
WORSHIP: GOD TRANSFORMS

Part 1 of Doctrine

Pastor Mark Driscoll | June 15, 2008

WORSHIP: GOD TRANSFORMS

Lecture number eleven, we're gonna deal with the doctrine of worship, how God transforms us. Now, first let me define worship. Worship is not a style of music. Worship is not a meeting in a church. Worship is not something that happens on Sunday. Worship is not something that starts and stops. And worship is not something that just Christians do, non-Christians do it as well.

Worship is giving ourselves away, pouring ourselves out to the glory, the good of someone or something. Here's why we worship: We're image bearers of God. The Father, Son, and Spirit—Harold Best says this well. He's got a great book called *Unceasing Worship*, and he talks about how the Trinity is a worshipping community, that the Father, Son, and Spirit are continually pouring themselves out in love, service, adoration, and affection, continually. To be an image bearer of God is to be a worshiper. We all worship. We all love, serve, pour ourselves out unceasingly to the glory of someone or something.

The problem is, after the Fall, we worship people, things, experiences, other than God. The Bible calls that idolatry. Idolatry is one of the mega-themes of your Bible. Sometimes when people think of idolatry, all they think is, "Oh, you put a statue on your mantle, you bow down to it. That's idolatry. I don't have a statue, I'm not an idolater." Well, maybe yours plugs in, and it's not on the mantle, it's next to the mantle, and it consumes three to four hours of your day like the average American. You're making a sacrifice of your health and your time and your talent and your treasure. You can worship television, sex, money, fame, power, relationships, children. You can worship anything and everything. And it's idolatry. It's pouring yourself out, giving yourself to someone or something other than God.

Now let me define this for you, Romans 11:36–12:1, Paul says this, "To him," that's God, "be the glory," that means he's preeminent. "Forever. Amen. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

There we see the definition of worship as two components. Worship is two things: Someone or something is in a position of glory, it's preeminent, prominent, most important. It's the source of your joy. It's your highest treasure, your deepest longing, your identity. And sacrifice, we make sacrifices. We only have so much time, so much money, so much energy, so we make sacrifices for that which we hold in the position of glory. That's worship. That's worship.

Everything's a worship issue. This will blow your mind. If you come in to Mars Hill and get familiar with how we do counseling, it will blow your mind. If you go to someone who's not a Christian, they'll look at the behavior and tell you what to do to change your behavior. It's behavior modification. We believe every issue is a worship issue. Every issue is a worship issue. It's worship or idolatry.

Martin Luther says it right. In the Ten Commandments, the first two commandments are these: There's one God, you worship him alone. Luther says rightly, "If you obey the first two commandments, you don't break the rest." You know what adultery is? Treating sex as god and worshipping sex. It's a worship issue. Do you know what coveting is? Treating possessions as god and worshipping possessions. Do you know what lying is? Treating your image and reputation as god and lying, so that people think that you're better than you are.

Those of you who eat too much, it's a worship issue. Paul says your God is your stomach. Those of you who drink too much, your problem is not alcohol, it's idolatry. When you take the bottle, you decide that this will be your savior. You're depressed? This will help. You can't sleep? This will help. You're angry? This will help. You're stressed out? This will help. Here's my God, here's my savior. You sacrifice money to buy it, health to drink it, and life. You offer your body as a living sacrifice.

I had this conversation not long ago, I have it all the time. Young woman comes up to me, it's a typical case, happens all the time. "Pastor Mark, I'm dating a non-Christian, I'm a Christian, but I really love him and I want him to meet Jesus. Is this not okay?" "Are you sleeping with him?" "Yeah." "I thought you were a Christian." "Oh, I am, I love Jesus." "No, you don't." See, Jesus isn't in the position of glory, the boy is, and when you lay down on the bed, you're offering your body as a living sacrifice. Fornication is an act of worship. Adultery is an act of worship; it's an act of idolatry.

Our issues are worship issues. We worship our way into sin, we worship our way out of sin. Behavior modification, it doesn't get to the root issue. Let's say pride is your god, and you have a short temper, and so you want to get behavior modification so that you don't lose your temper, so that everyone will think you're a good person. You might not get angry anymore, but you're still an idolater. It's all about you and your glory, and it's not about God and his glory.

This changes everything, doesn't it? This changes everything. And what tends to happen is idolatry is where we take a good thing and we make it a god thing. Food's not bad, but it becomes an ultimate thing. If you're over twenty-one, in moderation, drinking is not a sin, but it becomes a Lord, it rules. It's not a sin to want a relationship, but to compromise your standards and integrity to be in one means that you worship someone other than Jesus to meet your emotional requirements and your desire to not be alone.

"The opposite of Christianity," Peter Kreeft, a philosopher, says rightly, "is not atheism but idolatry." Paul says this same thing in Romans 1:25, "They exchanged 'the truth for the lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator God, who is forever praised, Amen.'"

We're all worshipers, we either worship Creator or creation. We worship God and enjoy food and relationships and work and pets and the environment and intimacy with our spouse. Or we have a pagan inversion; we worship money and food and power and sex and marriage and relationships, and then like pagans, we want to manipulate God, so that he will give us our real god. "So God, I will tithe, I will pray, I will do something to manipulate you and make you give me what I ultimately want and if you don't give me what I ultimately want, then

I will deny there is a God. I will renounce this God. I will turn my back on God. I'll go get a new religion."

That's what people do. They'll say things like, "I tried God, and it didn't work. I had cancer and he didn't heal me." So for you, glory, that which is most important is health, not God. You worship health. Some people say, "I didn't have any money, I came to church, it didn't work. God didn't give me money." Then your god is mammon. Jesus says that the god of money is mammon.

