

Passionate Worship

Welcome/Prayer

Background

We are implementing a 2020 Vision that will guide our church for the next five years. Simply put, that vision is to be “A Fruitful Congregation for Christ.” We have identified five practices that contribute to a congregation’s fruitfulness: Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity. Since worship is the center of a church’s life and serves as the primary entry into the life of a congregation, we’re going to address the subject of Passionate Worship.

Introduction

According to the dictionary, *worship* is “reverence or adoration given to a divine being.” One Christian writer has described it this way: “Worship is focusing on and responding to God” (Whitney). Our 2020 Vision says that “worship connects people to God and one another.” *Passionate worship* is further defined as “worship that is authentic, alive, creative, and comprehensible, where people experience the life-changing presence of God in the presence of others.”

1. How would you define worship?
2. What makes worship “passionate?”
3. Share about a worship experience when you experienced “the life-changing presence of God in the presence of others.”

Preparation

Read the following text related today’s message:

Exodus 19:14, 16-20a (NLT)

Then Moses came down the mountain and told the people to get ready for worship...On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud appeared on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast was heard. All the people in the camp trembled with fear. Moses led them out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD had come down on it in fire. The smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and all the people trembled violently. The sound of the trumpet became louder and louder. Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder. The LORD came down on the top of Mount Sinai...

Break It Down

In our recent ONEWorship services, we looked at Exodus 40 where we explored how the tabernacle created an environment for passionate worship to be practiced by the Israelites. They experienced “authentic, alive & life-changing” passionate worship as “the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” (Exodus 40:35b NLT). However, the people of Israel were connected with God and with each other through worship much earlier than the

Tabernacle experience. It occurred at the foot of Mount Sinai and is described in Exodus chapter 19 (Exodus 19:14, 16-20a GNT).

From that story recorded in Exodus 19, we can identify four components of passionate worship:

1) Invitation

Moses went up the mountain to meet with God. The LORD called to him from the mountain and told him to say to the Israelites, Jacob's descendants: "You saw what I, the LORD, did to the Egyptians and how I carried you as an eagle carries her young on her wings, and brought you here to me. Now, if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own people. The whole earth is mine, but you will be my chosen people, a people dedicated to me alone, and you will serve me as priests...I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking... (Exodus 19:3-6, 9a GNT)

Worship comes at God's initiative, not our own.

"The Lord called from the mountain....I will come to you." Scripture tells of a God who reaches down, touches persons' lives, and invites them to enter into a relationship – regardless of their disposition toward Him. As Jesus told His disciples, "You didn't choose me. I chose you." (John 15:16a NLT)

1. What can we learn about the character of God by understanding that God chooses us?

A common element of many worship services is the "invocation." The truth of the matter is: we don't need to "invoke" God's presence. He is already here and "invites" us to join Him. God wants to be here, and He desires for us to join Him through worship.

2. How does the fact that God invites us to worship affect our behavior and mindset about worship?

We have the privilege of meeting, not with a powerful earthly ruler, but the One who rules and reigns over all that is. How awesome that He wants to connect with us through worship.

2) Preparation

After God issued the invitation to meet Him on the mountain, He gave these instructions

"The LORD said to [Moses], 'Go to the people and tell them to spend today and tomorrow purifying themselves for worship. They must wash their clothes and be ready the day after tomorrow.'" (Exodus 19:10-11a GNT)

“Then Moses came down the mountain and told the people to get ready for worship. So they washed their clothes, and Moses told them, ‘Be ready by the day after tomorrow...’” (Exodus 19:14-15a)

An audience with God does not come without some special preparation.

1. Describe some events/occasions that we spend a great deal of time and effort preparing for.
2. How do you prepare for worship? Do you do anything different on Saturday night to get ready?

Worship would become more passionately alive and authentic for us if we would take it more seriously and adequately prepare ourselves for the experience. What if on Saturday night, every worshiper at Lynn Haven read some Scripture (maybe the sermon text), spent some time in prayer for the services, got things ready to go and went to bed early? What if on Sunday morning, we got here early, took time to “center in” on God, paused to pray for ourselves and others, and entered this room with a “holy expectancy” believing God was going to show up?

3. Discuss how you might worship differently if you had prepared for worship.
4. Why is it important to purify ourselves before approaching God?

Most of the Israelites’ preparation involved external cleansing (i.e. washed their clothing). It’s why Christians have traditionally put on their “Sunday go to meeting clothes.” But their outward appearance represented a desired inward condition of holiness. In v. 6 God said He wanted them to be “my kingdom of priests, my *holy* nation.” While we may put a premium on looking good on the outside, God is more concerned about what we look like on the inside.

“If we confess our sins to [God], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” (1 John 1:9 NLT). In preparation for worship, we need to purify ourselves from all that would defile us; which, of course, is sin. God cleanses us when we confess our sins to Him.

3) Revelation

“Moses led [the people] out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.” (Exodus 19:17 GNT)

The ultimate goal of worship is to meet God.

So worship is not about you and what you like or don’t like. It is not about the music or the sermon. Ultimately worship is all about God and having the incredible privilege to meet with Him.

1. What are some ways in which God reveals Himself through worship?

Discussion Guide: *Passionate Worship*, a message from Lynn Haven United Methodist Church

2. Describe ways in which you've experienced God's power and presence in worship.

Worship always provides God the opportunity to speak to us and reveal Himself to us.

That's exactly what happened in Exodus 19. God's appearance at Sinai showed the Israelites something about His character.

3. Look at Exodus 19:16-19 and describe how each earthly event represented a facet of God's character. For example, the cloud and smoke showed that God is a mysterious, spiritual being.

Through worship, we discover who God is and how we are to relate to Him. God's self-revelation always calls for a response.

4) Participation

Then all the people answered together, "We will do everything that the LORD has said," and Moses reported this to the LORD. (Exodus 19:8 GNT)

A genuine worship experience is never complete until we respond.

For the Israelites, that response took the form of a promise to obey God's commands. For us, that response may take a variety of forms, but it always requires us to do something (e.g. repent, request healing/deliverance, tell others, more worship).

1. What does it mean when we say that worship is not a spectator sport? How does this affect how we worship?
2. What keeps people from truly passionate worship?

Conclusion

Remember our earlier definition? → "Worship is focusing on & responding to God."

1. What is ONE thing you can do to be better prepared to worship each week?
2. Commit to be willing to respond however God directs you in worship.

Close In Prayer

Pray that we might experience truly passionate worship at Lynn Haven.