

Worship Reality #6 - Worship Reveals God

It's been a phenomenon going around the World in recent years and it's the phenomenon of "Stadium Expansion". If you look around, this morning, everyone seems to be expanding their stadium. A couple of years ago out in B.C., after the Olympics they did an overhaul of their place and they did this huge stadium expansion and renovation. This year, hopefully, Winnipeg will have their new stadium ready to go. The next year, I am told, Hamilton is going to have its new building up and ready to go. In the year 2017, so they say, the alien mothership is going to come in and land and plant 33,000 seats in Regina for the Riders to have a new stadium. None of these stadiums that have been expanded and renovated hold a candle to one in particular....there's one stadium that just kind of blows all the rest of them out of the water, at least in North America. That is, the stadium they renovated and built down in Dallas, Texas. They replaced Texas Stadium which held a measly 65,000 seats. They demolished that and they built the new Cowboy Stadium. I am told that Cowboy Stadium now holds 85,000 seats but you can squeeze in 105,000 people, if you really need to. The thing that surprised me about that is that it's only the third largest stadium in the NFL. This place is huge, it's massive, it's state-of-the-art and it's just spectacular to see, so I am told.

Now, probably the most amazing feature of Cowboy Stadium is the big screen they have up there for people to watch plays. You may think "Wow, that looks really disproportionate and it's massive. This was my plan for what to do this morning. I thought I'm going to get the measurements for that thing and I'm going to get some tape and I'm going to put some tape on the floor in our auditorium so you can see how big this screen really is. The problem is: I couldn't fit the tape inside the auditorium. I had to go to somewhat a bigger scale to give you a sense of how big this thing is and so, If I went and put tape out in our parking lot to mark how big this thing is, it would be roughly about, the size of our building. Phenomenal, unbelievable. All that to say that, really we look around in sports and we see all these stadiums expanding and things going and that's really a healthy sign, right? In sports that's a healthy sign to see growth, to see expansion. And not just in sports or a team but in business and wherever we look. When it's growing and we say "You know what, we need to expand" that is a good thing, that is a healthy thing, that is something that we actually look forward to, that idea that, hey! We're growing and we need to accommodate that.

And so I thought, does that principle apply to churches as well? It probably should we probably should have that sense of excitement, enthusiasm, about growth and expansion in church and I try to apply that to myself and on the one hand, I do feel that; but on the other hand, I'll be honest with you, I feel a little pressure and high expectations in that regard because I am one of the ministers in this church and so, being one of the ministers in this church, part of my role is to help this church grow. That means, to help this church grow spiritually and to mature spiritually and grow in numbers. But also, there's probably an element of that where it comes with a little expectation that my work here will somehow help us grow numerically as well. So we do lots of things at this church that are efforts to that end, right? We do lots of things that will help us grow, that will help us expand, that will help us mature as a church. We

do things like making our Sunday mornings open to outsiders and we want our Sunday mornings, to do a better job of connecting us to God. We try and focus on being a little more outward minded instead of just inward minded all the time and being involved in our community. The food blitz we are starting up again in March is another good example of that. We have our Friend Speak program on Wednesday night and the cross-cultural program is about to start up again in March, as well. We do lots of different things. We did Dinner theatres in the past and we have our special service on Christmas and Easter and even in our small groups, we're trying to do some different things that will give us a chance to reach out to new people and bring new people in. All these are kind of that effort to grow and to expand and to reach new people and to mature as a church. I want to see this church grow and I want to see this church grow not just because that's what I've been commissioned to do, but that's generally what my heart desires to happen. I imagine if I asked you guys, you would say some of the same things. That is kind of the desire of your heart that you want to see the Kingdom grow; that you want to see this church grow and mature and develop. But I also suspect that if we asked you about that and when we talked about these things, certain words come up like: Evangelism, share your faith, share the good news, and when we start throwing around terms like that, and as I gaze on your faces I think I'm on target here. So as we start throwing around terms like that there are certain kinds of responses that start to well up inside us. Maybe some of these responses are going to connect with you this mornings.

Here are some of the responses that I think start to well up inside us when we start to talk about things like: growth and evangelism, and about sharing our faith and things like that. The first one is: Pressure. We feel a little bit of pressure about doing that. And the truth is, with every effort we make as a group to grow and mature and expand, that puts a little bit of pressure on you, as an individual, to participate and do your part and get involved in that. Now, pressure isn't always a bad thing, sometimes pressure is a good thing. The vast majority of my papers in college never got done until the last night and they got done on the last night because there was a deadline. If there were no deadline and no pressure of a deadline, most of my papers would still not be completed. So sometimes pressure is a good thing.

