



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### Inner Health Made Audible

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Psalm 115:1-8, Psalm 150

Do you ever feel your life is being driven anything and everything else but you? Sally Morgenthaler has written “Our lives are being driven and shaped by everything but God.” There are some people here this morning thinking to themselves: “I am not good enough to be in any church.” Maybe something has happened and you just feel unclean and unworthy. Or lost and confused. Maybe your view has changed. Maybe you’ve seen too much pain, hurt, and hopelessness. Maybe you feel you have no status or friends. I stand before you to say: As alone as you feel, *there are people here* who know from experience that God will meet you there. God met me there and made me human.

- That’s one reason why we worship.
- It is my goal that our church will to go the extra mile so that new people understand the graciousness of God through us. If you are new, you are welcomed here! But remember—there are no perfect people allowed! ☺
- Nothing can top God. It is our goal every week in planning worship that we will get out of God’s way, so that you might make a connection with God Himself here. You can acknowledge your brokenness here...and connect with God—the great God who created you and loves you and has a beautiful plan for your life. And the connection we feel toward one another when the masks start dropping is powerful. That’s worship.

If worship is all that, then why do we struggle so much?! Because we don’t understand ourselves, we don’t understand worship, and we don’t understand God. (And they *are* connected!)

**1. We struggle because we don’t understand ourselves.** *We were designed to worship.* Everyone in the world worships: no matter how much money you have, how much brains you have, how many opportunities you have, or *don’t* have. You can’t help but worship. The problem is, some of us have some really bad gods. And the Lord God wants to deliver you from that. This is nothing new. God’s Word says it in Psalm 115:1-8:

*1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory*

*Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.*

*2 Why should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?"*

*3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.*

*4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of man's hands.*

*5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they cannot see;*

*6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; they have noses, but they cannot smell;*

*7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; they have feet, but they cannot walk;*

*They cannot make a sound with their throat.*

*8 Those who make them will become like them, everyone who trusts in them.*

Sometimes we’re in danger of thinking idols are only little gold calves with orgies and dancing around them, but an idol is simply a really bad god: a substitute for God or a supplement to God. And along with all the other stuff in our lives that we worship, it includes ourselves. But listen to what the Psalm writer reveals about your substitutes for God and mine:

**They have mouths but do not speak. No promises.**

- Since recorded history God has spoken his promises through his leaders, prophets, and his Son. But because we fall for all this *other* stuff, we fall for false, empty promises. And we're left scrambling when tough times hit, because we've fallen for this other stuff that offers no meaningful promises for our lives. How "duh" is that? No promises.

**They have eyes, but they do not see. No protection.**

- "*I will guide you with my eye*" (Ps 32:8). "*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.*" (Ps 34:15) Imagine being outside of God's view. The worst things usually happen when no one is watching. God sees you and knows you and because he has seen your affliction, he offers you hope and a way out. When we're all into other stuff and forget about God, there is no protection.

**They have ears but do not hear. No prayer.**

- God *hears* us when we pray. He encourages us to come to him and pour out our hearts before him. Imagine not being able to go to God whenever you needed him? (But we forget to pray, don't we?) No prayer.

**They have noses, but do not smell. (Why does he throw that in there?) Because it means no praise.**

- Here's why: The aroma of worship was always in the temple. Not just incense, like we picture in Orthodox and Catholic services, but BBQ! Remember animals were used as the substitutionary atonement sacrifices for sin of the Old Testament? Imagine the Temple during times of sacrifice and offerings. Noah gave burnt offerings when he finally put his feet on dry land. (Gen 8:21) Now imagine offering your *best* to a dead idol? It's insane! Yet today, so much of what we do could be described as "worship" as we chase other, lesser things, leaving no energy for God and what He's doing here in our lives. (And when was the last time we offered God our best, rather than the leftovers of our lives?) No praise.

**They have hands, but they do not handle. No power.**

- The prophet Jeremiah said "*Do not be afraid of those gods. They can't do evil, nor can they do any good.*" (Jer. 10:5). Elijah made fun of the god Baal. He yelled to the prophets trying everything including cutting to summon Baal, "*Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he's meditating, or busy, or relieving himself, or sleeping.*" (1 Kings 18:27). Imagine giving your power to a powerless god? Idols can't "take" or care for the precious stuff we give them. (But all of us who struggle with addiction know what that feels like, don't we?) No power.

**They have feet, but they don't walk. No presence.**

- The prophet Isaiah names how Bel and Nebo, the dead idols of his time, had to be carried by their worshippers. The Living God, on the other hand, carries every believer, even the whole nation of Israel (Isa. 46:1-7). Only God can offer you His presence. One of the names of Jesus is "*Immanuel – God with us*" (Matt. 1:2-3). The Living God is right here, right now. (But we treat him like he's irrelevant in our lives, don't we?) And when we do, no presence.

