



HIGHER

Sermon Growth Guide

April 30, 2023
Make Much of God



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Higher - "Make Much of God"

1 Chronicles 15:1-3, 11-16

Key Verse: 1 Chronicles 15:13 "It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way."

Big Idea: We are to worship God as He has prescribed.

Foundations

This week, as we continue to focus on lifting God **Higher**, we look at the way God desires for us to worship Him.

As the people of God, we are invited into the worship of the Triune God. What a gift and privilege! As His sons and daughters, we receive a blessing as we gather to ascribe to Him the glory that He is due. Because the blessing is so real and tangible, we often fall into the trap of thinking that worship is more about what we might get out of it, rather than what we put into it. Nevertheless, the Lord has made it clear that when it comes to worship, we are to worship Him as He demands and delights.

Last week in 1 Chronicles 13, we witnessed the serious consequence of Uzzah losing his life after the holiness of God was mishandled in a mega way. This week in chapter 15, we find David and the consecrated priests returning to a prescribed way of worshiping God outlined in His word. In doing so, God gets the glory as His chosen people humbly and rightly return to a posture of humility and fear.

Jesus would later say in John 4 that "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." As God's chosen people who are called to love Him with all that we are, we must heed the manner in which He requires to be worshiped.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read 1 Chronicles 15:1-3 and 11-16.

What was it that caused David to return to a prescribed way of handling the ark of the Lord?

What might you say is the tone of this passage?

Applying God's Word

How might you evaluate your current posture toward worship?

What have you heard yourself say about corporate worship as you enter into it (or leave from it)?

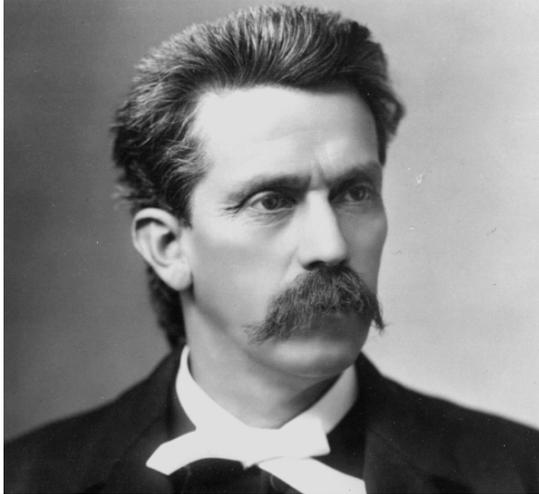
Where might God be calling you to return to a more "prescribed" way of worshiping Him?

Witnessing God's Word

What in your calendar needs to shift in order to prioritize worship?

Take action and share what you do with your Life Group and/or family this week.

So, last week we noticed a problem. We might be missing something. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We might be missing a healthy, constructive, motivating fear of the Lord. We may be too familiar with God in our times. This picture is of Henry Gage.



I'll give you a minute to let the mustache envy subside. The church planter, Sheldon Jackson, secured Henry as our founding pastor in 1871. If Henry walked into our place today, what would he say? In a lot of ways, we'd be singing the same song. Gage would find a church devoted to the authority of the Word of God, lifting up the name of Jesus, promoting the gospel in this city just as he did—convinced that whatever the citizens of Colorado Springs are searching for, what they need is Jesus. We'd be on the same page. But one thing would shock him. In his day, Sunday was for one thing and one thing only.

This month was the 50th anniversary of the cell phone. (Pictured is Martin Cooper, the father of cell phones, shown with a DynaTAC prototype.)



Like every technological advance, people were buzzing. With this much free time on our hands, think of how much time we will have with our families, with our friends—to invest in our spiritual lives! How's that going? Christians who once took a full sabbath day on Sunday every week to attend to the things of God struggle to make it to church once or twice a month. "I don't have a full day for God every week, are you kidding?" We don't have a day for God. We don't have a morning for God. We don't even have an hour for God, in a week. Have we possibly forgotten that the One Jesus calls us into relationship with is the Lord God Almighty?

Last week, we studied a really hard passage, when Uzzah touched the ark and fell down dead. Three months later, David is ready to try again. He was trying to get God to do what he wanted, but now he's ready to try to do what God wants. "After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said, 'No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the Lord chose them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever'" (1 Chronicles 15:1-2). David knew, in the fear of the Lord, that to honor God we need to honor God in God's way. God tells us how to worship and devote ourselves to Him. You know this quadrilateral: you can do the wrong thing the wrong way; you can do the wrong thing the right way; you can do the right thing the wrong way; (I have seen all of these play out in churches by the way); or, finally, you can do the right thing the right way.

"Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. He said to them, 'You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it'" (1 Chronicles 15:11-12). This isn't going to be a military parade or a political exercise. This is going to be worship, in Spirit and in truth. This is going to be the people of God honoring God in the way God demands—and delights—to be honored. "The last time, you blew it," says David. "It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way" (1 Chronicles 15:13). If I'm a Levite, I'm thinking, "Yeah, you had something to do

with that, boss!” Nevertheless, God outlined how the ark was to be moved. It’s in Exodus 25. It’s in Numbers 4, Deuteronomy, Joshua—if you want to know, you can know. God told you. If you happen to find the ark by the way, remember this! Did you want to know? That’s the question. Do you care what God wants? That sounds harsh, but honestly. Do you? Do I?

One more step, then we’ll get to that. “So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the Lord” (1 Chronicles 15:14-15). That’s what I wanted to get to, the Word of the Lord. That’s what I wanted you to see. They inquired of the Word of the Lord. They searched the Scriptures. They, finally, took an interest in what God said. A little late, particularly for Uzzah. But instead of what seemed right, what pleased them, what seemed like a good idea to the crowd, they went to the Word of God, and asked, and submitted, and took it seriously. They consecrated themselves. That means they took some time, they made some intentional sacrifices, they changed their patterns of behavior. Whatever was on their calendar got cleared off. Why? To honor God.