I imagine some of you have two levels of clean in your house. I know we certainly do. There's the level of clean for when the family is at home and then there's the level of clean for when company is coming over, right? And so when company is coming over there's a little bit of pressure to tidy up and there are certain things that would never get cleaned if no one came over to your house, right? So sometimes pressure is a good thing.

Probably the second thing that people feel when we start talking about these things, is summed up in the word "insecurity". We start talking about evangelism and sharing our faith and people start to say "You know what? The feeling that wells up in me when we start talking about those things, is insecurity." And sometimes that insecurity is based on our knowledge or our lack of it or at least, our perceived lack of it. And we say "You know what? I believe that's good stuff to do. I believe that's something we should be doing but I just don't know how to do it. I don't feel like I know my Bible well enough to do it and I'm worried that if I

were to say something to someone, I might say the wrong thing. And so, I just have this insecurity about sharing my faith in that kind of way. Sometimes our insecurity is based not so much on knowledge but on inexperience. We say “You know what? I’ve never done that before and so I’m a little nervous. I’m a little awkward about stepping out and speaking about spiritual things outside of the church building, because I’ve never done that before and so I feel this sense of insecurity about it. Probably the biggest thing thought, the most common thing when we talk about this topic is the feeling that wells up in me when we start talking about things like: Evangelism, sharing our faith, spreading the good news. Guilt. I feel guilty when we start talking about these sorts of things. I feel guilty and my guilt comes from, perhaps, a failure to try. And my failure to try is probably linked to my insecurity about things we just talked about, right? I don’t feel fully equipped or fully prepared to do it and so I don’t try and I feel guilty about not trying to do it. Maybe my failure to try is just not quite high enough on my priority list and so I just never get to it. Or maybe my failure to try comes from this fear that I have. I’m a little bit scared about stepping out of my comfort zone and talking about spiritual things with people who aren’t from my church or people whom I work with or at home or whatever. And so I’m a little bit scared about what the reaction is and so, that kind of gets me a failure to try to actually step out and do that and when I don’t then I feel guilty because I haven’t.

Or perhaps your guilt comes from a failure to succeed. Perhaps you’ve tried before to share your faith. Perhaps you’ve tried before to tell someone about the “good news” about Jesus and it hasn’t really turned out the way you were hoping it would. So, because of that you feel like “You know what? I just don’t have the ability to do it.” I feel bad because I feel like I should have the ability to do it but apparently I don’t cause I tried and I failed, so I feel guilty about not being capable of doing it. Or maybe that failure was because the person you were talking to wasn’t receptive to the message at the time and wasn’t ready to hear that message, or maybe even your failure to succeed is due to a simple lack of desire and that’s because you know what, I like our church the way it is. I like the people who are in our church, right now and I like it because I know everyone and I feel comfortable in it and I don’t want our church to grow a lot because then it would be uncomfortable for me. But then, I feel guilty about the fact that that’s where I’m at. So those are kind of the things that we carry with us when we approach this topic of sharing our faith, our evangelism, when we talk about pressure and insecurity and guilt. And those are probably top of the list for a lot of people. And that makes it a very awkward subject for us to approach, doesn’t it? It makes it very difficult for me to stand up here and talk to you about those things because I feel a lot of those same things and I know that many of you are feeling those same things, so it’s tough for me to stand up here and try and say something that’s going to encourage you and not just amplify those things you’re already feeling about sharing your faith. And therein lies the problem, doesn’t it? God has clearly commissioned His people to make disciples and lead the lost to Christ, but at the same time, I don’t think His desire for us is to walk around with spiritual ulcers from the pressures and anxiety and the guilt of it all.

If there is any doubt, Paul makes it clear to us in 11Cor. 5: 18-20 that this is our mission. He

says:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that god was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are, therefore, Christ’s ambassadors, as though god were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf; Be reconciled to God.”

This is the mission that God has given to us. To implore people on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. And if it were up to us, on our own, by our own power and to our own strength, according to our own wisdom, this would be an impossible mission and the Letter to the Corinthians would have self-destructed ten seconds after the Corinthians had read it. But there is a secret to how we accomplish this and Paul tells us. It is written in the verse just prior to what was read. Here’s what Paul said in 11Cor. 5:17, just before he says “here is your mission that God has given you. Here is what he says:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, and the new has come.”

Paul says, here is how you are going to accomplish the mission God has given you and it’s because in Christ, things are different. You are different. And this is the argument that Paul has been building for us the last couple of weeks. If you’ve been here the last couple of weeks, you’ll recognize some of these verses. Here is what Paul has been telling us through this book of 11Corinthians as we’ve gone from week-to-week. We started out in Chapter 3:18b, he said:

“And the Lord who is Spirit makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.”