*And here's the kicker...*

**Those who make these idols are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them. When that happens, no progress.**

- Idolatry is giving yourself to the "*creature rather than the Creator.*" (Rom 1:25). Only the Creator can transform us to be like himself. At a business seminar I attended at the Ren Cen, the speaker said "Every organization is perfectly aligned to get the results it gets." I thought that was really redundant, until I experienced it first hand, day in, day out. And I think it applies to people as well as organizations. If you're stuck by something of your own accord, look to see what you're worshiping. Chances are, you're perfectly aligned to get the results your getting. A friend told me this week: because he doesn't want all the problems that come with being a gambling addict, he doesn't go in casinos. Because I don't want all the problems that alcoholics have, I avoid drinking. Because I don't want all the problems of perpetual anger, I don't align myself and worship those things that bring that out in me. Spiritually speaking, those who worship and trust in false gods eventually become blind, deaf, dumb, weak, and immobile, because they're perfectly aligned to become that. *We* can never rise above our present circumstance, because we manufacture it ourselves. We're perfectly aligned to get the results we're getting! Worship of the *living* God raises our eyes, our spirits, our relationships, and thus our circumstances. And *that* leads to progress. We struggle in worship because we have failed to understand this about ourselves.

**2. We struggle because we don't understand worship itself.** *We become like those things we worship.* Worship is literally "dedication pledged to God; and the ways which those are expressed." One of the

Hebrew words for worship is literally to bend the knee. Do you bend your knee to God, even though it might cost you? Some of you may have never “bent your knee” to God before. Today may be your day. Do you bend your schedule to God? Do you bend your plans to God? Do you bend your blessings to God? That’s giving God worship.

The entire book of Psalms ends with an extreme blessing of praise. Listen to the words of Psalm 150.  
“*1 Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. 2 Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. 3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, 4 praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, 5 praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. 6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.*”

Now, if you’ve read the Psalms and other parts of the Bible, it sounds like God *demands* praise from his people. How can *that* be right? I can’t stand people who are always fishing for complements. *We all despise* those people who demand assurance of how good they are, or how smart they are, or how successful they are. So what’s with *that*?

Simply this: Think about a sunset you have seen...or a beautiful garden...or a great touchdown pass. When it is *so* good, we want to share it with someone. Not only that, but it’s so good, admiration or respect is the correct response to it. Admiration will not be ‘thrown away. As a matter of fact, if we choose not to admire it, *we’ll* be the losers. We’ll have missed something. C.S. Lewis writes “It is in the process of being worshiped that God communicates His presence to people.” Lewis goes on to say “I have noticed how the humblest [people], and at the same time most balanced and active minds, *praised the most*, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised the least (whether it was books, artwork, or cooking). Except in rare cases, **praise always seems to be inner health made audible.** ...I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but *completes* the enjoyment. (Reflections on the Psalms by C.S. Lewis). Wow. Praise is inner health made audible. That is why we were created. So, even in the midst of tragedy and difficulties (or perhaps especially during these times) we are to praise God. That is my challenge to you this week: be a praise-full person. Find a way in anything and everything to express your gratitude and praise to those around you and to God. Thank them. Praise them sincerely. Point out what you appreciate to someone else. More than you ever have before. Let praise be your worship this week.

**3. We struggle because we don’t understand God.** *Only God deserves our ultimate worship.* All other gods warp us. Only God made a covenant to be with us. Only God is eternal. Only God is deeper than the ocean and higher than the storm. Only God sent his Son Jesus Christ to die in my place. Only God is holy. Only God is just. Only God is faithful. Only God is pure. Only God is our Creator. Only God is true. Only God is the Source of life. Only God can free us from other things. Only God can free us from our selves. Only God sent his only Son to die on the cross that we might live eternally. Only God. Only God. Only God. Who are we to worship? Only God. Amen!

#### “THE GIFT OF WORSHIP”

Worship...

Worship is a huge thing.

We look forward to worship every week.

When the music includes one of our favorites, we say, “The worship was great!”

When the music stinks, we yawn and wonder why the worship wasn’t very good.

We leave churches because of the “worship style.”

Worship is a huge thing.

Have you ever wondered if we’re more concerned with what worship does FOR us...

And less concerned with the Object of our worship?

It seems like it’s more about what we GET not what we GIVE.

It would be like taking a gift to a friend’s birthday party, but keeping it for ourselves.

Worship is all about GIVING our lives (again) to God.

Worship is not about the feelings we receive when we sing.

Worship is not about convincing God to bless us.

Worship is not about whether the guitar is too loud.

Worship is not about what's happening on the stage.

Worship is not about entertainment, lighting or sound.

Worship is not about us at all.

**WORSHIP IS NOT ABOUT US.**

It's about Him.

And we enter through the gateway of the cross.

At the cross, we...surrender...love...cry...dream...give up...shut up...kneel...confess.

We look at God, and place Him above all else...because he's worth it!

Life gets crazy and painful. No one can deny that:

Job stress... divorce... death... addictions... parenting... loneliness.

No one is asking you to pretend that those things aren't affecting you.

**DON'T PRETEND.**

You're just being invited to bring that stuff to the cross, and simply gaze at Jesus.

And as you look at Him, allow your response to be...

...worship.