

Genesis

The Lord is Worthy of Praise
7.2.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 8:20-22

SERMON NOTES:

Introduction

Deconstruction is a popular term today. Many people who once identified as Christians have deconstructed their faith. These are men and women who at one time professed Jesus as Lord, they went to church, they got baptized, but have now walked away from the faith and no longer consider them Christians for one reason or another.

Because this term has received a lot of attention lately, it appears to be a relatively new phenomenon. But the truth is, it's not new at all. People have been walking away from the faith for a long time.

One of the more notable Christian deconstructionists is Oprah Winfrey. She walked away from traditional Christianity nearly 40 years ago. You can go to YouTube and listen to her explain why. She describes being in a church service where the preacher was talking about the attributes of God.

Here's what she said,

Then he said, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." I was caught up in the rapture of that moment until he said, "jealous." And something struck me. I was 27 or 28, and I was thinking God is all-powerful, God is omnipresent, God is . . . also jealous? A jealous God is jealous of me? And something about that didn't feel right in my spirit because I believe that God is love and that God is in all things."

Those who deconstruct their faith do so for a number of reasons. Usually, it's a cherished sin they don't want to give up. But for Oprah, she walked away from the faith because couldn't stomach the idea of a God who demands that we worship Him and is jealous when we don't.

I will give Oprah credit. She was right about one thing: The Lord is jealous for our worship. Listen to these texts.

Ex. 34:14, “for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Deut. 6:13-15, “It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve, and by his name, you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.”

God demands that you and I and Oprah Winfrey give Him all our worship. Otherwise, He becomes jealous and promises to break out in judgment against us.

For the unbeliever, like Oprah Winfrey, the notion that the Lord is jealous for our worship is detestable. But for the Christian, it not only makes sense, but we also rejoice in such truths because we understand, first, that God doesn't get jealous in a sinful way like us. He's not envious. God's jealousy is righteous. His jealousy for worship is like a husband's jealousy for his wife. I would be jealous if I saw my wife kissing another man, and I would be right in feeling that way, because she is giving something to him that only belongs to me. In the same way, when we don't give worship to God, but direct it somewhere else, we are giving something away that only belongs to God, and He does not like that.

Christians understand that God is worthy of worship because of who He is and what He has done.

God deserves worship Because of who God is. His inherent beauty, value, and worth make Him infinitely worthy of our praise. The angels fly in His presence day and night and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Rev. 4:8). If God never did anything on our behalf, He would still be worthy of worship simply because of who He is!

But God has done wonderful things for us. He is to be praised because He is the Creator and Redeemer.

“Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!
4 For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
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” (Psalm 96:3-4).

So, when we hear that God is jealous for worship, we say yes! And so are we! Because He deserves praise, and for Him not to receive it is sin and idolatry and robbing God of His glory. The Lord our God is worthy of worship, and that is the focus of our discussion this morning.

Before we get into our passage, let me bring you back into the story.

Chapter 6: God was grieved by man’s corruption and determined to destroy all mankind. However, He chose Noah and His family for salvation, established a covenant with them, and charged Noah to build an Ark to save them from the worldwide flood.

Chapter 7: Noah’s family entered the Ark, and God destroyed the entire world and everything in it. Water prevailed on the earth for 150 days.

Chapter 8:1-19: The waters abated, and the families on the Ark exited.

Now, Noah’s family is back on dry ground. Let’s see what happens next.

Passage

8:20- “Noah built an altar to the Lord.”

As soon as Noah steps off the boat, he builds an altar. This is the first record of an altar built in Scripture. Cain and Abel made sacrifices, but it says nothing of an altar. Though we’re not told what this altar looked like, keep in mind Moses is the author of this story, and the first readers of the book of Genesis would have been Moses’ contemporaries. When they saw the word altar, they would have thought of Exodus 20:24, which says the altar was to be built from dirt or stones.

Noah built an altar to the Lord, which means he built the altar to worship the Lord. I don't know about you, but if I was stuck on a boat with my family and in-laws for a year, the first thing I'd want to do is have a little me-time. Maybe look for a place to live. Perhaps some food to eat. But not Noah. The first thing Noah does after 12 months on a boat is worship the Lord. He worships the Lord in a very specific way; it says he "took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

What's interesting is that what Noah is doing pre-dates the Law of Moses. That he builds an altar for sacrifice and offers only ceremonially clean animals as burnt offerings to the Lord were prescribed later in the Law, but Noah clearly has already received such instructions for worship. This information was either passed down from Adam or God Himself told Noah how He was to worship Him.