And then in Chapter 4:16, he said”

“We don’t lose heart though outwardly we’re wasting away, because inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

And in Chapter 5:17, he says:

“Therefore, anyone who is in Christ, is a new creation the old is gone the new has come.”

In Christ we are being changed to better reflect the image and glory of God. Therefore, carrying out his ministry of reconciliation, is assisted by, and actually is a product of, our transformation into the image of Christ. Have you ever thought about something for awhile and then suddenly realized “you know what? I think I’ve had this backwards all along.” Every now and then we get the feeling that we’ve gotten things a little bit backwards, right? And I think on this topic we’ve had things a little bit backwards, at least I have had it backwards

in the past because I have often thought that our job is to go out and evangelize people so that we can bring them in and get them to worship God. That we go out and convert people so that they will become worshippers of God, but now I don't think that's quite so much God's method. In fact, I think we're supposed to turn that whole thing around, in fact, we worship God so that people will see Him in us and be drawn to Him. Every expression of our decision to make God the most important thing in our life, transforms us into a clear reflection of who Christ is and it is a testimony to everyone around us. And if it's true that when I worship, I'm being transformed into the likeness of Christ then my worship becomes the most evangelistic thing in my life. It's the concept that Jesus talks about back in Matthew, Chapter 5:14-16, he says:

“You are the light of the World. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, the lamp is placed on a stand where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way let your good deeds shine out for all to see so that everyone will praise your Father in Heaven.”

Jesus gives us a metaphor here and in this metaphor you are a City, your life is the hill that the City stands on and your worship is the light that shines out for everyone to see. Jesus ends up by saying: “Let your good deeds shine for everyone to see.” But ‘good deeds’ here means more than just random acts of kindness or being courteous to people around you or not swearing quite as much as the person next to you. Now, those are all good habits that I want you to cultivate, for sure. But this means more than that. Jesus is saying more than that and I challenge you to redefine ‘good deeds’ as ‘God deeds’. And what is a God deed? Well, a God deed is an action that is a reflection of the actions of God. A God Deed is a heart deed that is a mirror of the heart of God. It is anything that I do that shows God's reign in my life. It is an expression of my decision to make God the most important thing to me. A God Deed is ‘Worship’. In which case, your worship is no longer something that is exclusively between you and God. Your worship now becomes what God uses to reach out to other people.

Which brings us to our final reality. Worship Reality #6. Worship Reveals God. As I was planning this series out several months ago, I put this one in cause I thought it needs to be there, but I expected it would be THE most difficult topic to cover. But I discovered the last couple weeks as I was preparing, now I think it might have been one of the easiest ones I had to prepare and here's why: Because I realized that if the previous five realities that we have discussed, are true. If Worship Creates Community; and if Worship Inspires Awe; and If Worship Compels Passionate Expression; and if Worship Compels Compassionate Expression; and If Worship Transforms me into something more, something better; and If Worship really does bring Renewal to my Life; if Worship really does all of those things for me....then, how can I possibly not tell others about that experience. How can I possibly hide from others what I have discovered. How many people in our world and how many people that you know are desperately longing for a place to belong. People who are seeking a sense of something greater. People who are searching for something worth getting excited about. People who are wishing for a way to change. People who are dying or even a little taste of renewal or

refreshment, and if I've discovered something that might give them even just a little bit of any of those things, to someone I know, how can I not share it with them. Even better than just telling them about it, let them see God work in my life. Let them see me live a life of worship. You see, this is God's strategy for reaching the World. Here it is. It's very simple. I'm going to find people in the world and I'm going to transform them into the likeness of Christ; I'm going to restore them to how they were meant to be in the beginning; and I'm going to put them back in the world to be living examples of who I am and how I act, so that others can see. You see, God wants to reach people in your family through your worship. God wants to reach out to people at your work place through your acts of worship. God wants to reach out to people in your school through your worship. God wants to reach the people in your neighbourhood through your worship. God wants to reveal His love through you. He wants to reveal His faithfulness, through you. He wants to reveal His grace, through you. He wants to reveal His purity, through you.

So, what if, as we leave here this morning, so what if this week, if in every situation we found ourselves in, we hold in mind the words of Mordecai to Queen Esther, when he said: "Who knows, maybe God put you in this very place, at this very time, for this very reason." What if in every situation we find ourselves in this week, we ask ourselves the question: What does God need to communicate to the person standing in front of me? What if in every situation we find ourselves in this week, we allow our worship to reflect God's glory and shine as an example of what He has done in our life. It seems to me, that living our lives like that, just might be a game changer.