**Heart Attitude to worship**

Today is the second Sunday of Lent.

Lent is a time of examining ourselves in the 40 days leading up to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We continue today with our theme of worship in these 40 days.

Last week we started to define what worship was. We recognised that singing praises and playing instruments to the glory of God were a large part of worship but that was not all of worship. That the 166 hours of the week that are not in church are also places of worship

I want us to think today about where our hearts are in worship. What is our heart attitude to worship?

In December 2024 a lady in our congregation received this word during a worship service. It troubled her and she spoke in tears immediately after the service to Karlene and me.

The word included this: "My worshippers are not with me. Tell them to seek me every day and not just on the Sabbath. My children are not with me. People are worshipping me with their lips but not their hearts."

Another lady a few months later heard a verse and shared it with the Leadership Team:

Joel 2:12-13 *“Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love”*

These prophetic words were from people in our congregation and the words were for our congregation. Although it also seems to be theme running through the church across the world about this as well.

How do we align our hearts and lips? What does God say about wholehearted worship?

Today, I am talking about our heart attitudes.

The term Heart attitude refers to the way we think and feel about ourselves, others, and life in general. It can affect our physical, mental, and spiritual health. Having a positive heart attitude, such as being optimistic, cheerful, grateful, and purposeful, can help protect our heart from diseases and stress. On the other hand, having a negative heart attitude, such as being pessimistic, bitter, resentful, and aimless, can harm our heart and our relationship with God.

Heart attitude is not head knowledge. It is far deeper than that, it is at gut level. It is what we believe deep down, often unconsciously.

Another term related to this is our unconscious world view

A person’s worldview influences every aspect of their lives. How you answer the important questions of existence will inform how you behave in your day-to-day existence.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The concept of heart attitude is a central theme throughout the Bible, emphasizing the importance of our inner disposition and intentions in relation to God and others. The heart, in biblical terms, often represents the core of a person's being, encompassing our thoughts, emotions, will, and moral character. Scripture consistently underscores that God values the condition of the heart above outward appearances or actions.

In the Old Testament, the heart is frequently mentioned as the seat of one's spiritual life. Proverbs 4:23 advises, "*Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow springs of life.*" This verse highlights the heart as the source of life and actions, suggesting that a well-guarded heart leads to a righteous life.

The account of David's anointing as king illustrates the importance of heart attitude. When Samuel was sent to anoint one of Jesse's sons, God reminded him, " *The LORD does not see as man does. For man sees the outward appearance, but the LORD sees the hear*t" (1 Samuel 16:7). This passage reveals that God prioritizes the heart's condition over external attributes.

The New Testament continues to emphasize heart attitude, particularly in the teachings of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses the heart's role in fulfilling the law. He teaches that righteousness surpasses mere external compliance, focusing instead on internal purity. Matthew 5:8 states, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*." This beatitude underscores the necessity of a heart aligned with God's will to experience His presence.

Jesus further elaborates on heart attitude in Matthew 15:18-19 : "*But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander*." Here, Jesus identifies the heart as the origin of sinful behaviour, indicating that true transformation begins internally.

The apostles also stress the significance of heart attitude in the life of a believer. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, writes, "*For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved*" (Romans 10:10). This verse highlights the heart's role in faith and salvation, suggesting that genuine belief originates from within.

In his epistle, James warns against duplicity, urging believers to maintain a sincere heart.

Duplicity means contradictory doubleness of thought, speech, or action; especially: the belying of one's true intentions by deceptive words or action. A dissonance between what we think and what we do.

James 4:8 exhorts, "*Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded*." This call to purify the heart reflects the necessity of wholehearted devotion to God.

The Bible consistently teaches that heart attitude is of paramount importance in one's relationship with God and others. A heart aligned with God's will leads to a life that honours Him and reflects His love to the world.[[2]](#footnote-2)

This is a huge and very relevant topic for our Christian walk, but I want to narrow our focus to our heart attitude to worship which was the focus of the two prophetic words.

First let’s look at the word “heart” in the Bible.

The word we translate in English as heart in Hebrew (leb or lebab ) essentially is our inner most being – our innards, our kidneys, our intestines, our entrails, our core and including but not solely our blood pump.

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So, when you read heart, think of inner core, our inner being.

Science backs this up. The Vagus nerve is a long nerve that originates in the brain stem and extends through the neck and into the chest and abdomen. It is responsible for regulating critical body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, and digestion.

Not only does it do what the brain tells the organs what to do, it works the other way too, and the organs tell the brain.

When our gut tells us something, we need to listen.

Our innermost being and our brain are connected.

The Bible does not identify the brain as not the centre of consciousness, thought or will. As a broad general statement, the Bible places the psychological focus one step lower in the anatomy than our brain, down to our gut. (Logos bible study on the word Heart]

Even the Greek translation of the word Kardia (Heart) in scripture denotes the centre and seat of spiritual life as the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavours.

We are right in fact when we say, “what is your gut reaction”, “what does your gut tell you about this or that?”

So, from that general discussion, let’s turn to worship. What is our heart attitude in relation to worship, in particular our Sunday worship?

Remember last week I quoted Francois Fenelon (who died in 1715): “Just to read the bible, attend church, and avoid big sins-is this passionate, wholehearted love of God?” [[3]](#footnote-3)

In the olden days (the black and white days, my kids would call it – before colour TV) people would come into church well before the service and would sit in quiet and stillness, examining their heart and connecting with God and preparing for worship.

