

WORSHIP

SPRING CLEANING

Matthew 2:1-12 // Craig Smith

March 5, 2017

CRAIG: Before we dig into God's word this morning, I wanted to celebrate. Something happened last week. We announced last week the launch of our Mill venue, which is designed to make a little bit more space. We actually got a little space this morning because you guys made the effort to change your clocks last night probably. We're kind of anticipating 11:00 is gonna be a madhouse. And in our effort to make room for the number of people God's been bringing us, we're launching an alternative venue called The Mill, a little bit more chill worship experience and then a video venue as far as the preaching goes. And we said last week that we needed probably 50 to 100 people or so for each service to launch it. Well, we got about half of the people we needed to help us kind of form that core group. And so if you were one of those people who said, "Yes, I'll be willing to commit to going down there for the next six weeks to get this thing off the ground," just a big thank you. Let's give them a round of applause.

And for those of you who thought, when I was talking last week to somebody else about needing those volunteers, you're wrong. I was talking to you actually. And so if you've been kind of thinking through that still, we'd love to have you be part of that core launch team. We're just asking people to commit to six weeks to kind of help us get it off the ground and get it moving. So you can do that through the church app, or you can, just on your way out, just stop by the Welcome Center and tell them, "Hey, I'm willing to help get that thing off the ground." And that would be fantastic. We'd love it.

So, hey, we're in our Spring Cleaning series right now, and we are trying to do the same thing in each week, which is to sort of get the clutter pushed aside and focus in for a little bit on the core things that we do as a church, the three things that we have to do to be a church according to Scripture. Those things are evangelism, discipleship, and worship. And we talked last week a little about what's this discipleship business, trying to kind of, again, peel back the layers and get rid of maybe all of the big misconceptions. Honestly, even just like sense of, like, what exactly is that thing, just confusion, and say discipleship is the process of becoming more like Jesus so that we can join him more effectively in his mission. That's the whole thing.

And today we're turning our attention to worship. Worship is one of those words that we hear a lot about in Christian context. And yet I think there's a lot of confusion about what worship really is. And we're not even trying to focus here on how do we do it. We're trying to focus this morning on what is this thing that we call worship?

So if you get your Bibles, I'd love to have you join with me, in Matthew 2. If you don't have a Bible, please feel free to grab one from the seats in front of you. And that's our gift to you. You'll find Matthew at the very beginning of this thing we call the New Testament. It's about this far through. Matthew is one of the Gospels, tells us the story of Jesus. And we're gonna look this morning in our quest to understand what worship is by looking at a story that doesn't usually get looked at except at about Christmas time. It's the story of the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus. And you might go, "Okay, why are we looking at that to talk about worship?" And the answer is because the word worship shows up here several times. And it's used by very different kinds of people, and I think it provides us some important insight into what the concept of worship is.

So we're gonna begin in Chapter 2, verse 1. "Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem, and they asked, 'Where is the one who's been born the king of the Jews. We saw His star when it rose, and we have come to worship Him.' Now, when the King Herod heard this, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. And so when he called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written. But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. From out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people



Israel.’ And then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and he said, ‘Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me so that I too may go and worship Him.’”

Now, I don’t know if you’re familiar with the story or not, but spoiler alert, he was lying. He had no intention of worshipping this child that he just found out about. But here was what we got going on. We got two very different types of people who are both using the word worship. The Magi say, “We’ve come to worship Him.” Herod’s saying, “Yeah, I’m gonna worship him too.” And the question we want to push into is what exactly did they mean by that? We can easily tell that Herod’s not authentic. But it seems, at least on the surface, the Magi are authentic in their desire to worship Jesus. But why is that? And what is it that they mean by it?

I think we’d probably naturally assume that the Magi had some kind of insight into who Jesus was. If they’re going there to worship Him, they must understand that He’s not just a human king. He’s the Son of God. He’s God made flesh. Otherwise, why would they say, “We’re here to worship”? But I’m not entirely sure that that is true, that they had that understanding. I’m not sure that they thought He was anything more than a human king. And there’s a couple reasons I say that.

Probably, the most important one is these guys are pagan astrologers. They’re not Jewish theologians, okay? They’re coming because they saw a star in a constellation, and their tradition, their superstition said that probably means there’s been a king born in the land associated with that constellation. They clearly don’t know Scripture, because when they get there, they had to ask the Jewish theologians where this Messiah, this long-awaited king, this anointed one that God’s promised, where is He gonna be born? And they said, “Well, it’s gonna be in this place.” So, clearly, the Magi don’t know scripture.

