

## Passionate Worship – John 4:23-24

We're reversing the order of service this morning, because the topic is worship. The thought being, that worshipping *after* the sermon, will give us a perfect opportunity to apply to apply the sermon. And I think we'll be ready. So let's prepare our hearts and turn in our Bibles to [John 4:23-24](#).

➤ This is the 5<sup>th</sup> message in our **Core Values** series, talking about the qualities and attributes that describe who we are and what we do, at the core. And we're focusing on them, because to the extent we *do*, we will embrace them, and abide by them, and unite around them.

And this week is **passionate worship – in spirit and truth**. Worship, as in heartfelt adoration, affection, and devotion directed to God. In spirit and truth. Summed up with this: *Believing that Jesus deserves our adoration, we join our hearts and live our lives to exalt his name*. Passionately. We worship passionately. Not indifferently. Not apathetically. But zealously. Enthusiastically. Not because we think it's the best way to draw a crowd, but because it's the best way to honor God. As found in the Bible.

6 reasons. We worship passionately for 6 biblical reasons. Starting with God's heart.

### 1. We worship passionately because it's the desire of God's heart (John 4:23-24)

Like an athlete who goes all out for their coach. Or a musician who works hard for their conductor. They expend themselves, and exhaust themselves, and pour themselves out, because their leader desires it.

How much more for God? In worship. [John 4:20](#). Jesus is speaking to the woman at the well, and she says to him:

[20] *Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt Gerizim, in Samaria], but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.* [21] *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*

[22] *You worship what you do not know [because they had rejected all but the first 5 books of the Bible, and even changed them to fit their situation and experience; the very thing people are doing today] You worship what you do not know [you Samaritans]; we [Jews] worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [They were the first of God's chosen people, and from them came the Messiah; Jesus himself].*

[23] *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers [Jew, Gentile, Samaritan, everyone] will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.* (ESV)

The Father is seeking such people to worship him (23b). God is actually looking for worshippers. Revealing a *desire* on his part to be worshipped. A *desire* to be exalted; a *desire* to be magnified. Which would be sinful if he didn't deserve it. But he does. He's God, and he's awesome. The desire of God's heart is that we would worship him. For his glory and our joy.

➤ But notice he's not looking for worshippers on *their* terms, to worship *their* way; but his. He desires worship *in spirit and in truth*. Stated twice. V23 and 24.

*In truth*, as in, based on reality; the biblical record of who he is, what he's done, and what he requires. Not who we *think* he is. Not who we *want* him to be. Not some figment of our imagination based on our sexual preference, or culture, or lifestyle. He desires worship in *truth*. Based on who he *truly* is. The triune God revealed in the Bible. That's *God's* way.

➤ As is, worship *in spirit*. He desires worship *in spirit*. Meaning, from the heart, and regardless of location. [V21](#). *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. There will come a time he said, when location, location, location doesn't matter. A time when the Holy Spirit will indwell every single believer, and they will worship God wherever and whenever they want.*

And we're in it. We're *in* that time. [V23](#). *The hour is coming [Jesus said] and is now here*. Pentecost has happened. The Holy Spirit has been given. And continues to be given every time someone receives Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Enabling them to worship anytime, anyplace, regardless of location.

➤ And do so from the heart. That's the *other* part of *in spirit*. Regardless of location, and from the heart. [V24](#) – *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit*. From their heart to his. Soul to soul. One heart of love to another. One heart of devotion to another. One heart of faithfulness to another. God desires worship from the heart.

Which *naturally* overflows in *passion*. If you truly *love* someone, in your heart of hearts; if you truly *believe* in someone; if you're truly *devoted* to someone; how could you *not* be passionate about them? You see it all the time in people who follow sports teams; they're over the top. Same for political groupies; and their favorite politicians. And performers; from rock stars to movie stars. Passion abounds. Even if it's *not* truth-based. Even if it's *not* soul-to-soul. Even if it's *not* deserved.

