – you died to those dreams, you now live according to Christ's dreams for you. You don't do what your old self wanted to do, those goals aren't yours anymore. You now do what Christ wants you to do. This is why so many people can't live lives of authentic worship to Christ... it means they have to give up their will. For some it's too high a price to pay.

And what exactly is God's will? Well, in a sense it's pretty broad. For

example in **1 Thes 5:18** his will is that we give thanks in all things. In **1 Pe 2:15** its to do good in order to silence the ignorant. And in **1 Thes 4:3** it is to abstain from sexual immorality. But in another way it is more simple and generic. God's ultimate will according to **Dan 2:44** is the advancement of his kingdom. According to **2 Peter 3:9** it is the salvation and sanctification of his children through his son, Jesus Christ. But ultimately according to **1 Cor 10:31** his will is for his own glorification.

Simply put, we are to live for His kingdom rather than our own, for the salvation of the lost, and for his glory above all else. If you want to be a living sacrifice then you simply need to live for God's will. **Authentic worship is simply living according to God's will; where he says go we will go, whatever he says do we will do. Worship means living an authentic sacrificial life in response to Christ's life and sacrifice.**

Application

So... a couple of things here to discuss. First, does your life exhibit a lifestyle of holy conduct? Would anyone say when they see how you act in your daily life that you look different than non-Christians? How does your conduct look different now than when you came to Christ? What steps are you taking towards Christ and away from the world?

Secondly, does your life exhibit a lifestyle of following after the will of God rather than your own will? Do you make statements concerning your life that you haven't talked to God about such as; I'll never move. I'll never go there? I'll never do that ministry? Does God tell you how it is or do you tell God how it is? Have you abandoned your dreams and goals for God's dreams and goals? Would those who see you the most say that you do what you want to do or what you think God wants you to do?

Conclusion

And lastly, what about corporate worship... we didn't even mention that hardly at all. How are we going to talk about worship and not even mention what we do on Sunday mornings. Well, last week we talked about Biblical teaching and preaching which is a huge portion of what we do on Sunday mornings, right? Also, each week of this series we will touch some element of corporate worship, but we will really hone in on that more when we talk about fellowship and discipleship.

But, let me ask you this? Do you really need me to tell you that singing is a form of worship again? Let me say it this way; when we come together on Sunday's we are going to praise God! We are going to take all of that authentic worship that we've been doing on our own all week and we are going to combine forces to worship together through song, through prayer, through giving, through preaching and teaching, through fellowship, through communion, through baptisms, and through small groups. We will do all of that because worshipping together is what

Church is all about. And, yes, **authentic worship is very important here on Sunday mornings... but how you worship Christ Monday through Saturday is what really matters!** If you truly want to be an authentic worshipper then you have to do it when you aren't with the church. Listen, we depend on Christ in authentic worship because authentic worship is who we are when no one else is around. We are living sacrifices, holy and living in his will! So, die to yourself, live for his will, be holy as he is holy and live lives of authentic worship in response to what Christ has done for you. Remember... **Worship means living an authentic sacrificial life in response to Christ's life and sacrifice.**