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**Did my worship please God this morning?  
Mark 12:30**

When we go to see a movie before the glass doors usher us out from the air-conditioned theater we begin to evaluate whether or not we liked the movie. We all have our opinion on whether or not we liked the movie. A lot of what we decide whether we express our delight or dissatisfaction with the movie depends on us. If we love adventure and the movie was filled with action, and sword fights and chase scenes and cars smashing and blowing up. Then we might say. Wow that was a great movie, it was so exciting. Some of us prefer clever plot twists and suspense. We think a movie is great if we are kept on the edge of our seats...never able to guess what turn the story will take next. Some love the relational and character detailed development in movies. If a story of love develops and the actors portray a magnetic attraction for each other in a believable way than they might really like the movie. Others may look for the symbolic meanings and look for the deeper purpose being the closed door, the intersection and red handkerchief, that the director was trying to express by this means of art. And when it is well nuanced and agreeable to your point of view, you decide that was a great movie.

I say all this to point out that we are people who relate to events; going to a movie, a play, a concert, a sporting contest, as to how it affected us. We primarily see ourselves as a passive observer. We think its great when we are drawn into the action. But on the way out the tall glass theater doors, our conversation always reflects on the way the movie has impacted us. How it moved me. How I was challenged and changed.

We approach our attendance to church in the very same way. Sunday noon meal is a regurgitation of the sermon. If it was good the

pastor gets praised. If it failed to draw you in or you disagreed with a point or if it moved you and you really connected with it. At best people come away challenged and changed. And I do hope that the preaching of the word of God is making a difference in peoples lives and challenging and encouraging. I want all that to happen. It ought to happen. But to the degree you have been moved by worship does not constitute worship occurring. Worship is not about us being moved or even challenged to greater areas of holiness. Worship is not primarily about me being impacted. although I most certainly will be when worship occurs. But I would suggest this morning that our worship. And when I say “worship” I mean the whole of worship that includes the preaching, the offering, the announcements, the silent meditation, the prayer and also the portion of our corporate worship time where we sing songs of praise and honor and reflection to God and about our God. I would suggest that worship is primarily not about us and how it has impacted us, or moved us, or challenged us. Worship is something we do that pleases God.

Last week we determined that worship demanded our own surrender. Worship demands that we say “yes, Lord”. In the first half of the book of Romans, Paul reminds us of how much God has done for us and saved us from our sin and brokenness. In His mercy and grace he has sent His son Jesus to take our place and provide life eternal. Our most logical response is to present ourselves to Him as ready and available to whatever, whenever, wherever he wants. Here is my life today. You own it anyway. Here are my thoughts today. Here is my wealth today, Here is my gifts today. You own them all anyway. So I am here to say. Take me I’m yours. Daily we come before God and present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. We are able to surrender to Him when we trust Him more. We are able trust him more the more we love Him and realize His love for us. We realize how very, very much He loves us when we know him more and more. It is knowledge of God that opens our eyes to see His great love for us and draws us to trust Him and kicks

out the fear that holds us back from total surrender. It is in total surrender that we can then worship God well.

The question this morning is this. What is the kind of worship then that God is pleased with? How do we properly evaluate whether worship was good? We must get over the myth that worship is dependant on whether or not I was moved. We may walk out of a church service and say. Man that was flat. That was boring. Half the people were asleep in there. It didn't meet me where I was. I didn't like the sermon topic. They didn't sing any songs that I liked. And determine that the worship was poor. (And probably it was). But we could also walk out of a church service and say; "man that was great worship. People were enthusiastic. I was challenged to change. There seemed to be heart of love. I could just sense that God was moving in the pastor and the worship leaders of the service and in the people who were there. What a great spirit." You could think all those things and assume that the worship that occurred was pleasing to God (and it may very well be pleasing to God) but why??? Was it pleasing to God simply because people left feeling good about themselves and their church? Certainly not. Was the worship pleasing to God because people were moved and challenged to change? Was it good because people sang loud? Was it good because the pastor was fired up and really preached the word?

The question I want to explore this morning is this: **What is worship that God would be pleased with?** Turn with me in your Bibles to 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's pretty clear that God wants it all. All our strength. All our soul. All our mind. Total surrender. God is not interested in our leftovers. Stopping by for a chat whenever it is convenient. A knock on His door only when we get into a jam. He wants all of us.