So there’s no reason to think that they understood that this was the Son of God made flesh. I mean, even the Jewish theologians who knew Scripture didn’t know that this was God made flesh. They didn’t understand that’s who the Messiah was. They always assumed that it was a powerful king, a special king, but still probably just a human king. It was surprising we found out that God Himself was the one who came to be the Promised One.

And so if the Jewish historians didn’t know it was God in the flesh, the chances that the Magi, these pagan astrologers, knew that it was God in the flesh, that’s pretty hard to imagine. And, yet, they still said, “We’ve come to worship Him.” Well, if they didn’t know that it was God made flesh, then why would they use that word? Why would they use the word “worship”?

What we need to understand is the word worship to us is a very spiritual concept. It’s always closely associated with religion and with worshipping God. But the reality is that in the ancient world, the word worship didn’t automatically mean the way that we respond or relate to God. It was actually a pretty common term in terms of the way people related to one another. What we need to understand is that in the ancient world, everything was sort of set on a ladder. Everything was sort of in a hierarchy. When you met somebody, the first thing you always did was to figure out, “Okay, where are you in the pecking order? Are you above me or below me in terms of our social status?” You with me?

And when you figured out where they were and where you were in comparison, when you recognized how you related to one another, you greeted each other in different ways. If you realized, “Hey, you know, you and I are about equals,” you would greet each other with a kiss. Paul actually tells the people to greet one another with a holy kiss. And that was the way of greeting one another as equals. Now, I hope that he meant like on the cheek, because, otherwise, it gets creepy real fast, right? But that’s what it meant. I mean, if you’re equals, you greet each other with a peck on the cheek, side of the face.

But if the person that you were greeting was a little bit higher than you, you wouldn’t kiss their face. That’d be a sign of disrespect. And so what you do is you maybe kiss the back of their hand. If they were higher still, you wouldn’t dare to take their hand. And so there was actually a tradition where if they were high enough, you’d actually kiss their feet. And if the person that



you met, when you figured out who they were and you realized, “Okay, you’re the Emperor. You’re like the King, and I’m a servant,” you wouldn’t dare to touch their face. You wouldn’t dare to take their hand. You wouldn’t even dare to touch their feet. And so what you would do when you recognize, “Okay, you’re up here, and I’m down here,” as soon as you realize that, you’d drop to your knees, and you’d blow a kiss at them. I kid you not.

It’s a little hard for us to grasp, because our experience of blowing kisses is probably a little bit less profound, right? Like, I remember when my girls were little, bedtime was always an adventure, right? I mean, you get them down and you read the book, and then “Can I have another story? And another story,” you know? And eight stories later, you know, you have got to go to sleep. “Well, can I have a drink of water?” “Of course, you can have a drink of water.” Or “I have a theological question.” Well, okay, we always take time for theological questions. Or you need another drink of water? Or you want another story. And then 45, an hour later, you know, I’m collapsed down on the couch. And then you hear this little patter of feet, they come out on the balcony. They look down. They go, “Daddy, I love you.” And my job is to do what? Right. “Go to bed, seriously. I got it. Now, please go to bed.”

And that’s our experience with blowing kisses, right? It’s sort of an adorable moment. But it actually has its roots in something far more profound. The original tradition of blowing a kiss was a way of saying, “I know who you are. You’re up here, and I’m down here. So I’m not gonna touch you. I’m gonna blow a kiss towards you.”

And you might go, “Okay, interesting. Why are we talking about this? What does this have to do with worship?” Interesting fact, the primary Greek word for worship, the word that God gave the authors of the New Testament to use to talk about worship is “proskuneo,” proskuneo. It’s a compound word, “pros” means towards, something we do towards God. And “kuneo,” guess what it means? It means to kiss. The main Greek word for worship literally means to kiss towards God. And what that meant in its original context was “I know who you are. And I know we compare. You’re here, and I’m here.”

Really, the essence of worship is two things. It is recognition, and it is submission. You hear me? That’s the essence of worship. It’s recognition and submission. And, obviously, if you would do that to a human king, how much more appropriate would it be to blow a kiss towards God, in other words, to say, “God, I get it. You’re there. You’re way up there.” And for the Magi, when they came, they thought that this child was just a regular king, they were still willing to say, “I’m gonna blow kisses towards You because you’re king and I’m not.”