Noah offers an abundance of sacrifices. Some of every clean animal and bird were slaughtered and burned upon the altar. These animals weren't burned alive. They were killed first, their blood was drained, spread upon the altar, and then burned completely. It was a complete offering to the Lord.

By the way, if this strikes you as somewhat strange and disgusting, that's actually not a bad response, because this is what our sin has caused—blood, death, and sacrifice. If this offends you, you will be really offended when you read that the sinless Son of God was offered up to God this way when He died for our sins upon the cross.

In the Law of Moses, a burnt offering meant at least two things 1) it signified complete devotion to the Lord 2) it was a sacrifice of atonement.

Look at how Noah approaches the Lord. He offers this sacrifice saying, "Lord, me and my whole family devote ourselves to you and your service. And, we want to seek your forgiveness for our sins.

What is God's response to Noah's sacrifice?

8:21- "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma."

God didn't literally smell the burning animal carcass. God doesn't have a nose. He's a spirit. He doesn't delight in burning animal flesh. This is anthropomorphic language.

Meaning, this is human language meant to describe God in ways we can understand. It simply means God accepted Noah's sacrifice. God was pleased with Noah's offering.

Because the Lord was pleased, He makes three promises.

The Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Promise #1: God will not destroy the earth like this again.

"I will never again curse the ground because of man."

Some think this refers to Genesis 3, where God cursed the ground because of Adam's sin, but that's not what He refers to here. God is not lifting the curse of sin from the world. He says He will not destroy the world through a flood again. That seems to be what Genesis 9:12-15 is saying.

12 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Furthermore, the language of this text is similar to 6:5-7.

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

In Genesis 6:5-7, the reason God flooded the earth was because of man's wickedness and evil heart. But in our passage, He says, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). So, in one passage, the Lord says I will destroy the earth because of man's sin, but in this passage, He says I will never do that again because man is sinful from his childhood. What's going on here? I think it's simple. The Lord knows this is the way sinful man is. Destroying the earth didn't change his heart. Why do it again?!

Promise #2: I will never again destroy every living creature.

"I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."

This is good news. Do you ever wonder why God tolerates this wicked world? Why doesn't He just destroy everything right now? Because He promised He would never do that again. This shows you how gracious and merciful God is. He will spare the earth until the return of Christ and the establishment of His eternal reign.

In fact, He promised to provide stability for the earth until that time. That's the third promise in our passage.

Promise #3: The Lord will provide a stable earth.

22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

In other words, as long as the earth exists, there will be regular seasons without ceasing or destruction. Instead of destruction, the earth will be blessed with predictable periods of time and weather. That's a big deal considering they just went through a very rainy season.

Our passage highlights worship. And what I want to do at this point is draw out some principles from this text about worship.

A Doctrine of Worship

#1: Worship is a response to the saving grace of God.

Think about this story. Noah gets off the boat, and the first thing he does is build an altar and offer sacrifices to the Lord. Why would he do that before anything else? Because God saved Him! Noah just witnessed the horrific death of every human being in the world besides himself and his family. God killed everyone! But He saved Noah. That alone is reason enough to worship the Lord.

But also consider this? Do you remember why God killed everyone? "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). God killed mankind because we're evil. Don't you think during the 12 months Noah was on the boat, he thought, "I am not perfect. I have evil in my heart. Why would he save me?"

Grace! God saved Noah by His grace. Genesis 6:8 says God decided to destroy everyone, "but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." The Hebrew word for favor is "*hen*." It could also be translated as "grace." Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. In other words, God did not save Noah because Noah was righteous. God saved Noah because God is gracious. And Noah's response to His saving grace was worship.

Friends, do you realize that's why we worship God today? Do you realize that the primary reason we come to this place on Sunday morning is to worship God? And the primary reason we come here to worship God is because He has saved us from His wrath by His grace!

God has forgiven your sins and spared you from His wrath in Hell. Christ has died in your place, and now you are the object of His eternal love and grace.

I love how Journey Worship Co. puts it,

"O praise the Father how He welcomes
All His children He will save
Praise our Lord who condescended
Took on flesh and made a way"

This is why we worship Him!

