Worship? Now? The whole world is in turmoil; I’m stressed and worried about so many things - and you want me to WORSHIP?!

It is easy to feel like that right now, isn’t it. The world as we knew it has been ripped away from us, certainly for a time and perhaps forever. We miss the joy of physical embrace with family and friends (how much hugging will be going on when we are through this!); we worry, whether for ourselves or our loved ones, that the business will have folded, the job lost, the hard-pressed essential worker broken, the money running out, the longed-for family occasion cancelled … you could readily add to this list, I’m sure. And, most importantly, despite our best efforts to uphold the ‘stay home’ rules, we worry that the coronavirus will get one of us, especially the elderly and vulnerable.

In short, we are living in a strange, dangerous and uncertain world, a very different place to what we have been used to. That last thing that we are inclined to do is to lift our voice in praise to God! Instead, we feel very much in sympathy with the Psalmist when he bemoaned “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4).

**Just do it!**

Guess what? We should worship God anyway! Believe it or not, there’s never been a better time to worship God than now! **Worship is the most important thing you can do to help you face and overcome this crisis**. It will lift your gaze from the trials you now face, and instead cause you to marvel in our utterly awesome God who loves you with a passion you can’t even begin to comprehend! He knows what concerns you, and he will bear you through it all. So rejoice in his deliverance, for it is coming – praise the Lord!

In searching to explain the spiritual principles behind this, I felt drawn to one of our well-known worship songs “I will worship with all of my heart”. Having studied it I realise that it clearly identifies what worship is and why it is so important for us to do it. First, here’s the complete song (feel free to sing it out loudly as you read!):

“I will worship with all of my heart; I will praise you with all of my strength. I will seek you all of my days; I will follow all of your ways. *(chorus)* I will bow down, hail you as King. I will serve you, give you everything. I will lift up my eyes to your throne; I will trust you, trust you alone.” *(chorus)*.

Chorus: “I will give you all my worship, I will give you all my praise; you alone I long to worship, you alone are worthy of my praise.”

*[“You’re worthy of my praise” by David Ruis (© 1991 Shade Tree Music)]*

(I bet you’re feeling better already, aren’t you!). Now let’s unpack that a little:

“I will worship with all of my heart; I will praise you with all of my strength”. **Worship is an act of love**. Jesus taught us that the single most important priority for our lives is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mathew 22:37). Our whole being should be focused on loving our Lord God, and the foremost way we express that love is to worship Him.

“I will seek you all of my days; I will follow all of your ways”. **Worship is an act of steadfast obedience**. As we’ve said repeatedly through this series, we express our worship through lives lived to God’s glory. Jesus said “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

“I will bow down, hail you as King. I will serve you, give you everything”. **Worship is an act of sacrifice**. It’s a determination to place our Lord first in our lives, to let him be the goal we most long for, to give him everything we have – our time, our money, our families – everything. Jesus said “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only” (Luke 4:8).

“I will lift up my eyes to your throne; I will trust you, trust you alone.” **Worship is an act of faith**. As I’ve said, we need not to look at our circumstances but at our Saviour – and see how everything is transformed as a result! “Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

And, of course, this song states loud and clear that **Worship is an act of will**. Worshipping our Lord is something that we delight to do (or should be!) when things are going well for us but, equally importantly, it is something that we choose to do when the odds seem stacked against us. In doing so we demonstrate our love, obedience and faith towards God – a living sacrifice that is the true worship which God expects of us (see Romans 12:1).

**Let this week be different!**

So, as we start on a new week in this strange world, don’t let lockdown get you down! **Determine to worship the Lord**, knowing that He’s got all of this, and all of you, and all of your loved ones, in His hands. Forget your feelings – focus on your Father in Heaven. Hallowed be His name!

And one more thing: notice the difference that worship makes to your witness! Trusting in God in this storm will produce in you a peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Others will notice, and you will want to tell them why you can be like this, at such a time as this. **We have such an important message of hope to tell the world right now** – be ready to share it and spread this good news!

God bless and protect you, and those you love, as you continue on the path to be a more effective disciple of Jesus, whatever lies ahead.

*Produced by Martyn Read on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  Holy Habits is "an adventure in Christian discipleship", based on Luke's picture of the early church in Acts 2:42-47.  Find out more* [*here*](https://www.brfonline.org.uk/collections/holy-habits)*.*