But then as they began to find out, He’s not just a king, but this is the king who’s been prophesied by Scripture for centuries, “Whoa, you’re that kind of king!” And then, ultimately, to come to understand that He’s the Son of God made flesh, “You’re that kind of king. You’re there. I recognize who You are. And I also recognize who I am,” recognition and submission, because the very act of going down on your knees was an act of submitting to the one that you were greeting, because it was a way of saying, “Not only do I understand who you are, but I’m putting myself under your authority. I trust myself to you,” because, from this position, you can’t run, you can’t attack, you can’t defend yourself. You’re saying, “I know who you are, and I’m putting myself in your authority.” So that’s the essence of worship. It is recognition and submission.

And, of course, if they were willing to do that to a human king, how much more would they have been willing to do that when they realized the One they’d come to recognize is the Son of God? Herod, on the other hand, has no intention of doing that. He’s not even willing to recognize a human king who has a rightful place on the throne, let alone the King of Kings. And he’s absolutely not willing to submit. He’s not willing to put himself under authority. I mean, again, spoiler alert. If you know the rest of the story, it does not go well. He kills every child two years and under, every male child two years and under in this whole region trying to wipe this king out. That’s not an act of submission.

The Magi’s response, however, was fundamentally different. What the Magi teach us is that the heart of worship is to say to God, “I know who You are, and I know whose I am.” For me, that’s what continually reminds me what the essence of worship is to say to God, “God, I get it. I know who You are, and I know whose I am. I’m yours. I’m not the one in charge. I’m not the one on the throne. You’re the one in charge. You’re the one on the throne. You’re the one who gets to call the shots. I know who you are, and I



know whose I am.”

Verse 9 says this, “After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star that they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. Now, when they saw the star, they were overjoyed. And coming into the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down, and they worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures, and they presented Him with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.”

There’s a couple of interesting things that happened here as we continue to see the Magi’s response to this king that they’re beginning to learn more and more about. We start with the essence of worship. They start with recognition of who He is and a submission to Him. But there’s an interesting thing that happens here, and that is that we recognize they didn’t start this process of worship with emotion.

And we don’t know much about their journey. We don’t know how it came about. But the natural assumption would be that they were servants to some king back in the Persian region, because the word Magi is a Persian word. So at some point, they reported, “Hey, here’s what we’ve been seeing in the stars. It looks like there’s been a king born in Israel.” And the king said, “Well, you know, we should play nice. We should send the baby gift. Where are they registered? Nowhere? Okay. Well, here’s what we’re gonna send him.” And so he said, “I want you to go, and I want you to do the good thing, you know, make nice with him.” And so there’s not much emotion in that. If there’s anything, it’s probably irritation. They gotta leave and they gotta go to a place that’s kind of inconvenient. It’s kind of a backwater part of the world from the rest of the cosmopolitan assumptions of the day. And it just was sort of “Okay, we gotta do it.” It was an obedience issue. It wasn’t an emotional issue.

But you notice, as they engaged in the work of worship, as they engaged in what they had been told to do, to come and to recognize and to submit, they begin to feel emotion. When they found out who this King was, their emotions begin to kind of percolate, “This is interesting. Who is this King?” And when the star eventually led them right to the house, did you notice what it said? “When they saw the star had stopped, they were overjoyed.” Emotion has entered into the picture.

But it didn’t start that way. And the reason I bring this up is because I think we have this idea sometimes that worship begins with emotion. And we come in here on Sunday morning for our worship time, and we feel like, “You know what? I’m just not there. I’m not feeling it. I’ve had a bad day. I’ve had a bad week. I’m not feeling it. So it almost feels like I’m being hypocritical to worship God, because I am not feeling it. So why would I sing the songs? Why would I engage in the things we do as worship, because I’m not feeling it?” Because we believe that it has to start with emotion. It doesn’t start with emotion. More often than not, worship begins with obedience. It doesn’t require emotion to say obediently, “You’re God, and I’m not. I get it. I know who You are, and I know whose I am. And so I do these things as an act of obedience.”

But you notice, for the Magi, obedience led to emotion. And then that emotion led to further worship. And here’s the thing, Obedience and emotion create an upward spiral of worship. Obedience and emotion create an upward spiral of emotion. And the great thing here is you can begin entering into that spiral from whichever place you happen to be. If you come in here on a Sunday morning or on a Saturday night and you’re just overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude for what God has done and how great and majestic He is and that he has a relationship with you that he sent his Son to die for you, you can come in here absolutely overflowing with emotion, which is a great place to begin worship. Jump in from that point.

