

Worship - Week 2 - Who Are You Worshiping?

Good Morning! It's me again.

I know what you all are thinking...they must have really not been able to find anyone to preach if Pastor Brad is preaching, right?? Ha!

No, that's pretty funny but not quite true. Several months ago, as we were planning our sermon series for the fall, Pastor Bobby really wanted to do a two week series on worship and asked if I could speak.

It's been a little over ten years since I have preached regularly, so it's been a long time but I am extremely honored (and a little terrified) to have the opportunity to speak to you all because I believe that the Lord has a word for you today.

Last week, Pastor Bobby started our worship series off by explaining what worship is and how to worship in spirit and truth.

This week, I'm going to piggyback off of him and take a deeper dive into what a life of worship really looks like.

Did you know that we all are worshipers here today?

Pastor Brad, what do you mean by that?

We may all not be worshiping the same God or thing...but we all worship something.

Let's turn our bibles to 1 Kings 18

But before we read, I want to give you some context of where we are in the story leading up to this point.

You see, God used Moses to free the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt...and after 40 long years in the desert, Moses led them to God's Promise Land.

If you don't know much about The Promise Land, let me tell you what the Bible has to say about it.

NUMBERS 14.8 (CSB) | "...he will bring us into this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and give it to us.

JOSHUA 1.13 (CSB) | “Remember what Moses the Lord’s servant commanded you when he said, ‘The Lord your God will give you rest, and he will give you this land.’”

“I gave you a land you did not labor for, and cities you did not build, though you live in them; you are eating from vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.” - Joshua 24:13 (CSB)

It sounds pretty good, right??

A land that brings *food and harvest*. A land that brings *rest*. A land that brings *freedom*. Yeah, that sounds pretty great to me.

But, here’s the deal...right before they enter the land, after those 40 long years of wandering in the desert, Moses has ONE specific thing he wants to make sure he reminds them about. Listen to this in Deuteronomy 4:22:

22 “...But you are about to cross over and take possession of this good land. 23 Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you, and make an idol for yourselves in the shape of anything he has forbidden you. 24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. - Deuteronomy 4:22

Moses, is like, “Hey, y’all...I know you’re excited to go to The Promises Land...but I’ve been with you for 40 years and I know you...especially your weaknesses...so, please don’t forget all the things God has done for you, like you’ve done so many times before...please remember the consequences of worshiping idols in the wilderness...please remember His promise and don’t ever forget it.”

So, now let’s fast forward 500-600 years to our story in 1 Kings.

In Chapter 16, There is a new king over Israel named Ahab and it says in the Bible that he was more evil in God’s eyes than any other king before him.

He ends up marrying a woman named Jezebel (who was just as evil) and built a temple to the Canaanite god and idol Baal– and he made an altar and worshiped him.

And let us not forget...he built this temple and altar in the same place that Moses had warned the Israelites 500 years earlier (that we just read about) not to worship anyone other than the true God or else...you gonna regret it!

So, God is fed up with his people, He’s angry...But, since God is such a good God...he sends Elijah to be his voice and talk to King Ahab.

OK, now that we have a little context in the story, let’s stand together in the reading of God’s Word.

1 Kings 18:20-26, 36-39 (CSB) - 20 So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. 21 Then Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.” But the people didn’t answer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I am the only remaining prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. 23 Let two bulls be given to us. They are to choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and place it on the wood but not light the fire. I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood but not light the fire. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The God who answers with fire, he is God.” All the people answered, “That’s fine.” 25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Since you are so numerous, choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first. Then call on the name of your god but don’t light the fire.” 26 So they took the bull that he gave them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “Baal, answer us!” But there was no sound; no one answered.

(Go down to verse 36)

36 At the time for offering the evening sacrifice, the prophet Elijah approached the altar and said, “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that at your word I have done all these things. 37 Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that you, the LORD, are God and that you have turned their hearts back.” 38 Then the LORD’s fire fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 When all the people saw it, they fell face down and said, “The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!”

(Pray)

The first thing I want to point out is that God sent a voice when he sent Elijah.

When God wants to get our attention, He will always send someone or something to be his voice. (even His own)

Parents – Have you ever been watching your kids do something that was a little dangerous and you try and warn them...”I wouldn’t do that or I wouldn’t touch that if I were you?”

You do that because you love them and you know they are going to get hurt if they keep on doing it, right?...God does the same for us.

The second thing I want to point out is that the first thing Elijah says in verse 21 is this...**“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him.”**

I think Elijah is onto something. I think he understands something important that some of us need to hear today.

It's time to stop going back-and-forth and just choose who we are going to worship.

I know some of you know my story but a lot of you sitting here today probably don't, and I won't go into much detail but I spent most of my life chasing an empty dream. I've loved music as far as I can remember. My dad got me my first guitar when I was 12 and made up my mind soon after that I was going to move to Nashville one day and become a big star. So, when I was 19, I decided that I was going to go for it and move to music city. But, one night about a month or before I was moving, I was lying on my bed and staring at the ceiling...and felt like God was speaking to me and telling me, "Brad, If you move to Nashville right now, you are going to ruin your life. I want you to go to bible school and learn about me."

At that time in my life, we were living in California and I had just started to fall in love with a second thing...partying/alcohol. So now my two loves were music and alcohol. Which was a perfect match for disaster...especially in Nashville.

But God sent a voice...and I was faced with this decision: **Worship God or My Way?**

Thankfully, I listened and chose God— and within a month and a half, God swung open every door possible and I started my first semester of bible college on the other side of the country.

I wish the story ended there but honestly that is the start of a long 12 year battle. A battle of going back-and-forth. Worshiping God some...then... worshiping My Way? It was a never ending cycle.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that I didn't love Jesus or have a relationship with him - because I did...But, what I will tell you is that Jesus definitely wasn't my first love...alcohol was...my dream was...it was something that became an idol and I worshiped because I put it before God.