One-third of all children are aborted, you know what that is? That's the worship of a false god that the Old Testament calls Molech. We read the Bible, we say, "How primitive! They sacrifice their own children." We do, far more than they, because we worship sex, we worship self, we worship independence. And children, they take away our independence. They impinge on our self, they take time and money, and if we worship ourselves and we see a child as an inconvenience or an expense, then we have to have a worship act whereby we murder our own child, so that we can worship ourselves.

Our culture is pagan to the core. Our culture couldn't be any more pagan. Our culture is committed to sex and power and fame and status and money and identity and pleasure and we use people, we don't love them. We use God, we don't love him. And some of us, even our view of Jesus is pagan. "I really want something, and I'll worship Jesus so that he'll give it to me." It's idolatry. It's worship of created things rather than Creator God. It's worship of created things rather than Creator God. I'll say that again, it's the worship of created things rather than the worship of the Creator God.

Let me get real specific, this will be profoundly disturbing. Next time you go to the store, look at the magazines. Every cover is a false gospel enticing pagans to worship creation. Every picture denotes someone's functional view of heaven, and the pages are filled with functional saviors. There's dog heaven, cat heaven, marriage heaven, children heaven, organized home heaven. Car stereo heaven, big flat-screen TV heaven, six-pack abs heaven, cigar heaven, hunting heaven, fishing heaven. Each of those is a sermon in a picture. Here's heaven, not with Jesus, right here right now. Open the pages, here's how to get your functional savior. Here's how to get your functional savior. If you take these principles, obey these steps, you'll get what you want.

Ultimately, it's all about me. Americans, in general, and people in particular, worship themselves. It's all about me. Some of you say, "No, no, no, but I serve other people." So that they will say nice things about you, so that you will feel good about you. It's still all about you, and I can prove it. When they don't say thank you or they're ungrateful, you get angry because they overlooked your glory. We are a twisted, nefarious, selfish bunch.

Martin Luther says, rightly, that sin is the turning in on self. "I worship me. I love me. I live for me." And that's the opposite of Jesus who said, "Love God, love people, as you already love yourself." The last thing you need to know is how to love yourself. It's the only thing you do.

So the root issue in the Christian's life is always a worship issue. At the end of 1 John 5:21, he makes this curious line. It sounds at first like a throw-away statement. He ends his epistle saying, "Keep yourselves from idols." Ultimately, that is the answer. It's the answer to everything.

So I'll close with a few questions. Who or what do you love the most? Meaning if God took that person or thing from you, you would curse him? Mothers, is it your child? "So what, are you telling me not to love my child?" I love my children, I'm not telling you not to love yours, in fact, you should. But when you make your child your idol, the source of your joy, your identity, you'll ruin the child.

Who or what do you love the most? I've met people, if they lose their job, their house, their car, their spouse, their pet, they hate God, because those things were in the position of glory and not him.

Number two, what are you most afraid of? You say, "I'm most afraid I'll be alone." Then relationship is your idol. "I'm most afraid I'll never be a parent." Then children are your idol. "I'm afraid I'll lose my job." Well, then money or status or possessions, that's your idol. "I'm afraid that people will not like me." Well, then, you are your own idol. "I'm afraid that I'll get sick." Then health is your idol.

Number three, what are your functional saviors? What do you use to make your life feel like you're in heaven? Drugs, alcohol, sex, food, money, gambling, entertainment, these are the common ones. "Right now my life feels like hell, I want it to feel like heaven. I don't need Jesus, I need a functional savior, not a savior who can save. I'll sit in the chair, I'll turn on the TV, I'll drink alcohol. I'll eat a bunch of junk food. I'll have sex. I'll masturbate. I'll play video games. I'll surf the Internet. I'll find a functional savior, someone will save me."

You say, "Are these things evil and bad? Are you saying we shouldn't eat, we shouldn't watch TV?" I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the heart must continually be examined. The human heart, one theologian has said rightly, is an idol factory. "Why am I doing this? As an act of worship, to glorify and enjoy God, or am I doing this as an act of idolatry in replacement of God?"

Number four, what do you make sacrifices for? What do you sacrifice your health, your time, your money for? Your family, your income, your intellect, your grade point average, your vocational upward mobility? Are you killing yourself so you can get a nicer car and a nicer house than other people so that you will have status and prestige?

Number five, what do you consider your mediators between you and God? What brings you closer to God? It better be Jesus. I've had some people say, "Well, we have to sing these songs 'cause they make me closer to God." No, they don't. There's one mediator between you and God: Jesus, not the song. There may be songs that you like more than others, that's fine, but it's not that these songs make you closer to God than these songs.

And number six: What is your actual, functional, practical view of heaven? Is it getting a new house? Is it getting married? Is it having kids? Is it paying off your credit card debt? Is it having enough money in the bank that you don't have to stress out? Is that your picture of heaven? Is your picture of heaven Jesus, being with him forever, enjoying him forever? Be satisfied in him forever? Is Jesus enough for you? If not, you are prone to idolatry that will lead you into sin, and sin only leads to death.

And here's why I tell you this, the lie of idolatry is that you'll be happy, and the only people that are happy are those who are worshipers of, satisfied in, Jesus alone, sick or healthy, rich or poor, successful or failure, loved or alone, living or dying. Those alone are the people that are truly happy, and I just want you to be happy. True worshipers are happy. Everyone else is ultimately miserable.

Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.

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