But if you come in here and you’re not feeling it, you don’t have to feel it. God is still God, and you are still not God, whether you’re feeling any happiness about that or not. In fact, you can have an emotion that says, “I’m really frustrated with what God’s done. But I know that you’re God, and I’m not.” And that can be a great place to enter into worship as well. And then obedience and emotion create an upward spiral that lifts our worship to the next level. But we enter into it from where we happen to be.

The other thing I want you to notice is that their worship was costly. Their worship cost them something. I mean, it cost them the



convenience of leaving their place and traveling, like, a long way to get to this place, to come into a part of the world they probably didn't have much interest in. It cost them something of their identity a little bit to be able to come in and to find this little King who is brand new, and He was in a country they didn't even have a whole lot of respect for. And they were gonna bow down and blow kisses. They're gonna say, "I know who You are. You're a King, and I'm not." They're putting something of their own identity on the altar there, right? It's costing them something of their pride to be able to do that. And, of course, they're bringing gifts, expensive gifts, and it cost them a lot of time to do this. Worship is almost always costly.

Their cost continues on, because not only did they give their gifts and they've already sacrificed their time, but, now, they're warned in a dream not to go back, which means they have to take a different route. They have to go back to their king who sent them to make nice with the political powers in Israel. And that king is gonna say, "Hey, did you meet Herod?" "We did." "Did you find his kid?" "He didn't have a kid. There was another kid. He was in this barn over here." "Interesting. Well, how did Herod feel?" "Well, he told us that when we found Him, we were supposed to go back so that he could worship the kid too, so that he could recognize and submit." "So you did that, right?" "Not so much." "Why not?" "Well, we had a dream. So we decided to just ignore all of that." I mean, understand, that's costly. I mean, they're costing something in their relationship with their king.

But do you understand what I'm saying? Worship is almost always costly. In fact, I'm gonna go a step further. I'm gonna say this, that the less our worship costs, the more likely it is that we're doing something other than worship. The less our worship costs us, the more likely it is that we're doing something other than worship. At the very least, worship requires the cost of setting our pride and our self-centeredness on the altar and saying, "I am not king." At the very least, our worship cost is getting up off of the throne and stepping down and going, "Sorry, Jesus, that's your chair." At the very least, that's what it costs. And if it's not costing us anything, chances are very good it's not worship.

Now, there's a lot we can say about worship. We could spend several weeks unpacking Old Testament concepts and ways they did it and New Testament pieces of it. But this is spring cleaning. And what we're trying to do in this series is just to push the clutter aside, push all of the other stuff that sort of accumulates around these things, and let's just get down to the bare bones. What is this worship business? And at its heart, the worship business is just to say to God, "I get it. You're God, and I'm not. You're God, and I'm not." That's worship. It's nothing more complex than that.

There's a lot of ways we do it, but here's the important thing. If we're not doing it in every area of our life, we're not really doing it in any area of our life. You hear me? Because you can't say, "Okay, here on my church time, yeah. I come in here and I say, 'You're God, and I'm not.' But with the way that I engage the Internet, if I'm saying, 'I'll make the decisions. Thanks very much.' If my TV viewing habits don't reflect 'You're God, and I'm not,' if the way I treat my wife doesn't reflect 'You're God, and I'm not,' if the way I do my work doesn't reflect 'You're God, and I'm not...'" Do you understand what I'm saying? If we are not saying to God in every area of our life, "You're God, and I'm not," we're not really doing it in any area. You can't come in here on Sunday morning and go, "Yes, You're God, and I'm not," unless it's being played out in every area of our life, throughout our life.

I'm gonna ask Danny to join me up here. We solicited some questions this week from different people going, "Okay, what do you wonder about when it comes to worship?" And what we've tried to do at this point is just boil it down and say the essence of worship is to say to God, "You're God, and I'm not." But we thought it'd be useful to engage some practical issues about what does that look like in practice? And so we got several questions. Let's start with this one. "Why is it when I need to worship the most, I'm motivated to do it the least?" Anybody else who ever feel like that? No? What do you think, Danny?

