

Call to Worship

#0570

Study by W.D. Frazee—February 12, 1966

We have come this morning to worship God. This is the hour of worship. This is the place of worship. Let us hear the call to worship as echoed by the angel of Revelation 14:6-7.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” Revelation 14:6-7.

This message is not a negative message. It is true that the second angel follows announcing the fall of Babylon and the third angel exposes the falsehood of the beast and his image and his mark. But do you know if all men had listened to the first message there would have been no need for the second and third. It is only as we enter in to this message of the first angel that we shall be kept from the wine of Babylon, and kept from the worship of the beast and his image and the reception of his mark. So let us again this morning enter into the study of this wonderful message.

“Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” *Revelation 14:7*.

I thought this morning it would be of special interest to us to note some of the verses in various parts of the Bible that teach us this thought of reverence, the worship of God, how we are to worship Him, how we are to express reverence, and in what ways we can do this. Turn please to the law of God as recorded in Exodus 20. I want to notice some of the commandments and see how a number of them deal in one way or another with this important subject.

You remember that the Ten Commandments were spoken by God Himself on Sinai. And as this law was spoken special arrangements were made that all the audience might show reverence. In the nineteenth chapter God told the people to get ready for this occasion of giving the law. He told them to wash their clothes. Everything was to be clean about their person and their tents. And then in the twenty-first verse God sent Moses from the mount down to the camp saying:

“Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish” Exodus 19:21.

Then the 23rd verse:

“Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them” Exodus 19:23-24.

The 21st verse indicates that the Lord recognizes human nature that there might be a curiosity that would lead them to break through those bounds to do what? To gaze. What does that mean? To look. Yes.

The children of Israel years later when the Philistines had captured the ark and it was returned, they decided they would have a look at the inside of that ark and thousands of them perished as a result. Curiosity is not to be encouraged when it leads to irreverence and this applies in many areas, dear friends.

There is to be a holy fear, a wholesome fear, when we deal with God and the things of God. This is not a slavish fear. It is not a terrified fear. It is a respectful fear. And so as God spoke from Mt. Sinai, the people, at a distance, stood in respect and reverence. They were not allowed to come to the mountain.

Now the thing that made that mountain holy was what? The presence of God. Before we look at the twentieth chapter with the Ten Commandments, I want us to go back to the third chapter of this same book. Here was an experience that had happened some months before when Moses alone with his sheep came near this same mountain.

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” Exodus 3:1-3.

Now here was a curiosity. It was a proper one up to a point. But now watch what God did:

“And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither...”

Be careful, Moses, don't come to close.

“...put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” Exodus 3:4-6.

Moses had a holy fear, a wholesome fear, respect toward God.

Now notice that attitude of reverence and respect was manifest in various ways. What was the first thing God said to him? Draw not nigh hither. Don't get too close. Now in a way we are to press very close to God, dear friends. We like to think of Him in the person of Jesus taking the children on His knees, holding them to His breast. It is proper we should think of Him this way.

It is also proper that we should think of Him as a great King and that we should approach Him with reverence particularly in public worship. Draw not nigh hither. Be careful. Keep a respectful distance.

Put off thy shoes from off thy feet. In some countries taking off the shoes when one enters the place of worship is still a mark of respect. Here in this country men remove their hats when they come into the house of God. But whatever it is that we do, it is simply a mark of respect, a mark of reverence. There are many ways in which we can show that reverence and respect.

All right. Then notice that Moses, it said, hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God. There is a becoming modesty, a reserve, a reticence. Paul, you remember, speaks of women adorning themselves in modest apparel with what? Shamefacedness and sobriety. It is the harlot that walks with the bold attitude and the bold face, look anybody in the eye with a hard expression. The Christian women will drop her eyes. She will show by her attitude that she is modest and retiring. And Christians of all ages and of both sexes will be modest, retired, reverence in the presence of God. Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God.

Let me repeat and emphasize this is not a slavish fear. This is not a terrified fear. This is a holy fear, respect and reverence toward God. He is so great and we are so small. He is so honorable. We are little worms of the dust. We know He loves us, but our understanding of His exalted character, His high position, will lead us to be careful, to be thoughtful, to be reverent.

All right. Now back to the twentieth chapter of Exodus. Let us notice a number of the commandments that in one way or another presents this important subject. Take the very First Commandment. What does it say?

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me” Exodus 20:3.

Nothing is to come between us and God. You see this commandment deals with the matter of our attitude toward God. If no other gods are to be before Him, where is He? Above all. What place does He occupy? First place. That is right.