So let me ask you this question:

What in your life are you putting before God today?

After college, I was still struggling and wavering but I eventually became a worship leader for a big college ministry in Knoxville in 2009...But after two years, I ended up resigning so that I could chase my dream. I ended up moving to Nashville to work on a record. From the outside looking in, I had everything going for me. My record was great...I had some pretty decent names on the record singing with me, I had great players, and knew all the right people...but deep down my life was in complete shambles.

I was singing about God in my songs but my life was lived in the bars. I was wavering. Teetering back and forth. I was so afraid to give my life completely to Jesus because I thought I'd miss out on all the fun. And I think somehow the record labels could pick up on that.

Can any of you relate to that this morning?

Things seem perfect on the outside but deep down you know your life is in complete shambles?

There were several record labels interested in me at the time...and every single one of them told me "Brad, we like you. We like your music but we don't really know how to market it because you don't say Jesus enough. Do you want to be a Christian artist or a secular artist?" I was absolutely crushed. That dream shattered right before my eyes. But, it's pretty ironic right? I didn't say "Jesus" enough...Christian artist or Secular artist? The Back and forth..They noticed my wavering...and It was a great picture of what my life looked like at the time.

But, here's the deal...I'm so thankful that God loved me enough to allow all those Christian record labels to tell me NO...He knew that would've been a recipe for disaster with the way I was living.

After that, my life completely spiraled out of control. I didn't know who I was without my dream...and I began to try and drink the pain away. Let me tell you...it didn't work. It just left me feeling more empty.

It was 12 years of pain, worry, guilt, horrible decisions, and a lot of hangovers. And what started out promising me the world of happiness and fun, led me to live a miserable life and ended up sending me to the one place I never thought I'd go...jail. Actually, I went a few times.

1 Kings 18:26 – So they took the bull that he gave them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "Baal, answer us!" But there was no sound; no one answered.

This god that they gave their whole life to worshipping, was nowhere to be found and left them empty handed!

Chasing Empty things will always leave you empty.

This is why Moses warned the people of Israel before they entered into the Promise Land and this is what Elijah knew as well...All other gods but GOD will fail you.

It doesn't matter if it's the god of: Baal...money...your dream...possessions...whatever it is...**If it's not God, it will always fail you!**

1 Kings 18:36-39 – At the time for offering the evening sacrifice, the prophet Elijah approached the altar and said, “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that at your word I have done all these things. 37 Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that you, the LORD, are God and that you have turned their hearts back.”38 Then the LORD’s fire fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 When all the people saw it, they fell face down and said, “The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!”

Elijah knew God. He worshiped him. He had seen his miracles. He knew his voice. And he knew that day that God’s fire would fall that day.

Sometimes God has to send fire to remind you that he is God.

You have 850 prophets of Baal on this mountain and God was like, “I’ve had it with you people...when will you understand that you are worshiping a dead God? Let me show you who the one, true Living God is.”

Maybe God’s fire is shown through a miracle or an answered prayer? A promotion at work? A friend or even a complete stranger saying something that you needed to hear...A complete breakdown? Sending you to jail? Whatever it is, God wants to get our attention and show us that he is the only God worthy of our worship.

Is there anyone here that needs to be reminded of that today? That God is the only God worthy of our worship?

What would’ve happened if I would’ve realized that sooner??

What if I hadn’t waited 12 years to give 100% of my life to God? How many years of pain and grief do you think I could’ve saved myself and my family? What If I’d given my life completely to God back when I was 18, how many more lives could I have impacted for his kingdom??

Conclusion:

We all worship something...It’s either God or an idol...and Let me tell you with all my heart this morning...if it isn’t God, it is eventually going to fail you...it will leave you empty... just like how Baal failed King Ahab and those 850 prophets on that mountain.

We need to make a decision and stop wavering.

Whatever it is, follow it with your whole heart..

I heard Louie Giglio (Passion City Church in Atlanta) say this and I think it’s so true...

Jesus would rather you follow an idol with everything you have instead of going back and forth because he knows you will reach empty a lot faster that way.

Wow. That hits pretty hard doesn't it?

God knows that there is nothing that can truly fulfill us but him. So, when we don't realize that... He let's us follow our dreams. He let's us worship our gods. He let's us... go to jail...

Why?? I believe he let's us do it, because he knows that the faster we realize these things are empty and won't fulfill us, the sooner we can realize that He is the answer. He is the one that we were searching for in the first place.

You see, my life completely changed in a jail cell in downtown Nashville in January 2016. It was the second time I'd been arrested for a DUI. Me and Alli had been married for a little over 3 years at that point and she was about to leave me because of my drinking. I put her through absolute hell those 3 years.

But this night was different. I was lying on the top bunk in that jail cell, staring at the ceiling and God began to speak to me in a very real way...Just like he did 12 years before when I was lying on my bed in my room and he called me to bible college...But you can see how circumstances can change when you worship idols.

I drank so much that night that I can't believe I remember anything. But, I remember every detail. I remember how I felt. I had never felt so low in my life. So empty. I couldn't believe my life had ended up like this. And I remember so clearly my conversation with God and how I gave my whole life to him that night.

Right there in that jail cell, I made a decision to stop going back-and forth..to stop wavering...and start worshiping God with my whole life. And, I can tell you right now...I've never been the same.

So If there is anyone today who is ready to stop going back-and-forth...to stop wavering...to put down your idol and surrender your life completely to Jesus this morning...Now is your chance! We have a prayer team who would love to pray with you and help you get started. You can also come see me or Pastor Steven after the service...

I'm telling you, it's time. You won't regret it. Make a decision today!

(Pray)

