

## Sermon – The Heart of Worship

Our worship song today is called The Heart of Worship and was written by Matt Redman. It came about in the late 1990's as a result of a pastor choosing to buck the system a bit.

Imagine coming along to church, and there being no music group, no mic's no keyboard, organ or guitars!

That's what happened in Matt's church, Soul Survivor in Watford. Their pastor felt that although the band was amazing and the congregation was enjoying the worship, that they were a bit apathetic. Worship isn't just cool songs or even beloved hymns. Worship is so much more, and their pastor wanted their communal worship to be coming from deep within. Worship is not meant to be a spectator sport, but something entered into individually and when gathered together, communally, each bringing their worship to create a connected whole.

So, they embarked on a journey of discovery, the pastor, Mike Pilavachi, asked them each week "What is it you are bringing to God in worship?"

His point being, we are not simply coming along to worship, or as we are now, sitting on our couches, at our tables or even on our beds, as consumers, looking for that spark, that bit of information or tidbit to carry us through the week ahead. Rather, we are challenged to come seeking to bow before God, to bring ourselves, what's on our hearts. What are we bringing to our worship?

Lets listen to Lauren as she sings the first verse...

Lauren – When the music fades

The first verse reminds us, that when all is stripped away, then we simply come before our loving God, that is enough.

Throughout the Bible we are reminded that God created us, and God is always pleased. But it's right that we approach God seeking, longing just to bring something that's of worth. Worthy is what the word worship means. That something that will bring joy to God. We know that about our human relationships, we get to know those we love the most, through spending time with them. And we want to bring joy to them.

There is a gentleman in my community who grows roses commercially. Right now, he can't sell them, but he also cannot bear to simply compost them. Instead he chooses to bless our community, as he heads home, he leaves heaps of them at a central area, then posts on Facebook that they are there. They bring deep joy to those around us. This week, my husband happened to be coming home from work and saw him putting them out, he knows how much I love roses, so he collected some to bring home to me. And they truly blessed my heart.

How much more should we long to bless God's?

Our psalm today is one of King David's. He's full of joy and wonder verbalising the majesty and power of God, phrases like 'How magnificent is your name', 'you have covered the heavens with your majesty'. David speaks of God in awe, 'what is a human being that you remember us'. He remembers the work that God has given all of us to do, 'to care for the earth and all its occupants' – a good thing to remember in this Season of Creation month. King David, of course, was chosen because of his heart for worship. The prophet Samuel was sent to anoint the new king of Israel by God, but he had to bypass the tall and handsome, the intelligent, the sporty, the arty... until God pointed out the one who loved to create worship songs as he cared for the sheep.

The song draws us back to this theme in each of the chorus's 'You search much deeper within, through the way things appear, you're looking into my heart, I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about You, it's all

about you Jesus. David would pour his heart out to God on those hills, and that pattern begun in childhood, he continued throughout his life, the Psalms at times are a hard read, David's frankness can be confronting. But also remind us that ALL of what's in our heart, we can bring to God, our anger and frustration, our hurts and pains, and our joys, our awe and wonder. What is in our heart?

As our children and young people point out, worship is not only our Sunday services, but our prayers, our songs, our love, our very lives lived out seeking to bring glory to God in some way. The way we treat those who serve us, the way we observe those in our community and seek to fill needs that may arise, the way we spend time in God's word, thinking, listening, learning, creating and yes in musical worship too.

But when we come together, what have we made our worship into? Lets listen to Lauren again...

Lauren – King of endless worth

We come to worship, sometimes harried and rushed, sometimes a bit frustrated, maybe longing for God's touch, maybe simply because this is what we do on Sundays!

Right now, we're not able to gather, again! And we're all feeling all sorts of things, some are over all the disruption and complexity of life. Many don't like having to use zoom to connect with each other, we feel like we are zoomed out, using the same media to connect with all the people we have to during the week, the last thing we want to do is do it all again in the weekend.

Fair call, and yet, in essence in more settled times we also meet with each other in pretty similar ways, we meet in classrooms, in workplaces, in homes, churches, cafes in person, maybe make the odd phone call, or 'talk' over social media. When we are 'in person' it's familiar, meeting digitally is a bit more clunky, it's taking a bit more getting used too, the screens are more

uncomfortable for our eyes, and the scenery can be a bit 'the same', we get more tired. And that's the thing, the scenery is pretty the same, in our everyday lives we move from place to place, group to group, activity to activity. In lockdown we don't move from place to place, but we can move from people group to people group, and although more restricted we can move from activity to activity if we so choose, the location and type of activity might be refined a little. But it's really tiring adapting to a new way to live, learning the new social rules, being pro-active to keep busy.

Remember when our brand new 5 year olds entered school? And they were in bed by 6pm every night because they were exhausted by all the learning they were doing? Yeah, I think we're doing that too and have been for 18 months or so as we adapt to this even more complex world.

So, let's circle back to that question Pastor Mike asks "What is it you are bringing to God in worship?"

For some life in lockdown is pretty quiet, normal patterns are disrupted, even those of us working from home theoretically have some more time as we no longer have commutes to our workplaces, or schools or places of voluntary work. Those families who are locked down together, yeah, not so much on the quiet front!

What we can bring to God in worship will look very very different, that's the thing isn't it? Our lives are to be about Jesus, all that we do, all that we say, all that we think. And what we offer is us, in all the ways God created us.

Our second reading, from Romans reminds us that we are called to place our whole lives before God as an offering. I thought I would look up the meaning of the word 'offering', we of course may well immediately think of our financial gifts, but offering means a bit more than that. Generally it's *a thing offered especially as a gift or contribution*. A gift is usually something an individual gives another individual, or at the very least is something given, freely to

another. Where a contribution can be a part of a bigger whole. So, as we've been raising funds for the roof, we've each contributed as we are able, and together we've made a whole gift to replace the roof, an offering. In our worship we bring ourselves as an offering, and when we come together, we are challenged to bring ourselves as a contribution to that offering as a whole.

When we come together to worship, be it online or in person, we have something to offer... our hearts. We come as a group of people united in our love for Jesus and our desire to offer him our hearts once again.

I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about you, Lord, it's all about you, Jesus. I'm sorry for the thing I've made it, when its all about you.

To finish the story, over a few weeks the congregation, after enduring some awkward silences, and discomfort began to find their voices of worship, they began to sing acapella, they began to pray and experience God in new ways! God's spirit was once again freed to work in their lives. One day Matt went home and wrote this song as a way of processing what was happening. And the rest, as they say, is history.

We too, are invited to come back to the heart of worship, what is it we are bringing to our worship each day in our every day lives, and in our communal worship?

As Millie sings us the whole song, I invite you to consider Gods invitation to us this morning, what is our offering to God?