The Second Commandment forbids any attempt to make a graven image of Him or of any other god. Now, dear friends, watch this point. This was not just to insure that Israel did not worship the gods of the Canaanites, the Philistines. It wasn't just to keep them from Dagon and Baal. It was them from lowering the conceptions of the true God. No sculptor could make an image of the great Jehovah that was fit to represent Him. No artist could paint a picture of God upon His throne that would rightly convey to our minds who it is that we are worshiping. So God said, Don't try it. You can't do it.

Now we all have in our minds a certain concept of God, but it is impossible to put it on paper. There is another reason that God told them not to make these graven images. A graven image turns him into a stereotype, a fixed image, the artist's concept of God. God intends that every day we shall get a fresh revelation of Him. We are not to worship God as we knew Him yesterday merely. His going forth is prepared as the morning and His mercies are new every morning. And in a sense the God that I worship today is more wonderful than what I knew yesterday.

What a pity it would be to come today and see in an image merely my best concept of yesterday when today God would lead me on and up beyond that I may behold Him more nearly as He is. But tomorrow that will still be true. So God says, Do not worship any graven image.

On a trip recently my wife and I were walking for a little exercise one evening. We came to a church of a leading Protestant denomination. There was a sign that said, Chapel open for meditation and prayer. It was just time for our evening worship and it was raining. We thought, This will be just fine. We will go in there. So we went in. It was a lovely little chapel. No one was there. And there were these pews of the little chapel.

But I was quite interested in how the Protestant denominations are following, some like Peter afar off, some not quite so far off, I say following the Roman Catholic concept for there were lights like candles. The pulpit was off to one side. The centerpiece was not the pulpit where the Word of God was preached. Rather it was a picture of Christ with a light upon it and a golden cross there.

And I thought now, The purpose of all this is to inspire reverence. There were little kneeling benches. But as the individual knelt, what would he see? Why, he would see that picture of Christ.

Well, you say, "Isn't that alright?"

I just want you to get the thought, dear friends, the Savior we worship is not to be an image. It is not to be a picture. No. I would never recommend to anybody that they kneel down before a picture of Christ. No. That is not the place to kneel. That is not the one to kneel to. The Christ we worship is not on a piece of paper any more than He is a piece of stone or a statue of gold.

Our Savior is in the sanctuary. And I repeat that God is waiting and longing to give us conceptions of Himself of His majesty far more than any artist's brush can convey to us, or any sculptor's tools.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image ...
Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them”
Exodus 20:4-5.

Oh, let us keep art in its place. And it has a place. But let us never as we think of the worship of God think of something that we have seen that men have carved or painted. Let us by faith look into the heavens and through those pearly corridors of Orion see in the temple of God surrounded by the myriads of the angel hosts, our God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and let the Holy Spirit give to our minds exalted concepts, evermore exalted concepts of the One that we worship. What do you say, friends?

Now look at this Third Commandment. Does it not too deal with reverence?

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain;
for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name
in vain” Exodus 20:7.

Why, the whole thought of this commandment is reverence. Is it not? Reverence concerning what? The name of God. The Psalmist says:

“Holy and reverend *is* his name” Psalms 111:9.

That is why, dear friends, the swearing is such a terrible thing. It takes the name of God in vain. It uses the most holy words in all the language as common words and in either a light way, or a vicious way, what a terrible thing to do. The Devil, of course, is back of it. But this Third Commandment was given to accomplish more than merely to prohibit swearing as we think of it. Every time we take the name of God upon our lips it should be an expression of reverence. That is quite a high standard, isn't it?

We are told that angels when they speak His name veil their faces. As Moses there hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God. We may not always go through that particular outward expression, but there should be inwardly in our hearts a reverent attitude whenever we speak the name of God.

There are some things that this will cause us to avoid. For example, the frequent repetition of His name even in prayer may come from and lead to undue familiarity. Someone may say, “Doesn't God want us to be real close to Him?” Yes. But as I said, that closeness is still to include a holy reverence and respectful fear of the One to whom we are close. There is a type of religious experience today common in what is called the Pentecostal movement and it reaches out into many other churches where the name of God and the name of Jesus is flung around in a very familiar way. And I would not for a moment suggest that all who are engaged in those things are in their heart irreverent, but I would say, dear friends, that it can easily lead to irreverence and in some cases comes from an utterly inadequate thought of the nature of God.

There are some religious songs today that smack of that same careless familiarity. Words and music, heated noise, to sentimental humans, puppy love affairs, than any expression of the exalted love that should exist between the creature and the Creator. Let us be careful in our choice of songs either for congregational singing or for special music. Let us be sure that we are entering into genuine worship.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain”
Exodus 20:7.

