

The Necessity of Serious-Mindedness in Corporate Worship

Geoffrey R. Kirkland
Christ Fellowship Bible Church

The wisest man who ever lived in ancient Israel spoke wisdom when he counseled believers to guard their steps as they go to the house of God and to draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools (Eccl 5:1). A little later, Solomon uttered another word of wisdom in the context of one's attitude toward God in corporate worship: Fear God! (Eccl 5:7). Having an attitude of seriousness seems to be a concept that has long-since deceased in our entertainment-driven, fast-paced, consumeristic-mentality society that has even crept into the church. To be serious-minded does not mean to be sour nor does it mean to be angry or depressed. It does not mean that one must enter with a frown on his face or a chip on his shoulder. To be serious-minded means that one is overwhelmed with the sense of divine things that are taking place and with a very real sense of God's almighty presence that exists when the people of God gather. To be serious minded means that one properly understands the *gravity* and *weightiness* of the corporate worship gathering as believers meet with the King of the universe and with the Author of salvation. This is not just another trivial meeting with a human friend. This is an encounter with the true, living, eternal God of the ages!

But the question remains: *why should believers be serious-minded in corporate worship?* In this brief write-up, I will provide five answers to that important question.

1. The Reverence Due to God.

The people of God should come to the house of God in worship with a serious mindset because of the reverence due to God. The prophet Jeremiah pronounced: "Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? Indeed, it is your due...But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation" (Jer 10:7, 10). When coming into the very presence of this Almighty God, believers should come soberly, seriously, and reverently as is proper to conduct oneself in the presence of the King of the nations before Whom the earth quakes! Revere and fear Him!

2. The Honor We Give to Scripture.

Another reason why believers must come into God's presence with a serious mindset rather than a trivial and worldly mindset is because of the supreme honor that we owe to Holy Scripture. When the Bible is opened and read, God Almighty thunders His voice. In fact, the Scriptures declare that the voice of the Lord is upon the waters and the God of glory thunders. The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is majestic and it breaks the cedars. Yes, the voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire, it shakes the wilderness, and it makes the deer to calve. Yes, everything in His temples shouts: "Glory" (Ps 29:3-9). God's people come to worship with a serious-minded demeanor because we joyously sit beneath the authoritative Word of the Living God as God speaks through His Scripture as it is read, prayed over, preached, and applied.

3. The Lowly Position of God's People

God, by His powerful hand, made heaven as His throne and the earth as His footstool and as the sovereign Creator of all things He looks to the one who is humble, contrite of spirit, and who trembles at His Word (Isa 66:2). The proper position of the people of God in worship is not self-exaltation and self-centered (*anthropocentric*) worship; rather, it is to sit lowly, humbly, reverently, and willingly at the feet of God. When Christians gather to worship together there must be a sense of lowness and awe amongst God's people that would evidence itself in Christ-centered conversations, God-centered speech, Word-centered encouragements, and sermon-based conversations that afterwards. To be lowly is to be Christlike. To come to worship humbly and soberly is to be like Christ, a man full of humility (Phil 2:5-11).

4. The Eternal Importance of the Event

Many people sit in pews to hear the Word of God expounded each week and prove themselves to be hearers of the Word but *not* doers of the Word. In so doing, they have deluded themselves and deceived themselves by their sitting in church in thinking that they are Christians because of their sacrificial services that they're presented to God. But the Scripture says that believers must humbly receive the Word implanted which is able to save souls (James 1:21). Furthermore, believers must be hearers *and* doers of the Word (James 1:22). As God speaks through His servant-mouthpiece as he faithfully expounds the text, it will either encourage a man in his walk in salvation or it will aggravate and increase his condemnation. The ultimate importance of hearing God speak to His people through the proclamation of the Word is reason enough for people to come to worship with a sober-minded mentality rather than a trivial, worldly attitude.

5. The Joyous Sobriety of Heeding the Word

In one of the most famous sermons ever delivered by a preacher, in His sermon on the mountain, Jesus concluded the discourse with a story of two builders: one is wise and one is foolish. The one who hears the words *and acts on them* is like the man who built a house, dug deep, laid the foundation on the rock and then when the flood came it could not shake the house because it had been well built (Luke 6:47-48). On the contrary, there was a person who hears the word but does not act accordingly (in obedience), he is a man who builds his house on the ground without any foundation, and the torrent burst against the house and immediately it collapsed and the ruin of that house was tremendous (Luke 6:49). The difference between these two builders: one listened and obeyed and the other listened and did not obey. In fact, just prior to this story, Jesus said: "why do you call me Lord Lord and do not do what I say" (Luke 6:46). Thus, the joyous event of hearing the Word is a reason to come to worship with a serious-minded demeanor but also the unspeakable importance of heeding that Word preached is a reason to sit seriously and be engaged and fight to be undistracted in the hearing of the Word. For truly the Lord gave this utterance: Blessed are those who read, and those who hear and those who heed the things written in the prophetic Scriptures (Rev 1:3).

May God use His Word and the glory of Christ to prepare us as His people for worship so that we would have lofty thoughts of our God, majestic worship for Christ our Savior, and a supreme love and affection for the Spirit who regenerated us by sovereign grace and power! Let us approach Him with reverence and with awe! Let us love Him dearly and worship Him gladly!