

Sunday 11th October – Colossians 3:15-17 ‘Homemade WORSHIP’

Everybody worships. That’s just a fact. We human beings are made for it. The word means ‘worth-ship’ – in other words, giving honour and worth to something or someone. And that’s something we can’t help doing. There are levels, of course – you might *love* peanut butter but you probably don’t fall on your knees and bow in front of your jar of Sunpat every morning. At least I hope you don’t, or lockdown is possibly having a bigger effect than you realised.

So when it comes to today’s topic in our season on Homemade Faith, let’s start by recognising that worship is a natural activity. It’s something we do all the time. The question is really – *who or what do you give your greatest honour to?*

In the 30 odd years I’ve been trying to communicate faith to other people in one form or another, I’ve often talked about this subject. And usually my first point would be: worship is not just something you do in a building on a Sunday. But the very fact that you’re watching means that I don’t need to make that point anymore! Here you are, on your sofa or at your kitchen table or propped up by pillows on your bed worshipping God. And that’s good, isn’t it?

The thing about worshipping God is that it’s a whole life activity: we give God honour every day – yes, by telling him that, but also by what we value and how we live. **All activity dedicated to God is worship.**

And in this short passage in the book of Colossians, St Paul gives us some tips as to how we integrate this sense of worship into every part of our lives, how our whole lives, at home or wherever we are, can be worshipful.

And the key point is really **to involve Jesus in whatever you’re doing**. Did you notice that everything he talked about in the passage was ‘of Christ’ – the peace of Christ, the message (or word) of Christ and the name of Christ. If worship is really about bringing God into our everyday, then it follows that we do that ‘in Christ’. And Paul tackles each part of our lives bit by bit – first our hearts, then our mouths and finally our actions.

So firstly, **we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts**. Notice that we don’t *make* it rule, it’s not a technique, we let it rule. Christ has *already* given us his peace – our task, and I know it’s harder than it sounds, is simply to let this peace hold sway. In practice, this means that we keep giving all our anxiety back to God. Our worries can rule us, can’t they? And we have to keep saying to those little thoughts: you don’t rule my life any more. God is in charge, and his peace rules my heart.

Thankfulness also helps – as we looked at a few weeks ago, choosing to focus on the positives, not the negatives in a situation. And that also governs the second tip. **Our mouths are to let the message of Christ flow freely**. And in the verse, we see that that’s partly about sharing God’s truth with each other, that’s partly about thankfulness again, and it’s also about singing.

You probably noticed in this passage that was written about 30 years after the start of the church, even by then they were singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs – i.e. a pretty similar diet to what we have now. In fact today we're copying that example by singing Psalm 23 (that was our first piece of music) as well as another hymn shortly and a couple of 'spiritual songs'. As the old saying goes, if it ain't broke....

Humans have always known how important music was to our wellbeing. And now modern science is proving it – study after study shows that music can reduce stress, and improve our brainpower and memory function. It also alters our mood. A fascinating study in 2009 played short clips of happy or sad music and then people looked at a neutral face. People who'd just listened to the happy music were much more likely to think the face looked happy, people who'd listened to sad music tended to think the face looked sad.

Now think about singing worship to God. How are you likely to see the faces around you after you've lifted your heart in praise? Worship is not just about how it affects your view of God, which is obviously the main point – but it's also about what happens next. You're not likely to spend time elevating your heart to God and then immediately think: 'well, God is great, but the person sitting next to me is a bit of a muppet'. If you elevate your heart to God, you also elevate your heart to the rest of your life and the people around you.

That's why we need to keep music central to our worshipping life. Yes, **it's about all of life – but musical worship remains a critical part of that**. That's why we still play hymns in our services in the church building even though we can't sing them at present. It's also why I'm totally supportive of people worshipping online precisely because singing is so important to our worship!

Finally, worship is about what we do. Peace in our heart, praise on our lips – and **actions in the name of Jesus**. In other words, can Jesus put his name to whatever it is we're doing? I suspect if the first two are going well, the last one is a bit easier. Nevertheless it's a healthy reminder that we're always worshipping. When the music stops, we still keep worshipping – honouring Jesus in the way we live.

So this week, let's keep remembering that we are homemade worshippers, honouring God wherever we are – in our hearts, with our lips and in our lives. And may that be our true and thankful worship. Amen.