#2: We worship God because we fear Him.

Another reason Noah immediately worshipped the Lord after exiting the boat was that Noah feared God. How could He not? He just witnessed the Lord kill all mankind and every creature. God spared no one. And Noah's response to such awesome power is fear and worship!

When we enter into the assembly to worship our Lord, we would do well to remember His awesome power. We should magnify His holiness and extol His righteous Name.

Jeremiah 10:7, "Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations. And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You."

#3: God determines how we worship Him.

When Noah approached God in worship, he built an altar and offered sacrifices. I don't know about you, but if I chose how to worship God, I wouldn't slaughter and burn a bunch of animals. So, why would Noah do this? Because this is how God told Noah to worship Him!

We don't get to worship God however we please. We must worship God according to His word and will.

David Peterson defines worship as "an engagement with God on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible."

In other words, we worship God on His terms and in the way He commands. Reformers, like John Calvin, called this the regulative principle. The regulative principle is an extension of Sola Scripture—Scripture Alone. The regulative principle says we must do those things in worship that God has prescribed in His word and nothing more. Calvin said that "God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His word."

Of course, we don't sacrifice animals today because we're not OT Israel, and more importantly, Christ is our final sacrifice. But the NT does give prescriptions for worship.

This is why you see that our services are pretty simple at TJC. We basically do 5 things and it's centered around the word of God. We **1) sing the Word, 2) read the Word, 3)**

pray the Word, 4) preach the Word, and 5) see the Word. We see the Word in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Scripture doesn't tell us we can do whatever we want in a church service. We're not to put on skits or interpretive dance. This isn't a time for Ted Talks or musical performances. We come here to worship the Triune God according to His Word because God determines how we worship Him.

#4: We can't approach God in worship without a sacrifice.

Before we can worship God, our sins have to be forgiven and washed away. This is called atonement.

Noah's sacrifices aren't merely an act of worship. They are sacrifices of atonement. They are offerings designed to pay for his sins.

This highlights another aspect of worship. Not only are prohibited from worshiping God how we please. We cannot approach God directly. We need a mediator. We need a sacrifice for our sins.

This is a major aspect of Christianity that some people don't like. I think many people would prefer we do away with a bloody cross and make the church more about praising God for the earthly blessings He gives and the fact that we get to go to Heaven when we die. But we must understand that Christianity doesn't exist, and worship cannot happen until you believe in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

To approach God in worship, you must be qualified to enter His presence. And the only way one is qualified to enter the presence of God is when their sins are forgiven. Otherwise, you're entering the presence of a God known to kill false worshippers. Furthermore, He is not obligated to accept our praise if we don't trust His Son.

So, for true worship to take place, one must trust in the sacrifice of Christ.

#5: Worship is a celebration of God's promises.

The Lord made significant promises to Noah. He said He would not destroy the earth or mankind again. This too is cause for worship and praise.

When we gather for worship, we do so not only to praise God for His incredible grace. We come to rehearse the promises of God. In doing so, we're worshipping God. Because we're glorifying the God who made such promises.

Application: What can do to make worship more meaningful?

#1: Come prepared to worship.

Morning Devotions

I know it's easy to roll out of bed and come to Sunday worship or wake up and look at social media for an hour while you drink coffee and then head to church. I am not saying that's bad or wrong.

But there is value in coming to the church having already prepared your heart by being in the word and prayer. When you have already praised God at home, it will enhance your experience of worshipping God in the church.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4 that God is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). When you come to church, you will get the truth. But whether or not you worship Him in spirit is on you. By spirit, Jesus means our hearts. Christianity is a heart religion. God is not pleased merely with outward form and ritual. He's after our hearts.

Remember what Jesus said of the Pharisees "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark 7:6). God is concerned that our hearts are in tune with His truth and grace, and one way we can work on that is by devoting ourselves to God in private worship before we come to worship with the church on Sundays.

Reconciliation

Another thing to consider before you come to worship is, "do you need to reconcile with anyone?" This is probably not something we think much about, but Jesus made it very clear that this is important to God.

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

In other words, if you are at odds with someone, before you worship God, make sure you reconcile with that person. Jesus' point is that you can't worship and profess your love for God when you still have anger and resentment in your heart towards someone else.

Seek your joy in worship.

