

## HOW TO WORSHIP

As I read this morning's Scripture a couple of things seemed to jump right out at me. It's about worship. It's about praying. It includes the total Gospel message of salvation. All this in order that "*we may live quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and holiness.*" Let me read the passage I'm talking about found in Paul's words to Timothy who was one of Paul's converts and a teacher in the faith. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:17 these words:

*"I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men-"*

One thing that popped out was Paul was urging, or we might say 'strongly advising' or might we even say 'encouraging strongly' that Timothy and the church follow the Christian guidelines that he was laying out in order "*That we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness (having a reverence for God) and holiness, (set aside for God).*"

How many of you would like to live a peaceful and quiet life? Our lives at times are full of turmoil and not so quiet as we move from this place to that, from this program to another. We're on the run so much sometimes we can't find time to sit down as a family for a meal. For some of you younger ones with families with some of those hectic schedules you have, one day when they are out of the nest you might find that peace

and quiet, but until then a word of advice....always PRAY and never GIVE UP! Don't you just love those words?

But we don't always have time to be quiet, much less having a quiet time to read, relax or even worship. We are told to take time and worship God, but that's not always easy. Even in worship on a Sunday morning I wonder how many of you let your minds wander to what needs to be done today, your shopping list needs, or about what you are going to have for lunch, or errands you still have to do. I wonder if your mind wanders here and there and is not at peace and therefore God doesn't have your full attention. With chaotic schedules and the demands, well, sometimes it's hard to find time to just sit down and read the Bible for a few minutes, or just have a few minutes to pray without being interrupted by something. Even the TV becomes a time stealer.

Paul's words for us this morning is entitled INSTRUCTIONS FOR WORSHIP in my NIV study Bible. So what is Worship? According to Paul worship is praying and being thankful and remembering who Jesus is and why he came.

I'm sure Paul knows a lot about praying, for he had lots of free time to pray. He reminds me of some of the prisoners- of- war who tell us that prayer and remembering Bible verses they once knew helped them pass the time and keep sane until they were released from captivity. Maybe with each letter he wrote, each conversation he had with a guard, each court date he kept perhaps they were bathed in prayer, in worshiping our God. One hymn comes to mind to me, *“Holy God we praise thy name; Lord of all we bow before thee; all on earth thy scepter claim; all in heaven above adore thee. Infinite thy vast domain, everlasting is thy reign.”* Or our offering chorus praising God from whom all blessings flow. We are not only thanking our God for his fruitful blessings in our lives, but praising him for who he is...our provider. Paul in other letters speaks about

praying always, rejoicing even in tough times, always make your requests made known to God. In the Gospels Jesus tells us how important prayer is. So when we look at worship, worship is steeped with and by our prayers.

Giving thanks to God is part of praying. It's not just asking but thanking God as well. Not bad for this first Sunday in November when we think of Thanksgiving Day and thanking God for all that he blesses us with. Paul writes, worship is opening our hearts to God through prayer, through a time of being quiet before God. It's funny sometimes because if we believe, which I do, that God knows all, is everywhere, sees all, hears all, and even knows what we are going to say before we even say it, then he already knows what's on our hearts and minds. From the moment you open your eyes each morning until you close them at night and fall into that trance we call sleep God knows everything about you, what you are thinking, what words will come out of your mouths, you know those praising words, those angry words, those cursing words, those uplifting words, those negative words. In fact, in all reality, he knows about your dreams. At Christmas time we think of the old song about Santa that says "he sees us when we're sleeping, he knows when we're awake he knows if we've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake." Maybe it was a Christian who wrote that song, or at least someone who had a thought about God for you and I know that's a good definition about God for he sees us when we're sleeping, he knows when we are awake, and of course he knows when we have been bad and when we have been good. And that doesn't just go for kids.. it applies to adults too.

So if God knows everything why do we ask him for things? Because it is a part of our worshipping experience. We ask because we are acknowledging along with him what we believe we need. We are trusting him just as he tells us to do.