In our busyness nowadays, we seem to have lost that ability, at least I have. I come into church just after 9, make sure the PowerPoint is showing right, that the sound is working right, that we have the right words for the songs to be sung, that the auditorium is tidy, that those on rosters have turned up, greet and connect with people, particularly new people, rush to the pre service prayer at 10 at the front of the church (often started late), then when the call to worship is played, sit down and catch my breath as the welcome and notices start.

It seems that I do not allow myself time to prepare my heart for a divine encounter. The songwriter Matt Redman tells us that God does not delight in fast food spirituality and that worship is a spiritual occasion, which must be marked by mystery and wonder and that we can’t rush wonder.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Hearing that prophesy, I wonder “Am I worshipping with my lips and not my heart?” because I have not allowed myself time to sit in his presence, to prepare my self with an encounter with the divine?

Am I believing a lie in my worldview/my heart attitude about making sure everything is perfect is more important?

Am I believing a lie in my worldview/my heart attitude that I must be doing things and just sitting is less important?

Am I believing the lie in my worldview/my heart attitude that I am time poor?

When I sit 3 times a day to pray using Lectio 365, the first thing I do is look at how long the devotional is. It is never more than 11 minutes but that is always the first thing I look at – how long. As though this time is encroaching on my time. How is that preparing myself for time with God? God you only have so much time! What deep down in my heart is causing me to do that?

Am I coming to worship on a Sunday morning, knowing that there are other events happening that day, and I am thinking how soon can I get away from church to attend those things? How is that honouring God with my whole heart?

Are we believing the lie in our worldview/our heart attitude that we only have to attend church when we are at home, but when we are away on holiday we don’t need to? Or that we only have to come to church every now and then and not weekly.

Are we believing the lie in our worldview/our heart attitude that our money is ours and we don’t need to give God money if we have other uses for it and will only give him the left-over bit.

Are we believing the lie in our worldview/our heart attitude that the songs we sing have to be the songs I like?

Are we believing the lie in our worldview/our heart attitude that if the church is not meeting my needs, then I will go somewhere else where my needs are met?

Are we believing the lie in our worldview/our heart attitude that my relationship with others is more important than my relationship with God, and when church starts with the call to worship, I should continue to finish my conversation in the lounge before entering into the auditorium, or continue my conversation in the auditorium?

The first worship songs sung is often referred to as a throwaway song, because most of the congregation is still in the lounge talking or have not arrived at church yet. How can that be? What is the world view or heart attitude that causes that?

Are we believing the lie in our worldview/our heart attitude that I don’t need to come to church and I can watch TV at home and call it “Church at Home” and be in relationship with God?

You see, world views and heart attitudes invade our coherent thoughts, and they come from deep down in our gut.

World views come from the culture we live in (and I am not talking about ethnicity here) but the values of the world which form our beliefs. We absorb them from our parents, our peers, TV, social media and our experiences.

Things like the “me culture”, “my rights which don’t include responsibilities culture”, the “entertainment culture”, the consumer culture, the Sabbath-less culture, the more is better culture, the right to happiness culture.

The source of a lot of this culture is not from the Bible but from the enemy and we need to examine it and confront it.

Socrates penned the quote: The unexamined life is not worth living.

Socrates believed that a life devoid of introspection, self-reflection, and critical thinking is essentially meaningless and lacks value. By questioning our thoughts and actions, we gain a deeper understanding of our motivations and the impact they have on ourselves and those around us. Through self-examination, we can align our lives with our authentic selves, leading to a sense of fulfilment and purpose.

Does the world view/heart attitude reflect the world or Scripture? Does it reflect what we know of God?

Just as we know our spouse, not intellectually but wholeheartedly, not just with our head, but with our hearts, so it should be with our relationship with God.

Our acts of worship come from the attitude of our hearts. If our heart is not right, then our worship is just lip service. The Bible refers to being double minded and not focused.

Mark 12:30 *you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’*

It is out of our heart relationship with God that comes true worship.

In the communion scriptures Paul makes this clear:

1 Corinthians 11:28 *Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves.*

Examine your heart and see if you are in the right heart attitude and space to break bread with Jesus in mind.

We are to take time to examine our hearts as we prepare to worship God.

Coming back to those prophetic words we started with, how is our heart?

By and large, I believe we come to Sunday worship with the right intention to worship God wholeheartedly, but how does that translate into the other 166 hours of the week, and how do those hours affect our Sunday morning worship?

“My children are not with me. People are worshipping me with their lips but not their hearts”

“*Rend your heart and not your clothes*”

Isaiah 29:13 *the Lord said: "These people draw near to Me with their mouths and honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is but rules taught by men.*

And Jesus repeated those words in Matthew 15:7

What should our heart worship look like?

Psalm 51:15-17 *Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.*

The term “A broken and contrite heart” speaks of a heart attitude toward God exhibited in our worship.

Remember the words of the song writers Matt Redman and Geoff Bullock from last week, when they realised that what they called worship was insufficient and that it required a heart attitude adjustment.

Today I have focused on our heart attitude in worship relating primarily to our Sunday gathering but heart attitude affects our 24/7 worship as well and I will talk more on this later in the series.

This Lent period id a time for us to examine our hearts and prepare for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-a-worldview [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://biblehub.com/topical/t/the\_importance\_of\_heart\_attitude.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Francis Chan *Crazy Love: overwhelmed by a relentless God* 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matt Redman *Facedown* 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)