You remember in one of the early messages to the Remnant church we were cautioned against linking together the words Lord, God, and almighty. They are perfectly good words. But, ah friends, we are handling tremendous themes as we pronounce these wonderful words. We are to be careful lest familiarity breed contempt and disrespect.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain”
Exodus 20:7.

Let us be careful then in prayer that we do not multiply words particularly in careless and thoughtless repetition of the names of the Deity. You know if we were speaking to one another here even we wouldn't do that. If I am talking to Brother Cansler, I don't open every sentence with “Brother Cansler, I want to tell you this. Brother Cansler, I would like to have you do this. Brother Cansler, I want to do this.” No, we wouldn't do that. Let's weed out of our prayers careless, thoughtless repetitions. What do you say? And when we use the name of God, use it carefully, thoughtfully, in a reverent way.

All right. Now the Fourth Commandment. And what does that have to do with it. The Sabbath. Does reverence enter into this? Oh yes. We are to reverence, not only the name of God in the Third Commandment, we are to reverence the Lord's day. My Holy day, He calls it.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” Exodus 20:8-11.

And when He hallowed it, He put into it something that we are to reverence. That is His own holy presence. Is that right? Yes. As we think of reverence to the Sabbath day, let us remember that one of the great features of the Sabbath is the hour of worship in the sanctuary. Turn please to Leviticus the nineteenth chapter and the thirtieth verse where these two thoughts are linked together.

“Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary:
I *am* the LORD” Leviticus 19:30.

Now this verse given to us here applied of course originally and primarily to the tabernacle built by Moses there in the desert. The children of Israel as they came there to worship were to reverence the sanctuary. But what made the sanctuary a holy place? The presence of God. And so in every place set apart for the worship of God, whether it be set apart on a permanent basis as a church dedicated to nothing but worship, or whether it be a hall or another room which is used upon the Sabbath for the worship of God, when we come to the place of worship, the hour of worship, we are to be what? Reverent.

Let's turn to Ecclesiastes the fifth chapter and the first verse. Here is this book written by the wise man, Solomon, at the close of his life. The Holy Spirit inspired him to give good counsel. And on the subject we are studying this morning he has given us a wonderful exhortation.

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,...”
Ecclesiastes 5:1.

I wonder what he meant. Ah, my friends, if we were going into the throne room of an earthly monarch, I told think we would just come shuffling in. I don't think we would come running in. Do you? I think some guard would stop us before we got very far. Why, do you know when people are presented at court in Great Britain they have to go through a period of training to know just how to walk and just how to act as they are presented to the king or the queen.

May I be very practical, friends? We are here in Haskell Hall. This particular room is used for a number of functions. I trust that it will never be used for anything that is unholy. But it is used for classes from time to time during the week. There ought to be in your mind and mine a conscience difference in the way we come into this sanctuary on Sabbath morning. Am I correct?

Now we will not try to give to this building and this room the sanctity on Monday afternoon in a class that we do to the service of worship on Sabbath morning. No. That would be impractical, unnecessary, and in fact, it would fog the whole thing. But by the same token and far more important we must not bring into this place of worship on Sabbath morning any commonness.

There is a certain freedom of manner which is proper for a classroom and for a class activity which is altogether improper and out of place in the service of the sanctuary and the hour of worship on Sabbath morning. And I have a great longing in my heart, brothers and sisters, that we as a congregation shall learn to worship God on the day of worship at the hour of worship in the place of worship.

Now as you know we are preparing to build a place. Not only larger that more people may come to hear the Word of God, but built more particularly for worship. And as I thought about that, I thought, I am so glad that we can devote some weeks to studying and practicing how to conduct ourselves in the place of worship at the hour of worship on the day of worship.

Nothing should be allowed that will in any way detract from the spirit of worship and the spirit of reverence. When we come into this building, this hall, which is a sanctuary on Sabbath morning, when we come here before Sabbath school or at any time as the service progresses, let us leave our talking and whispering outside the door. What do you say? Unless it is something that pertains to and is a necessary part of the worship of God. If we have something to say in the Sabbath school class that is a part of the worship of God. Right? If a deacon needs to speak to a brother deacon about arranging the ventilation or about something about the offering, that is a part of the worship of God. And I could go on with many illustrations.

But let us as we come to this place of worship and the hour of worship leave outside the door common thoughts, common attitudes, the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silent before Him. And this is not to make our service less joyous. Oh no, friends! Just the opposite. This is to be the event of the week. This is to be the highpoint of our spiritual fellowship with God. This is to be the mount of transfiguration in which we travel up with Jesus, and as it were, see Him enthroned in glory. Oh, friends, let us rejoice in our privilege to know Him as Father, to worship Him as King.

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