But look what Paul says about praying. He says to make our requests to God, offering prayers for ourselves and for others. As pastor I have the privilege of leading us in offering our prayers for the world, those

on our prayer list, the concerns that are upon our hearts as well. This isn't just my prayer. It's OUR prayer as a congregation as we pray as God has commanded us to do. We can pray like the word ACTS...A, acknowledging that he is God praising him for being our God, our creator, our sustainer....C, confessing our sins acknowledging that we have fallen short of what he wants us to be, seeking his forgiveness for our failures, asking his strength and wisdom to make us better witnesses of our faith....T, thanking God for all that he has given us and all the blessings that come our way even when we can't see them, maybe even thanking him for the hard times as they make us trust more in his grace.....S, praying for others as well, lifting those whom he puts in our paths and those whom you have heard are in need, even, yes even your enemies.

Paul says to pray for "all in authority." We all know those in authority certainly need prayers. Whether it's government officials or teachers or even preachers or DS' or even Bishops they need our prayers because of decisions they need to make and for guidance in their lives as well. Those in Washington certainly can get caught up in the glamour and be enticed by others not always to follow their hearts. With another election year at our door we hear so much about what some will do if elected. We need to pray that they are sincere in seeking to help our country using wisdom in decisions that they make which will affect our country. Those in office, no matter where they serve, have an awesome responsibility and we need to lift them up to our God so that they can be influenced by Him, not just those they have placed around themselves, and certainly that they can stay away from temptations.

Besides praying and giving thanks in this passage we also find the Gospel message of Grace for the whole world. Checking out one of my commentaries William Barclay stated 'there are few passages in the New Testament which so stress and underline the universality of the Gospel.' Paul's message is: "Prayer is to be

made for ALL men. God is the Savior who wishes ALL men to be saved. Jesus gave his life as a ransom for ALL.”

You notice Paul didn't say to pray just for the Jewish people or that God was Savior for just the Jewish nation, nor did he say that Jesus died just for the chosen race that God called forth out of Egypt. Of course not. Otherwise Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and his father Greek, and his friends would be on the outside looking in. For that matter we today would be doing the same thing. That comes right back to the most memorized and used Scripture in the Bible, “For God so loved the world that he sent his only son to this earth to die for the whole world in order that **those who would believe** in him could have eternal life.” There's that phrase again, THOSE WHO BELIEVE. It just won't go away, praise the Lord for that. As we all know that's the good news in a nutshell. If you are in a struggle and you can't think of one verse let this one sink in and be in your heart and mind for it reminds you of God's love, why he sent his son, and the free gift that is offered to those who believe. You are important and God cared enough to let his son die for you.

If you go back a few verses to chapter one Paul writes, *“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”*

And some of you thought you were the chief sinner. No way!

What a great testimony. And with that testimony there is great hope for the rest of us sinners saved by the same grace Paul was offered. Though in his mind he didn't deserve the grace of Jesus, Jesus died even for him. Therefore if he could find forgiveness for the persecution of all those Christians, he could now reach out to

others and tell them how he has found peace within and a quiet heart to worship and thank his God and that those who believe in Jesus will be saved.

I can imagine the excitement that came over Timothy as he read this letter, embraced every word, drank in every penetrating thought. It filled him with enthusiasm for the world. It filled him with hope. It brought new life to his ministry. It reminded him to always PRAY and NEVER GIVE UP!

Since this is Communion Sunday we find these words in Paul's letter to Timothy, "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.*"

A hymn writer wrote, "All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give. I will ever love and trust him, in his presence daily live. I surrender all. All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all."

Yes, there is one God, one mediator and that is Jesus Christ our Lord, who is here today to offer himself to anyone who will receive. At this altar of grace may we all be able to surrender all to Jesus and be refreshed in our spirit and our walk with God. May we find peace through our loving God through his invitation to all to come and receive grace upon grace, mercy upon mercy through his son who gave his all.