



ARNA PENTECOST PODCAST 2023

The Spirit's role in worship

Day 4 | You are called to be priest who offers worship with sacrifices which are acceptable to God.

Focus/Intro | 1 min | Our hearts are still burning with the flame of the Spirit, being poured out at Pentecost. Today, we consider how we can ensure the worship we offer is acceptable to God.

Let us quieten our body and still our mind, so we may more easily discern the presence of the Holy Spirit within our heart.

Pause

Scripture | Romans 12:1-2

When we turn to God's Word, we see the Apostle Paul pleading with the believers in Rome to offer the kind of worship that is acceptable to God,

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2)

It sometimes surprises Christians to learn that there is worship that is not accepted by God.

To ensure we offer worship that pleases God, we need to reflect on what worship actually is.

Reflection |

Over the last few days, we have remembered that because of Jesus Christ's redeeming work and ongoing intercession, we are invited to draw near in worship to our Heavenly Father.

But if we want to offer worship which is acceptable to God, when we approach our Father, we must do so *on His terms*.

The only worship acceptable to God comes from a genuine, thankful heart, which is vitally united to the Spirit of God.

As we worship, we know God's eyes penetrate right into our heart (1 Samuel 16:7), so we must give consideration to our hidden attitudes and motivations.

Because true worship of God, through the Spirit of God, must approach God on his terms, any attempt to worship God the Father that is based on *our* traditions, or *our* culture or *our* personal preferences – is unacceptable. This kind of worship arises from a heart that does not seek God *on His terms*.

Paul's words we heard earlier reminded us that we are not to copy or be shaped by the patterns, behaviours or customs of this world. Rather, we are to let the Spirit of God within us transform our lives and our thinking so we behave like the brand new children of God He created us to be.

Too often, however, we allow our culture and our personal preferences to shape how we worship the Lord. What are two examples? When was the last time you heard people shouting their praises to God in church or in their private worship time?

How often do people raise their arms in worship?

Or, when was the last time you heard a message in tongues proclaimed, with the interpretation following?

Each of these worship practices are clearly described throughout the Scriptures.

However, because our Australian Anglican church culture has determined such practices are not appropriate when the community of God gathers together, they are shunned or ignored.

However, if we were to travel to experience worship in other cultures, we would see that loud expressions of praise and worship, flags being flown, handkerchiefs being waved, dancing occurring – all of these are regarded as totally normal.

If we want our worship to be shaped by both the spirit and the truth, we should acknowledge that worship described in the Bible is far more exuberant than our common Sunday service!

For example, more than 30 times in the Psalms we are urged to, shout to the Lord in exuberant praise. (Psalm 66:1)

While shouting during worship would be a radical step for many worshippers, we must acknowledge that our understanding of appropriate 'church behaviour' is usually shaped more by our culture than by how God describes His preferred worship.

So, where should our focus be when we worship our Heavenly Father?

Well, because Jesus is the Great Shepherd of our Soul, our worship will involve "*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2)

The Spirit of God will always prompt us to worship the Father, through our relationship with Jesus.

So, true worship means being vigilant to keep our attention on Jesus – not on what people are wearing or even on what they're doing.

Rather, our attention is fixed on giving Jesus and our Heavenly Father all the praise and honour they are worthy of receiving.

We should never come expecting to worship God in manner that pleases us – for we are not the focus of worship, God is.

So, let us remember, we were designed to bring our praise and adoration of God, with hearts filled with a desire to offer worship that is pleasing him.

Worship that is acceptable to God may mean laying down our own desires, our own established traditions and preferences, and whether or not we enjoyed the experience or even liked the songs and music. These preferences should never be placed above how God has communicated worship to be offered.

So, next time, the Spirit prompts you to dance before the Lord, or raise your hands, our let out a shout – consider it an expression of presenting your body as a living sacrifice – utterly acceptable to the Lord.

Let us endeavour to worship God with hearts full of gratitude and eyes fixed on Jesus, knowing this is the only appropriate response to our belief in God.

Pause

Let us stir up the faith in our hearts and turn our attention to our gloriously powerful Father, praising and thanking Him for the work He is doing in our lives – worshipping Him through the Spirit in our heart and in the truth of who He is.

Application |

Again, we open our bible and peer into the library of Psalms, and find that Psalm 84 verses 1 and 2 inspires worship on God's terms.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven's Armies. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the LORD, With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God!"

Allow the Spirit of God in your heart to bubble up, like a fresh spring of water, releasing your praise and worship to your Heavenly Father.

Do you dare let out a shout of praise to God?

While you are allowing the Spirit to flow through your mouth, open your hearts to hear what the Spirit may want to say to you.

Pause

Prayer | Heavenly Father, renew me that I might become a passionate worshipper with Spirit-inspired praise, exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. Awaken my heart so that my worship is a pleasing sacrifice of praise. May I worship you, Father, for who you truly are. In the name of your Son Jesus who brought me into fellowship with God our Father. **Amen.**