

Bethel Bible Study March 20, 2014

We Gather Together – Psalm 100

You've heard this: A seeker is invited to church but politely declines: "I can worship just as well while working in my garden or away at the lake. I don't need to be sitting in some expensive church sanctuary." Or – on a special day, a family has out-of-town relatives visit – they decide that it is more important to do a family outing (Disneyland/Hollywood, etc) than to bring them to share in worship.

It's a common notion: worship, even religious faith itself, is a personal and private matter. Certainly worship must come from one's own heart, and anyone can praise God in solitude. But we are taught that God is pleased by worship that occurs together, in community. Any family has a meaningful place to gather – perhaps a traditional spot, such as at the dinner table, or around the Christmas tree. God's family is no different.

Discussion and Reflection:

Describe a worship service that was particularly meaningful to you. Try to get beyond features of "worship style" and talk about why that time touched you deeply.

What are the most important aspects of worship for you?

Read Psalm 100, which is a true "community" psalm.

1. What evidence do we find that this psalm encourages group worship rather than only individual worship?
2. Who or what encourages you to gather with other believers in worship?
3. Where is the focus of this psalm?
4. In this psalm, what are the worshipers urged to do? (Look for specific commands or instructions.)

5. The “gates” and the “courts” of verse 4 refer to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. Why is it important to have a special place of worship?
6. For what reasons are we to ‘enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise’ (vv. 4-5)?
7. Why are thanks and praise essential elements of worship?
8. How can corporate worship help our personal worship when we don’t feel particularly thankful or full of praise?
9. Why do you think some Christians avoid corporate worship?
10. The psalms are actually songs, although the tunes are lost to us. How do the songs you sing tell of God’s love and faithfulness?
11. What story of God’s love and faithfulness can you share, perhaps from your own family or personal history?
12. What opportunities do you have this week to join in corporate worship?
13. How will you take advantage of these opportunities, and how will you encourage others to do the same?

Pray: That your/our experiences of community worship will be marked with joy and be full of the welcoming and energizing Spirit of God!

Now or later:

*Continuing your thoughts from #11 – write a psalm which tells a story of the Lord’s goodness in your life, the life of your family, your church, or someone else you know. Let’s come back together and share these, making it a time of mutual encouragement and corporate praise!*