Danny: That's a very common thing. I think that, by nature, we are very myopic, self-centered people. And we come to church bearing the weight of the world, of the things that happened to us during the week, whether it be at work, with friends, with family. We can be so distracted when we come inside the walls of this church that it's hard to flip that switch and come into the sanctuary and humble ourselves before the Lord and begin singing and getting into the mode of worship.

I think of when my oldest daughter, she's now freshman in college, when she was little, we were going to church, and she takes



off when we get to church, runs down the hall. We're wondering what she's doing. She runs into the bathroom. She stuck her head in the toilet and flushed it because she had heard about this swirly thing, and she wanted to try it. She chose Sunday morning to try the swirly thing. That's what happens to families when you come to church. Your daughter may run off and put her head in the toilet. I hadn't planned on telling that story.

CRAIG: That has never happened to me. I don't know what that says about your family.

DANNY: So it's just us, apparently. But those are the kind of things that happen to families when you come to church and would happen to anybody. There's a lot going on. So it's hard.

CRAIG: So my youngest daughter, she's not here, so I can say this, candidating weekend, no shoes, started walking through the parking lot no shoes, and we're like... So, yeah, no swirly but candidating weekend, no shoes. So we get it. Sunday morning is not always worship from the moment we wake up until we walk in here, right?

DANNY: Yes. So I'm not even sure where to go with the no shoes and the swirly. But the point is that we often have things in our head that prevent us from really trying to engage. So I think the work that's inextricably tied with worship is humility. And sometimes in my own heart, when I walk through the doors from backstage whenever I come into the sanctuary, "Okay, Lord I need this. I need to worship you," And humility is a good place to start.

CRAIG: Yeah, I mean, I think about what happens here on Sunday mornings largely as two things. It's culmination, and it's catapult. It's culmination in the sense that if worship is to say to God, "You're God, and I'm not," and we're working to do that in every area of our life, what happens here on Sunday morning is the culmination of a week of that, sort of the climax of it. But it's also a catapult, because what happens here is a catapult into another week of saying to God, "You're God, and I'm not," in a variety of different ways. And we need that desperately because we need that reminder. But I think sometimes, you're absolutely right, it's hard because we haven't culminated anything, because that's not how we've been living. And so we're expecting something to happen here that can't happen or very rarely happens in the moment. It's gotta be a consistent question we're asking, and then we'll find what happens on Sunday morning has a much more profound experience of it.

All right, next question, "Why do we assume that worship is synonymous with singing, right? Because we do. It's very easy to do. Why do you think that is?"

DANNY: Well, I think it's common. When you come to church, the first thing we usually do is we begin singing, we begin engaging. But worship is so much more than just singing. It's any sacrifice that you're giving to God. Maybe you're out here today and you have a sick parent, and you're taking care of a sick parent. That is worship. Maybe you're a mom with a young kid, and you're wiping their nose and cleaning up after them at home. That is worship. Maybe you have a struggle at work, and you're trying to love your coworkers. That is worship. Bringing anything before the Lord that is a sacrifice is worship. It doesn't have to be singing.

I think of a guy in Alaska, this church I played at years ago, and he would sit the front row, and he couldn't sing very well. He was an older guy. And he'd bring his tuba. He brought his tuba to church. And he sat there, and he played. And I remember when I first started, I thought, "Why is there a guy with a tuba? I've never seen this before." But it was one of the most sincere moments of worship.

Worship is not just singing. Maybe singing isn't your thing. Worship is coming in here and sacrificing something to the Lord. And maybe you're crying through the service because you have something going on your life. Those tears when you're not even singing are some of the most authentic worship you can have. Worship is an act of sacrifice.



CRAIG: I think one of the reasons that we tend to associate singing with worship is because singing is powerful. Music is powerful, because God wired us that way. There's nothing wrong with it. There's all kinds of commands in the Old and New Testament to worship Him with singing, because I think He realizes in some ways that bypasses our conscious mind. It gets past the part of our head that's full of swirlies and missing shoes and the distractions, right? It somehow transports us past that. I mean, there's tremendous power to music.

I mean, here's the reality. I work really hard at crafting certain statements that I use in preaching, especially the stuff that shows up on the screen. Those aren't random thoughts. I work really hard to craft them to make them portable and memorable. But the reality is no matter how much time I put into them, no matter how good a job I do, nothing that I have ever said in a sermon is gonna stick with you as well as "Break me off a piece, a piece of that."

