What Makes Worship “Work”? October 16, 2022

*Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 Series: Israel’s Greatest Philosopher*

Every Christian may truly say, God loves me better than I do myself. – Richard Sibbes

Intro: Why people go (and don’t go) to religious services

1. Realize how much God cares about your mind
2. God requires full attention and reverence

v. 1a *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.*

Exodus 3:5 *Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”*

1. It is tempting to make worship about us and not God

v. 1b *To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.*

Leviticus 10:1 *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them.*

* What does it mean or look like to worship God reverently?
* What are some ways we can make worship more about ourselves than God?
* Why is it beneficial and satisfying to keep God at the centre of our worship?

1. Realize how much God cares about your heart
2. God desires sincerity and humility

v. 2a *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God*

Luke 6:45 *… for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

v. 2b … *for God is in heaven and you are on earth.*

Jeremiah 17:10 *I the LORD search the heart and test the mind …*

1. It is tempting to merely “talk the talk” in worship

vv. 2c -3 *Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.*

* Isaiah 1:11 *“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.*
* People, including Christians, struggle to fully appreciate God’s holiness and power. Why is that? What’s a remedy for this?
* What changes when we remember that God cares about our heart not just our words and actions?

1. Realize how much God cares about your integrity
2. God hates hypocrisy and flashy displays of religion

V. 4 *When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.*

1. It is tempting to be overly ambitious or calculating in worship

v. 5 *It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.*

Deuteronomy 10:17 *For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.*

* Why do you think that God is especially firm in his condemnation of religious hypocrisy? What does this tell you about the purpose of worship?
* Why is it a blessing that God does not want or accept deals when it comes to our prayers and his gifts?

1. Realize how much God cares about your words
2. God expects honest and pure words

v. 6a *Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.*

Matthew 12:36 *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak*

v. 6b *Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?*

1. It is tempting to make worship about quantity not quality

v. 7 *For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.*

Matthew 6:7 *And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

John 4:24 *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

* If God already knows our hearts, why is it still important to be honest with Him in prayer?
* What is the difference between a relationship with God that is defined either by quantity or quality?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:8

Notes