

SERMON: *Worship GPS*

Psalm 100

October 20, 2019

**Prayer of Illumination:** May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Have you ever gotten off track, or ended up in the wrong place because you followed your GPS? A couple of weeks ago my husband Tom set off on his motorcycle to do some errands....and about 3 miles down the road he noticed that his GPS still showed him **sitting in the driveway!**

Today, we take GPS or global positioning system for granted. This space-based radio-navigation systems development dates back to the late 1950s soviet launch of Sputnik, and the first launch of American satellites used for navigation. GPS helps us find our way.

Our theme today is **Worship** GPS, as we continue our series based on Phil Maynard's book *SHIFT: Helping Congregations Back Into The Game Of Effective Ministry*.

Worship gives us guidance for life....

Our scripture this morning, Psalm 100, calls all the earth to worship God. In ancient times, it may have been sung at the Festival of Booths – at harvest time, and was also used as a processional into the temple. Professor Rolf Jacobson, an authority on the Psalms who teaches at Luther Seminary, says Psalm 100 is a typical hymn of praise, recognizable by its recurring calls to praise and reasons to praise God.<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 100 contains 7 calls to praise – calling people to: make a joyful noise, worship, come, know – meaning both intellectual knowledge and moral obedience, enter, give thanks, and bless.<sup>2</sup> The psalm lists two reasons why we worship:

- 1) God made us and we belong to God as God's people, and
- 2) The Lord is good – God's love is steadfast and faithful to all generations.

This psalm calls for the community to gather at the sanctuary for worship.

Jacobson says that when we give ourselves to God fully in praise – it is a way of being in relationship with God, and of witnessing to our neighbors who God is and what God has done.<sup>3</sup>

*SHIFT* author, Phil Maynard, says worship gives us:

- an opportunity to experience the presence of God
- the opportunity to invite people into the journey of discipleship
- time to engage in a process of personal transformation

<sup>1</sup> Rolf Jacobson, *Commentary on Preaching Series in Psalms*, workingpreacher.org, June 11, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Beverly Gaventa and David Petersen, eds, *The New Interpreter's Bible One-volume Commentary*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010, p. 337.

<sup>3</sup> Jacobson, Working Preacher commentary.

- a corporate setting that trains us for worship as a lifestyle
- and, that worship remembers the body of Christ. <sup>4</sup>

And there are *many different* ways to worship. Do you remember our Candy sermon series from last fall – where we looked at 4 different spirituality types?<sup>5</sup>

- **Starbursts** feel God is in scripture and knowable through study. For Starbursts, worship is carefully ordered and on time. Music helps them express our beliefs and prayer is word-based.
- **M&Ms** experience God through hospitality. M&Ms are reflective and feel God’s presence in worship through connecting with others, and less formal prayers.
- **Hershey bars** feel that God is a mysterious being we will never fully know. Worship is about the Holy Spirit and what God is teaching us. They prefer silent prayer and quiet music.

And then

- **Snickers** – for Snickers, worship is about when you go out and do – about serving and putting feet to your prayers. Music is inspirational for Snickers.

These are not just things people LIKE – these are the different ways people worship BEST. The ways they feel more comfortable and engaged – because of their personality. All of these types are RIGHT – and none are any better – they are just different. Knowing this helps us honor and respect our differences and realize that others sitting in our pew may experience worship very differently than we do.

Besides, worship is really not so much about what *we like* - because worship isn’t for us – it’s *for God*. Candler Professor Thomas Long has likened worship to a play or performance.<sup>6</sup> Even though we sit in the pews, we are not the audience – all of us are the actors – every single one of us – and God is the audience.

The point is that worship is for God. All creatures are called, indeed all the earth is called to give God praise and thanks in worship.<sup>7</sup> Worship is the “centerpiece of a Christian community and it impacts every other dimension of ministry – discipleship, hospitality, service and generosity.”<sup>8</sup>

Great worship transforms us and prepares us to live a worshipful life. And, worship is also one of Wesley’s means of grace – a way we receive God’s grace.<sup>9</sup> The English word **worship** comes from

<sup>4</sup> Phil Maynard, *Shift 2.0: Helping congregations Back into the Game of Effective Ministry*, Knoxville, TN: Market Square Publishing Company, 2018, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Brian Gilbert and Dr. Linda Gilbert, *Candy* sermon series.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas G. Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship*, Durham, NC: The Alban Institute, 2001, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *How Shall We Worship?* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Maynard, *Shift: Helping Congregations Back into the Game of Effective Ministry*, Dr. Phil Maynard, 2013, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Andy Langford, *Transitions in Worship*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999, p. 63.

the Old English word *weorthscipe* – which means attributing worth or respect to someone.<sup>10</sup> *Liturgy*, from the Greek *leitourgia*, means the work of the people.<sup>11</sup> So, in worship all of us work to honor and praise God.

Our basic 4-fold pattern of worship is rooted in scripture and in our UM heritage, coming to us from John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists of North America in 1784.<sup>12</sup> Now, we have an entire book of United Methodist Worship to guide us.

I know you are familiar with our 4-fold pattern:

**Entrance and gathering**  
**Proclamation and response**  
**Thanksgiving and communion**  
**Sending forth**

The ENTRANCE/GATHERING might include:

announcements/ private prayer/conversation/ bells, singing, music,  
greeting and hymn, call to worship  
opening prayers/invocation

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE consists of:

prayer for illumination  
scripture  
sermon  
response to the word through hymn or affirmation of faith  
concerns and prayers  
confession, pardon, and peace  
offering

THANKSGIVING

The Lord's Prayer  
Holy Communion

SENDING FORTH

hymn or song  
Benediction - Dismissal with blessing and challenge

Maynard says worship is about giving honor and glory to God, and he encourages churches to adopt a **GPS** focus:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* 3rd Ed, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> White, p 26.

<sup>12</sup> United Methodist Church, *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Maynard, *Shift*, p. 43.

**G – God centered**  
**P – participatory**  
**S – Sensory**

**God-centered** means worship is about what God has done, who God is, what God is saying to us, what God is asking us to do or be, and where God is at work in our world.

**Participatory** – means we focus on engaging people actively in the worship experience, having something to do, some ways to respond to what God is doing in our midst.

**Sensory** – means finding ways to engage the senses, not just the brain. Ways to create visual connections, smells, tastes, and touches that help us engage in the Word.

Can you think of ways our worship is sensory?

dipping our hand in the baptismal font  
being blessed with oil for healing  
passing the peace of God to each other  
kneading some clay into an image  
smelling candles or Easter flowers or palm leaves  
seeing and tasting different kinds of breads like last week  
hearing the hand bells or organ or guitar or drums  
seeing the stained glass windows or beautiful flowers or the cross  
watching a drama acted out  
seeing a banner or a butterfly or flames waving in the air  
feeling gritty ashes on our forehead

God calls us to worship – to make a joyful noise to the Lord as we come into God's presence. Worship as a community is our opportunity to learn and deepen our relationship with God. It is the foundation of our faith and of our lives.

Next week Pastor Rich will preach on just how worship *shifts* from being an event to being our lifestyle.

Worship matters.

Worship is our GPS.

God-centered, Participatory, and Sensory worship will take us deeper on our spiritual journeys, be welcoming to those to whom we are reaching out, *and* we can trust that this GPS will never leave us stranded!

Amen.