

## **God is Looking for True Worshippers**

### **Luke 18:9-14**

#### **Introduction:**

1. The Bible teaches that you were created to worship God. Psalm 95:6
2. Worship is the adoring response of mankind towards God. It involves expressing our love and thanks to God by magnifying Him and exalting Him. It can involve singing, praying, giving, thanking, reading, and obeying His Word. Psalm 29:2, 34:3
3. God longs to see His children truly worship Him (John 4:23-24). Our worship of God should be the #1 priority of our lives.
4. But our worship must be done in truth if it is to please God. There is a right way and a wrong way to worship God. Jesus said about the Pharisees (Matthew 15:9), "*But in vain they do worship me...*" Their worship was empty and meaningless; their heart was not right.
5. We have an example of true and vain worship in our text. Two men are going into the temple to worship God. Let's read Luke 18:10-14. Every believer must worship God in a way that will truly honor God. How can we do that?

#### **First, worship must be done in unity with other believers.**

1. Notice: he "*prayed...with himself.*" vs. 11 These men are there to worship God corporately, but there is a clear division. vs. 10
2. It should have been two sinners, together, adoring a loving God of grace and mercy. Instead, there is a divide between the two, factions are formed – "I'm a Pharisee, you're a publican." vs. 11
3. The Pharisee was supposed to be the spiritual leader, the more mature one. He should have come alongside the publican, rejoicing that he was there, and endeavoring to help him draw closer to God. Instead, he puts up walls.
4. God puts a very high precedence on unity when His children come to worship Him. Matthew 5:23-24
5. Unity among believers is a mark of being filled with the Spirit. Acts 2:46-47
6. Are you worshipping God in a spirit of unity with fellow believers? If there is any animosity or resentment, you need to get it cleared up quickly.

#### **Second, worship must be centered on God, not ourselves.**

1. The Pharisee acted like he was there for God, but clearly it was all about himself. Notice how many times he uses the word, "I." Clearly, he is bothered by this publican being there.
2. Instead of having his heart focused on God, he was focused on himself and those around him. Do you think this still happens in churches today? It is so easy to forget why we come to church. We can get so sidetracked.

3. In America, there has been a shift in attitude from a self-sacrificing worship to consumer-focused, self-serving worship of God. It has not been a good thing. It's an ugly thing, and I believe it offends God greatly.
4. Instead of focusing our adoring worship on God, we are focused on ourselves, our needs, and our preferences. **Examples:**
  - The music style.
  - The pastor's message.
  - The comfortableness in the worship services (somebody is sitting in my pew, my seat is uncomfortable, I don't like the service times, the music is too loud, tall guy in front of me, etc.).
5. You get the idea. The time of corporate worship is all about me – my needs, my preferences, and my wants. It's hard to find God in this scenario.

### **Third, worship must be done with humility.**

1. What was the Pharisee's root problem? It was pride. Verse 14 makes it clear. Instead of comparing himself with God, he compared himself to others: *"I thank you that I am not as other men are..."*
2. He had a problem with this other worshipper. Why was this? Because he thought he was better than the other guy. Why do we get bitter at other people in church and judgmental, leading us to stop talking to them, avoiding them, or not even looking at them? Because we really believe we are better than that other person.
3. What happens because of this? There is no joy in our worship of God. Going to church becomes an exercise in pious religious duty, rather than an overflow of our love for God and appreciation of His grace.
4. The publican had it right, didn't he? Look at verse 13. It isn't so much posture (not looking up), but this was simply an expression of his inner attitude of humility – *"... God be merciful to me a sinner."*
  - The Greek root of the word *"merciful"* has to do with propitiation. It is used on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, which was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice on the annual Day of Atonement. As he prays this, he is thinking about that lid on the Ark that is sprinkled with the blood. He knows that is his only hope.
  - Likewise, when we worship God, we do so humbly, realizing without the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we would be strangers, foreigners, and enemies of God, acknowledging, I'm no better than anybody else in this room. I'm an undeserving sinner that has been saved and brought close to God only through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ.

### **God is looking for true worshippers. How can we turn the focus away from ourselves toward God? Three commitments:**

1. I will be faithful in my corporate worship.
  - It has to be a priority. When we give God our leftovers, it means nothing to God. It has to be a priority. It cannot be something that we do when sports, vacations, and entertainment don't get in the way. What message

does it send to God and others when corporate worship means so little to us.

- Make a commitment to be faithful, and watch God work in your life and your family.
  - When I first got saved, an older Christian told me they had made a commitment that when it was time for corporate worship at church, they would either be in bed sick, dead, or in church. I never forgot this.
2. I will pray before I attend worship services.
    - I will pray for my own heart and attitude of worship. I will pray for God to speak to me in the worship services. I will pray for others in worship. I will pray for all distractions to be removed.
  3. I will be a worshipper instead of a judge (the Pharisee was a judge).
    - Too many times we leave a worship service like we just judged an Olympic event. The pastor gets a 6, worship leader a 7, choir a 5, the other worshippers a 3 because they wouldn't move over and insisted on having an aisle seat.
    - When we leave with judgmental thoughts, we have not worshipped God. Instead, we have attended an event for our entertainment.
    - We must pray our eyes will be on worshipping God, instead of judging aspects of the corporate worship services (Ephesians 1:18). We must pray for a focus on Him. Colossians 3:1-2

### **Conclusion:**

1. Imagine if the Pharisee would have put away his judgmental attitude and joined the publican in worship – both of them on their knees before a merciful God, both of them crying out, *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”*
2. Imagine them embracing, overwhelmed at the mercy of God, in that He heard and answered their prayer. This is true worship.