Turn with me to John 4. Jesus has been resting by Jacob's well near the Samaritan village of Sychar. It's about 6:00 in the evening. His

disciples had gone into the village to get some food for dinner. Usually Jewish folks traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee went the long way to avoid Samaria...but not Jesus. He walks straight through Samaritan infested Sychar. While he sits at the well, a woman comes to get water. Jesus asks her for a drink. She's surprised that he; a Jew would even talk to her and asks him why he bothered to talk to her. The Jews and the Samaritans were not noted for being friendly to each other. She is wondering who He is. So Jesus answers her, by saying He has living water that she could have. Well, this all sounds pretty good. If she had some of this Living Water, she would never thirst again and have eternal life? Sounds like the fountain of youth. The woman says "I'll take some please." If Jesus is going to give out some eternal life, Jesus first needs to deal with sin. Jesus unmask her promiscuous behavior of having five different husbands and living with a man now she is not married to. Upon this revelation, she becomes a bit uncomfortable with the way the conversation is heading and decides this Jesus is a mind reader or a prophet. She then asks him, out of the blue, a question about worship. It's interesting that Jesus takes her up on the rabbit trail and answers her question. He happens to unfold the true gospel to her as well. Lets pick up the story in John 4: 20-24. She wants to know the correct place to worship. Is it on Mt. Gerezim in Samaria. Remember this was the temple that Josephus says was built by Sanballet for the priest that Nehemiah kicked out of the Jerusalem temple. Jesus says that soon a time will come. Jesus is referring to the time of His death that will rip the temple veil in two and bring in a new phase of God's dealing with his people, the church age. Worship is no longer centered and confined to temples.

What is the worship that God is pleased with? God is pleased with our worship when it is accurate. The Samaritan woman brought up this debate of where is the best place to worship. Some say this others say over here. Do you want to weigh in and give an opinion of where worship

is best done? Jesus replied that worship must be based not on the opinions of others but based on what God has to say about it. I here people say, “Well, I like to think of God as a ...” Or “I really don’t think God would do that would he?” People have worked to make a God that works for them, a kind of God they would like to worship. But we simply can’t create our own comfortable God that seems good to us and then go about worshipping it. That is idolatry. We’ve done that in our churches. We have made God in our own image and so our faith has become idolatry. The popular book, “Conversations with God” is a classic example of making God into our own image. “The author dares to put words into God’s own mouth, “No I would never ever condemn good people to hell. I just care that they try.” No I would never limit just one way for people to come to me. I am a loving God and have provided many roads to join me. I would not deny any pleasure. I created pleasure for you to enjoy.” That is all in direct violation of what God has clearly laid out for us in His word. Worship must be based on the truth of scripture, not our own opinions. **What kind of worship is pleasing to God? God is pleased when our worship is accurate?** John 4:23 “...true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers.” Worship pleasing to God is based not on man’s ideas, but on the truth of Scripture.

**Worship that is pleasing to God is not only accurate but it is also genuine.** Jesus told the Samaritan women that people will worship God in truth but also in spirit. Jesus used the word “spirit” not referring to the Holy Spirit or even by means of the Holy Spirit. When John writes and is referring to The Holy Spirit something he always includes is the definite article “the” in front of spirit. It’s not here so our best option of interpretation is that spirit Jesus is talking about is referring to our spirit. We who were made in God’s image. We are spirit with a body and God designed our spirit in order to communicate with God. When we worship our spirit is responding to God’s spirit. It is that real us inside,

that immaterial part of us that will last an eternity. When Jesus said in Mark 12 “Love God with all your heart, soul he meant our worship must come from the deep core that drives us within. Worship that pleases God is genuine, its authentic, its from the heart. It pours from the core us. It is not just a matter of singing a few songs, saying all the right words. We must actually, genuinely mean with we say. Heartless praise is an oxymoron...it is no praise at all. Praise where the words are said, the sacrifices are made, the ministry is done, the service is performed all without a genuine spirit is all worthless. Indeed worship without a genuine heart is an insult to God.

When we are worshipping everybody around us may be listening to the words we pray, or the songs we sing. But God looks right past our words to see the attitude, the spirit of our heart. I Samuel 16:7 “Man looks on the outward appearance (that’s all that man can see) but God looks on the heart”

Worship that is pleasing to God involves delighting ourselves in God. It will move us, challenge us and engage our emotions. God gave us emotions so that we could worship him with deep feeling, but emotions can be tricked they must be born of genuine authentic heartfelt desire. God can easily look past our masks and see our hypocrisy. God hates phony worship. We aren’t perfect and it possibly for us to worship God in the midst of our imperfections, but we must be genuine and real before God. We must be sincere. But sincerity is not enough because we could be sincerely wrong. That is why worship that is pleasing to God is both accurate and authentic, spirit and truth are required. We are to use both our hearts and our heads when we worship God.

There are too many Christians today who have evaluated worship by how moved they were by the music. They equate being moved by the spirit as the same as being moved by a tune...but its not the same. A moving hymn, or song, or praise tune may stir up sentiment and feeling and introspection, but that sentiment may in fact be a big distraction

because they take the spotlight off of God and cause us to focus on our feelings. Indeed the biggest distraction in worship is yourself, myself, my interests, my desires.