How much more with God, for whom it *is*? It *is* in spirit and truth. It *is* worship that's deserved. It *is* legitimately desired.

Our whole life should be one great big worship service. One unbroken, continuous act of glorifying God in all we do. Punctuated with regular times of *corporate* worship. That's the desire of *God's* heart. That we worship him *in spirit and in truth*, passionately.

### 2. We worship passionately because it's the command of God's Word (Ps 95:1-2, 6)

Just like with preaching and prayer, the Bible *commands* our passionate worship. Do you realize that? Heb 12:28 says – *Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe*. Passion. It's commanded.

Or how about **Ps 29:2**? *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness*. The glory of his perfection. A setting that *begs* for passion. Like watching the sun set over the ocean. Or the moon rise over a mountain. Splendor begets passion. And when it comes to God, it's not only warranted and natural, but commanded. Passionate worship is commanded.

Because when you get right down to it, there's no other way to give God *the glory due his name*. (Ps 29:2) Passion is prerequisite. How do you express and declare the goodness and greatness of God Almighty without it? Without enthusiasm. Without zeal. That would be

like telling your wife all the reasons you love her, in a monotone voice. As if you're thoroughly bored and void of feeling. Unfortunately, that describes the worship of far too many. Maybe even you.

➤ Ps 95. Another place we find God's command to worship passionately. Ps 95:6. *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!* [That's passion.] *For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

It's a command, to focus our mind's attention, our heart's affection, and our will's submission on God. And do so from a posture of passion; bowing and kneeling; whether physically or metaphorically. It's a command to worship passionately.

Same in v1-2. *Oh come, let us sing to the LORD* [another form of passionate worship]; *let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!* [Joyful] [2] *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!* Songs of exuberance, and exaltation, and tribute.

Far from expressions of boredom, or indifference, or apathy; those are expressions of passion; and delight; and enthusiasm. Expressions that are commanded.

So we obey. We set aside our inhibitions, and worship passionately because it's the command of God's Word.

### 3. We worship passionately because it's the pattern of God's people (2 Sam 6:14-16)

Like the Apostle John in Revelation 1, who fell to his face in the presence of Jesus. *Overcome* with passion. Or King David in 2 Sam 6, who *danced* before the Lord. Having yearned for the Ark of the Covenant, the focal point of God's presence in those days, he worshipped passionately when it finally happened. He *danced before the Lord* [it says] *with all his might*; leaping and shouting.

Does that mean dancing has to be a part of *our* worship? No. It's not *prescriptive*, but *descriptive*. It's not a command of what *should* happen, but an example of what *did* happen.

➤ But it does set a *pattern* for our worship. A pattern of passion and freedom. To make a joyful noise, lift up our eyes, bow our head, or get on our knees. Passion is the *pattern* of God's people in worship, and we ought to follow it.

But not at the cost of *order* in worship. Where *all things should be done decently and in order* the Bible says. (1 Cor 14:40) That's why we don't dance in the aisles, or wave a bunch of flags, or tap on tambourines. There's *freedom* in our passion, but not at the cost of order.

Or at the expense of *others*. Whatever you do in *your* freedom and passion, be mindful of others; so you don't inhibit *their* passion and freedom. By distracting them, for instance. So that all they see is *you* instead of God. There's *freedom* in our passionate worship, but not at the cost of order, and not at the expense of others.

➤ Having said that, we could do with a little *more* passion and freedom in our worship.

More passion for *God*, and less worry about others. More freedom and less inhibition. It's who we are and what we do.

4. We worship passionately because it's a celebration of God's greatness (Ps 96:1-9) Ps 96:1-9. *Oh sing to the LORD a new song* [that could mean sing an old song in a new way, or with a new passion; or sing a new song altogether]; *sing to the LORD, all the earth!* [2] *Sing to the LORD, bless his name* [as in praise and exalt him]; *tell of his salvation from day to day.* [3] *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*

[4] *For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised* [celebrated]; *he is to be feared above all gods.* [5] *For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* [6] *Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary* [the place of his presence].