Yeah, I can never approach that, right, no matter how hard I try, because there's something just incredibly powerful about music. And so I think we have these powerful experiences of worship in music, and then we begin to think, "Well, that's what worship is." And as Danny is saying, it's not. Worship is to say to God, "You're God, and I'm not," in every area of our lives, in almost an infinite variety of ways. But, of course, worship by singing is a really powerful way. But, again, it should be a catapult.

All right, let's see what else we got here, "How does modern westernized evangelical worship measure up to the Old and New Testament worship?"

DANNY: That's a lot of big words for a musician to answer that question.

CRAIG: A lot of words.

DANNY: Well, I think if you study worship throughout Scripture, you go to the Old Testament, and when God delivers the Israelites, first thing He does is make a covenant with them and say, "This is how I wanna to be worshiped" and has very explicit things that He wants them to do and things that He does not want them to do. Then you go from the Old Testament into the New Testament, and it's loosened up a little bit, and there's different ways that we can worship. But, really, the essence is still that God wants us to worship Him in spirit and truth. He gives us examples throughout Scripture, especially the Psalms, but He wants us to worship Him in spirit and truth.

And at Mission Hills, I can say unequivocally that what we wanna do in this place is worship God in spirit and truth. Like He has asked us to do in the Old Testament, like He asked us to do in the New Testament, what He wants us to do now.

Now, it has changed in Western civilization, especially in the last 20, 25 years. There's been an explosion of creativity because of some of the things that we can do digitally. I think when I first started leading worship and playing for youth groups and camps years ago, there was an overhead projector, and I had all my songs in a folder. And I put it on there, and we'd start singing. Nowadays, we have these huge screens. We can project backgrounds that take you to another place. We have lights that are smart lights that can move and go. We have all these things in our toolbox to point back to a creative God. And that's what we're trying to do.

CRAIG: You know, I think one of the things that we hear often in sort of the criticism of modern worship is "Yeah, you're using lights and you're using these kinds of things, and isn't that getting away from the heart of it? That's not biblical worship." But the reality is, in some ways, it's a return to biblical worship. If you read Old Testament worship descriptions, there was a lot of drama going on. And God ordained those kind of things. He said, "I want the priest to be wearing these colors. And I want their breastplates with gems to flash and light as it goes. And I want you to blow the trumpets at this point. I want them to proceed, and at this moment, they'll stop, and they'll blow..." I mean, that's all dramatic kinds of things, because God wired us as visually and not just in terms of our ears. And so there are commands throughout Scripture to worship God with all of these kinds of things at our disposal. Think about the cathedrals of Europe. Those are intentional. I mean, it's the use of space and of light coming through the windows to draw people to contemplation that "You're God, and I'm not."



And I think I think some modern worship, going back especially 50, 60 years, began to lose a lot of that, and we became, well, no, worship, again, it's just singing. It's just this. So in some ways, the way that modern worship is beginning to reincorporate visual and dramatic elements really is a return to the Old Testament styles of worship. But I think we often miss that.

DANNY: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the stained glass was really a predecessor to some of the lights that we use here in the sanctuary. I mean, the way the people that designed these old brilliant beautiful old buildings, the light would come through the stained glass and hit the wall in a certain way to inspire and show God's creativity. The same thing we're trying to do in here, we don't have light coming in, so we use our own lights.

CRAIG: Yeah, and we recognize that that kind of stuff can become sort of a distraction itself. We work really hard. I know you and Brian work really hard and Mike to make sure that those elements are contributing, that they're moving worship along, they're drawing people in and up. We recognize that it can go the other direction. It can be sort of like those tools are being used for their sake. But the intention is definitely not that. The heart is not there. And I've loved the heart behind all the technical aspects of what we do at worship here in Mission Hills.

All right, I think we got time for maybe one more. "Does it matter if we like the music selection or presentation style?" Go.

DANNY: No, it doesn't matter at all. No, I'm just kidding. You know what? For a lot of years, I traveled and played at different churches. I was at a different church every week, and so I saw a lot of different styles. And some weekends, it was very inspiring to me. Other weekends, it was like banging my head against a wall. So we readily admit that we know that certain songs, certain genres, things that we do on a weekend are not gonna appeal to everybody. That's true.