This is another counter-intuitive idea, but when you come to worship the Lord, you should seek your joy in the Lord. I know we have talked about this before, but it's something we need to constantly revisit lest we turn worship into mere duty. Worship is a duty we owe to God, but if worship is only a duty, it does not honor the Lord.

The best illustration of this comes from John Piper: "If I go to my wife and bring her flowers, and she asks why I did that, and I say because I am your husband, it's my duty. That doesn't honor her. But if I give flowers to my wife and she asks why I did that, I say because I love you, and nothing brings me more joy than to honor you as my cherished wife. That brings her honor, and it brings me joy. I enjoy making much of her, and she is honored when I do so."

Some people think seeking our joy in worship is selfish and self-seeking, and even sinful. I was listening to a podcast the other, and the host told a worship team, if what you are doing in worship makes you happy, it's probably wrong. The point he was trying to make was that worship is about God, not us. Which I agree with. Worship is about God. But I would argue with you this, if you're not happy in worship, you are not worshipping God. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. God wants you to enjoy Him. In fact, God is honored when we enjoy Him.

Go back to that illustration with the flowers. If I give my wife the flowers, when I tell her the reason I am giving her flowers is that it makes me happy to do so, she's not going to say, "Well...I guess it's all about your happiness, isn't it?" No, it honors her.

In the same way, God isn't upset when you enjoy singing His praise. That's what He wants, because we were made to praise what we enjoy. And God wants you to find your highest satisfaction and joy in Him.

#3: Worship God in all of life.

Worship cannot be restricted to what we do on Sunday mornings. Worshipping with the church is essential. We can't honor the Lord if we don't worship Him with the gathered church. But worship doesn't just happen on Sunday mornings. Worship is all of life.

Paul said, "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." (Romans 12:1).

How do we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God? I think the next verse answers that question.

Verse 2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

We offer ourselves as living sacrifices by not being like the world, but living transformed lives for Christ in everything we do. Whether you eat or drink, do everything for the glory of God. Whether raising children, running a company, working on the factory line, sitting at your computer, or having fun with friends, do everything for God's glory and praise. Make your life a living testimony of thankfulness and praise to the living God.

REVIEW:

- ❖ What does it mean that God is jealous? What is he jealous for?
- ❖ What did God promise after Noah worshipped him? (3 Promises)
- ❖ What is the significance of worship in this passage?

REFLECT:

- ❖ How do we see worship reflected in these verses?

RESPOND:

- ❖ When was the last time you genuinely responded in worship to God's promises?
- ❖ How can you prepare yourself to worship God in a worthy manner?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Genesis 8:21 - "And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of

man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.”

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Psalm 96:3-4 - “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.”

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Administrative Pastor - **Tim Lance**
- ❖ Ministry - **Deacons**
- ❖ **Pray for our long-term families:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks (departing in October)
- ❖ **Pray for our mid-term sent ones:**
 - Abby & Katherine (gap year - returning in August)
 - Kaesi (gap year - departing in August)
- ❖ Pray for our short-term teams:
 - Southeast Asia team departed on June 23
 - Central Asia team departs in September
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Tunisian Arab in Germany
- ❖ **Population in country:** 94,000
 - **Global population:** 11,935,500
 - **Christian Adherent:** 0.2%
 - **Evangelical:** 0.05%
 - **Primary Religion:** Islam
 - **Primary Language:** Arabic, Tunisian Spoken
 - **Summary:** Tunisia is a small nation in northwestern Africa. The vast majority of the Tunisian people consider themselves Sunni Muslims. The region now called Tunisia was conquered by Arab Muslims in the late seventh century. Over the centuries, the formerly Christian population converted to Islam. Tunisia gained its independence from France in 1956. Many Tunisian Arabs have left their homeland in search of better economic opportunities. Some of these Tunisians now live in Germany. Tunisians often work jobs in sanitation, transportation, manufacturing and construction that Germans prefer not to fill.
 - **Prayer Focus:** A tiny fraction of German Tunisian Arabs are believers. Pray these believers would share their faith and grow in their knowledge of the word. Pray that the Lord would open the hearts of the Tunisian Arabs in

Germany to hear and understand the gospel. Ask the Lord to send workers to the Tunisians in Germany. Pray that the Lord would make Germany an incubator for a movement to Christ among Tunisians everywhere.

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