Of course there is much debate on the different forms and styles that are appropriate to worship God, but most of these arguments reflects personality and ones differences in background. There are many different forms of praise mentioned in the Bible; Singing, shouting, standing in honor, kneeling in honor, raising of hands, dancing, confessing, making a joyful noise, playing musical instruments. There are many different ways to express our delight and satisfaction to God. Which of these style best helps you to authentically express your love for God? Based on the personality and background that God gave you? Here lies the problem. God could have easily limited us to one style and one form, but He didn't. God gave many different styles and forms for us to worship Him. That is one reason we are somewhat eclectic here at Yacolt EV free. As a family we love the hymns, we love the praise songs, we love the contemporary tunes, the energetic and the reflective and meditative. Someone coming to our church might hear the youth lead worship one Sunday and then a worship team another Sunday then a single person leading. In the worship singing style, the leaders have been shooting for a consistent style of mix of hymns and contemporary songs to make each service sound very similar. One idea is that people will feel more comfortable if it is mostly the same and they know what they are getting. But the elders have decided to try something new. Affirming that God created people with different worship languages.

We are going to be intentional about different kinds of worship styles. You won't know what you are going to get. No, actually starting in September when all the worship team members get back from vacation. The first Sunday of the month. Communion Sunday. We are going to be shooting for what I call "classic worship". I will probably wear a suit. We will sing mostly hymns, a shorter singing service, with a main worship

leader directing us to worship. Two other Sundays the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> we will be shooting for a worship team with a band to support. Similar to the sound we have had for the past couple of years. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday will be an acoustic worship, where we will have one person playing guitar or piano. A more informal feel. Similar to what I did on the piano last week. When we have a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the month we will have the youth bring their band for a contemporary addition to our worship. God intentionally made us all different and we relate to God in different ways...yet still accomplish the same result of pleasing God and offering him up honor and glory. When we come to a Sunday that is not exactly fit our worship sweet spot. When there is a song that is too fast or too loud or too slow...remember we are here to worship God with His music. Think of the words. Make sure your worship is accurate and based on truth. Worship God from the heart. Make sure you reflect on God with your spirit.

**What is worship that pleases God is not only accurate and authentic, it is also thoughtful.** In the Great Commandment we are challenged us to “love the Lord our God with all our mind”. God is pleased when we actually engage our minds and think about what we are doing. He is not pleased with thoughtless prayers that spout off endless cliches, or careless exclamations of “hallelujah” or “praise the Lords” just because it seems like a good thing to say at the time. If worship is mindless then it is meaningless. Jesus referred to this in His sermon on the mount as ‘vain repetitions’. Sometimes its easier to toss up a canned prayer filled with cliches then to take the effort to engage the mind and offer up authentic, truthful and genuine prayer. I get convicted when I pray with the kids at night and begin thanking God for the for we are about to eat. My mind was not engaged. it simply had been jammed into automatic pilot.

Here is some homework I would challenge you to begin working on this next week. I want us to attempt to praise God without using the

words: praise, hallelujah, thanks, amen. Instead of saying “God we just want to praise you” try using word like “admire, respect, value, revere honor appreciate” Make a list of synonyms and begin to engage your mind as you offer worship and honor and appreciation to God. (see I didn’t say praise)

**Worship that pleases God is accurate, its authentic, its thoughtful and its also costly.** This come back to the fact that worship in order to be true worship demands surrender. Worship is not about how much we were moved or challenged. Its about giving to God in costly surrender as we present ourselves a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is our most logical response of worship.

In II Samuel 24 King David wanted to buy a threshing floor to build an alter in worship to God. The owner of the property said, “Great idea. If you want the real estate here its yours, I will give the land to you, I will even supply the oxen and wood that you need. Its right over there and its all yours.” David replied in v.24 “No. I am going to buy it from you and I’m going to pay full price. No kingly favors on this one, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing.”

What kind of worship pleases God? Its worship that costs us something. In the OT God was pleased with sacrifices of grains, harvests, first of the crops, livestock because they all pointed forward to Jesus who is our ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross. Now in the age of the church God is pleased with different sacrifices from us:

Psalm 50:14 “Offer to God a sacrifice of Thanksgiving”

Psalm 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken spirit and contrite heart, O God Thou wilt not despise.”

Phil 4:18 “speaks of the gift of money received from the church at Philippi and refers to it as a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice that is well-pleasing to God.”

Ps.141:2 Our prayers. May our prayers be counted as incense. The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

Heb 13:15 “let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise , the fruit of lips that praise His name.”

Heb 13:16 the sacrifice of serving others. “do not neglect doing good and sharing for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

Ephesians 5:2 As we treat others well in the context of forgiving each other “walk in love as Christ loved you and gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Worship that pleases God will cost us something. Cost us our self-centeredness. Cost us our effort and time and energy. The verse calls us to Love God with all our strength”. Worship is not always comfortable. Worship is not always convenient. Sometimes worship does feel flat and boring and it is a sheer act of our will. Indeed a willing sacrifice to praise God. But when you praise God even when you don't feel like it. When you get out of bed to worship when your beat and tired. When you serve others out of a genuine authentic heart of worship to God. You are offering a sacrifice of worship to God and that really pleases Him.