But it really isn't the point. The point, as Craig has mentioned earlier in the sermon, when we come into worship, the first thing is to recognize that we are not God, to recognize that God is God and we are who we are. And the second thing is to submit to Him. So our posture as we come into worship is more one of sacrifice than wanting our personal preferences to be realized. And I know that's difficult because music is such a personal thing for all of us. We have what we like. We have what we don't like. But we work pretty hard to try and find the middle ground on that. And the bottom line is that it needs to be a sacrifice.

CRAIG: Yeah, I mean, worship is incarnational, in the same way that God didn't speak to us from the outside of culture, but He was willing to become one of us and engage in culture. That's what incarnation means. Worship music needs to be incarnational. It needs to pay attention to the language of culture, and music is a big part of that. But the reality is because we're so diversified, not everybody's gonna like all the styles of those kinds of things. But sometimes the very act of choosing to engage the obedience factor, choosing to engage even when a style is not your preference can be a really profound act of worship because it begins with obedience.

I spent some time in Zimbabwe a few years ago. And I'll be honest, I didn't get the style. I didn't get it at all. I didn't even understand most of the words. And worse yet, for a white American guy, their worship involved a lot of dancing. And so I had to make a conscious choice. I'm gonna step in and we would do this little move. This is my white guy move.

DANNY: I can't wait to see this. Yes! Get that on tape, please.

CRAIG: But what I found, as I was doing that, was, "Okay, I don't like this style. I don't know this song. And this is absolutely not what I'm comfortable with." But the very act of saying, "But I'm gonna do it anyway. I'm gonna join with this family of God here, and I'm gonna do it this way," was a profoundly moving act of worship. It began to move towards an emotion that I hadn't experienced in a long time, even though the style wasn't what I was comfortable with. And so, yeah, even if you don't love the style, there can be a profound experience of worship that comes from "I'm gonna step into this as a way of saying this is how



we're doing it, and you're God, and I'm not."

As we said, worship is much more simple than we make it out to be, as we think about it. At the heart is worship is just to say, "You're God, and I'm not." And whether we do that with a song, whether we do that with an act of service, where we do it, not just here, but we do it in our work and in our relationships and in the way we use our free time, all those things, revolve around the concept of saying to God, "You're God, and I'm not." As I've said, you can't compartmentalize worship. If you compartmentalize, it's not really worship. It would cost me a lot to start thinking about "You're God, and I'm not" in all of these areas, and I go, "Yeah, because worship is costly." And if it's not costly, it's a good chance you're not doing worship.

Let me give you three questions just to wrestle with as we think about this simple idea about worship this week. Question number one, what area of my life has the lowest worship level? Chances are as soon as I say that, you immediately can think of it. Maybe it's the way you spend your time on the Internet or your TV viewing habits, as we've mentioned, or it's a relationship, or it's how you live at work or how you interact with your neighbors. Whatever it is, what one area of your life can you immediately think of that that one has the lowest level of saying, "You're God, and I'm not"?

And then the follow-up obvious question is what am I gonna do about it? What's one step that I'll take this week, one step that I'll take this week to increase my worship level in that area? Because here's the thing, as you increase the worship level in one area, you're gonna find that you increase the worship level in all areas because you're reminded this is how we live. This is how we do worship.

But I wanna encourage you not just to confine it in that one area, but also ask this question. What other steps is God calling me to take to increase the overall worship level of my life? And, again, as we understand it, now, that doesn't mean that you're supposed to go through every day and every moment your life singing songs. No, that's just one expression of worship. Worship is to say to God, "You're God, and I'm not. I get it. I recognize it. And I submit to it." What other steps is God calling you to do to bring up the worship level in your life as a whole?

Let's pray. Jesus, we get it. We understand that you are God and that we're not. And we ask Your forgiveness this morning for not living that way. For all the ways that You speak to us even right now and were convicted that we have lived as though we were God, we ask your forgiveness for those ways. We ask for strength through your Holy Spirit to get up off of Your throne, step off, and say, "Please take Your seat," because you are God and I'm not. We ask that You convict each of us of areas of our life where we're less likely than any other to say that, where we're least likely to say, "You're God, and I'm not," and to live accordingly.

And we ask your Holy Spirit would speak to us about what it means to change that this week. And then, Lord, give us the big picture of our lives. What are you calling us to? To say moment by moment, day by day, in every area of these things that we call our lives offers us an opportunity to say, "You're God. I get it. And I'm not. I submit." Lord, would You receive our desire to do that more and more? Would You receive that as the worship that You're due, even right now in this moment, because You are worthy of our worship? In Jesus' Name, Amen.