[7] *Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!* [8] *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name* [there it is again]; *bring an offering, and come into his courts!* [9] Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; *tremble before him, all the earth!*

➤ If that's not a celebration, I don't know what is. *Sing to the Lord; bless his name*; revere him; *declare his glory*; *ascribe strength*; *bring an offering*; and worship. It's a passionate celebration. And rightly so in light of such greatness. Rightly so in light of such splendor and power and majesty. You couldn't keep a lid on it if you tried.

Which is why passionate worship is often accompanied by clapping, and loud songs of joy, and raising our hands. Like it says in **Ps 47:1** – *Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!* And **Ps 63:4** – *Because your steadfast love is better than life . . . in your name I will lift up my hands.* Physical expressions of passionate celebration.

Does that mean *all* worship has to be loud? Not at all. Do we need to clap and raise our hands during *every* song? No. The Psalms give credence to times of reflection as well. Even silence.

But having received the greatest gift in the world, and having beheld the greatness of God's power and glory – in the Word, and in our lives, and in our church – passionate celebration should be the norm. And it is. It's who we are and what we do.

### 5. We worship passionately because it's a part of our witness (Acts 3:8-10)

Remember the lame beggar we talked about in Courageous Evangelism? The one healed by Peter and John? It says in **Acts 3:8** that – *Leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.*

Why the temple? To worship. That's why Peter and John were there in the first place. It was *the hour of prayer* v1 says. The appointed time for corporate *worship*. So he joined them. He entered the temple *walking and leaping and praising God*. All forms of worship, just like King David. A thousand years before.

*And all the people saw him* [here's the witness part] *walking and praising God* [worshipping], [10] *and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the*

temple, asking for alms [donations]. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (Acts 3:8-10)

His passionate worship was a witness to those around him. One of the ways he conveyed the goodness and greatness of God in his life. One of the ways he conveyed his testimony; God's work in his life.

And the same should be true for us as well. *Worship* should be an ongoing part of our witness. Even at church. Because unbelievers aren't the *only* ones, who need to see and hear about the impact of God's *work* in your life. Believers need to as well. They too need to see God's glory. They too need to be reminded of God's power. They too need to be encouraged.

So we worship passionately because it's a part of our witness; to believers and unbelievers alike.

#### **6. We worship passionately because Jesus is worthy (Col 1:15-20)**

He deserves it. I touched on it at the start, and want to emphasize it at the end. He's *worthy* of our praise. He's *worthy* of our passion. He's *worthy* of our affection and adoration. He's *worthy* of our worship. **(Col 1:15-20)**

After all . . .

[15] *He is the image of the invisible God* [the Bible says], *the firstborn of all creation*. [In other words, he's God in the flesh and owns it all. That alone makes him worthy of our worship.] [16] *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him*. [He made it all, and it's all for his glory.]

[17] *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together*. [He came first, and sustains it all.] [18] *And he is the head of the body, the church* [our leader and authority; the reason we exist]. *He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent*. [He rose again to offer new life, and to be Lord of all; even death.]

[19] *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell* [he's fully divine], [20] *and through him* [God was pleased] *to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross*. [He gave his life to save the world.]

We worship passionately because Jesus is worthy. For all those reasons and more.

➤ And he's going to be the *focus* of our passionate worship for all *eternity*. Just like the angels who worship him passionately right *now*. **(Rev 5:12,14)** In heaven.

*Saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"*

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"*

We worship passionately, and always will, because Jesus is worthy. It's who we are and what we do. So let's stand and get at it.

Prayer – Lord, we're all about worship because we're all about you. And our hearts overflow with passion, to the praise of your glory. Not to us, but to *your* name be the glory. The name of Jesus, in whom we pray, amen.

**You Are Loved**