In different times we emphasize different things about God’s character. For a long time now, it has been important to emphasize how familiar we can be with God. God is not a terror! God loves you, more than you will ever know. That is true. It is also true that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It might just help us resist the trends and currents of culture that are pulling us away from God. Sabbath is gone, isn’t it? I remember when Albertsons was closed on Sundays, the grocery store, before 7-11 and Loaf ‘n Jug. Everything was closed. Sunday was a different kind of day. One Sunday recently I bumped into a member who works at REI and she had to take a shift on a Sunday. She said, “Yeah, I never go shopping on Sunday. I just hate to think I made all those people work!” But there we both were on a Sunday afternoon. Everything used to stop on Sundays. Now we have a postal worker going to the Supreme Court just to retain the right to request that day off. Sabbath has disappeared from our culture, but it doesn’t have to disappear from your life. Recent articles in the *New York Times*

have secular New Yorkers appealing for the return of Sabbath—not to honor God! Just to have a day to breathe. To rest. God appointed the seventh day for rest and give the day to Him. It’s the fourth commandment! One of the Big Ten! It might be gone from culture, but it can return to your life with a little effort. Our denomination just printed a paper on Sabbath that one of our elders, Heather Bauman, contributed to. You might pick that up or pick up a book like John Mark Comer’s *Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* and block off a day. Not just a day to rest, but a day to honor and worship the Lord. Presbyterians used to take this very seriously, almost to a fault. We can pick it up a bit, I think. See, it is actually incredibly good for you to practice sabbath, and for your family, and for the poor and unjustly treated, and for the earth itself in fact. Make much of God. Lift him **Higher**.

Worship the Lord. God, who calls us to worship Him also tells us how to worship. We worship the Lord as the Lord has prescribed. Do the right thing the right way, that’s what we are after. David and the Levites opened the Bible to see how to honor and worship God in bringing the ark to the holy city. When it comes to worship, we worship the Lord as the Lord demands and delights. God is the audience. You are not the audience. What we do up front is not to entertain and delight you. God is the audience, and we are all together here to worship Him. That is so important to know. I hear all the time, “I just didn’t get a lot out of that worship service.” Or, more positively, “Thanks for that, I got a lot out of that.” I’m glad. But, do you know what? It wasn’t for you. It was for God! I’m more interested in what you put into it than what you got out of it. This is not a show. This is not competition for your entertainment dollars or attention. This is a gathering of the people of God, saved by Jesus and called by His Name, adopted for salvation and marked with the Holy Spirit, who have come to give honor and glory and adoration to the one true God—one hour out of 168. God is the audience. And God tell us how to worship Him, if we care to know.

I want you to know that every service of worship taken up here in this church is carefully, thoughtfully, and creatively designed to honor God and glorify His Name. Worship as God demands is worship in which God delights. In both sides of the house, we honor the Lord. I can’t go as deeply into this as I do in classes or with elders and staff, but

let me scratch the surface. First of all, does the Lord demand pews or chairs? Does God prescribe stained glass or LED walls? Must there be an organ or a guitar, a drum set or trumpet? The only thing God demands in these respects is that we are authentic and creative. I want you to understand with confidence that whether you walk into the Sanctuary or the Worship Center at First Pres, you are walking into a service designed to honor God as God delights.

But there are things to watch for, biblical elements to worship. What do we watch for then? There is a call to worship—this hour is for the glory of the Lord. Must that be recited or can it be sung? Doesn't matter, but we are called to worship. There is adoration in the presence of God. We lift up the Lord. There is acknowledgement of sin in the presence of the holy One, and there is forgiveness. Is this recited or sung? Doesn't matter. Only that it is done. There is reading of the Word of God, and an attempt at understanding and applying it. There are sacraments. There is a devotion, a consecration of ourselves through offering what God has given us. There are prayers for the church and for the world, and there is a sending out again on mission to glorify God in this lost planet. This is the shape. By the way, I'm not adding more guilt here, but when you come in late or you leave early, you cut this whole rhythm short—you miss something. Also, when you try to do this on your own through your phone or laptop, you miss something! I know some of you are not healthy enough to gather, but some of you are taking a sugary substitute for gathering. You miss something.

"I didn't get much out of that." That comment requires two answers. One, I don't care. That's not nice. Let me workshop that. I do care, but it wasn't for you; it was for God. But, two, yes you did. Yes, you did get something out of it. Every time we gather we are fed. Every time we glorify God our lives are transformed. The hour of worship shapes and nourishes us—God designed it this way. It is a blessing to bless God. When God is glorified, lives are transformed. You did get something out of it. Like a plant that felt the sun and drew nutrients from the soil and water, you may hardly notice it at all. Sometimes we walk out of a service of worship and say, "Whoa! That changed me." Most times we hardly notice it at all, but it did its work. The ordinary means of grace nourished and shaped our souls more after the likeness of Christ.

The worship the Lord demands, the worship the Lord delights in, is worship as the Lord has outlined in His Word and over which He presides by His Spirit. Jesus said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). "Well, you make it sound like I have to go to church to worship and the only place worship happens is within these walls." No. Actually, you need to learn to worship with your whole life wherever you are. Not on this mountain or that mountain, as Jesus said, but in Spirit and in truth. Worship with your whole life wherever you are. But you learn it here, together with the Body in the gathering of worship. You learn it here and we practice it together. How can we lift God higher? Change your calendar. Consecrate yourselves. Change your calendar, right now. Make your next appointment to meet with Jesus, and worship as the God who is worthy of worship demands and delights. Make much of God.