

# Lifestyle of Worship

John 17:1-6

preached March 28, 2010 by Dr. Dwight Kilbourne

*After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you.*

**Introduction.** Imagine you are with your family, closest friends and colleagues. You know that you have less than 24 hours to live. You realize that this will be your last opportunity to speak with those you love. What would you want to do? What would you want to say?

When Jesus reached this point in his life, he gathered with his closest friends and shared the festival Passover meal. At the conclusion of the meal, he spoke to them from the heart. He knew that his final hour had come and he was facing the last step of his journey and he would die as a martyr.

John 17 provides us with the final segment of Jesus' discourse. It takes the form of a farewell speech and prayer. He looks back at where he's been, where he is and what is ahead. He offers a prayer of intercession for his followers and those who will believe as a result of their ministry.

Throughout the season of Lent, we have focused on worship. The sermons in the Nave and Vine have communicated some theme related to worship. Small groups have met for the past 5 weeks and have talked about this subject. We have spotlighted corporate worship. But here in our scripture lesson, Jesus highlights an aspect of worship that is vital – a lifestyle of worship. He prayed: *"I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do."*

Worship is not something limited to what we do on a Sunday when we gather for

church services. Worship is to be integrated into our everyday life and our very living is to be designed to glorify God. Like Jesus, God has given us "work" to do during our lives here. By doing and completing that "work" in ways pleasing to God, we glorify God. Let's take a few moments and reflect on aspects of the work God has given to us.

**Relational Worship.** One of our greatest sources of joy flows out of relationships with those we love. Yet, without a doubt, some of the toughest "work" we do is found in relating to those we love, particularly in our homes and church. How can we glorify God through the relationships we have with others?

Jesus knew first hand the challenge of relationships. He found that on occasions, his own family members were not supportive of his ministry and wondered if he should be committed. He often found that on his team, the "starting 12" had some real issues. In the final meal he had to deal with two – Judas who betrayed him and Peter who denied him. So how did Jesus glorify the Father through his work of relationships?

In the farewell prayer, Jesus shared that he committed himself to two important aspects of work in these relationships: he nurtured them in their faith and sought to protect them for their well-being (physically, emotionally and spiritually). Jesus invested his life in their lives. He shared with them matters of faith. He allowed them to be part of his life and ministry. He involved them and equipped them for making a difference. He dealt with the issues they faced and stayed engaged through both the good and difficult times. Through his work in relationships, he glorified the Father.

Throughout his life, my father has been a busy and involved person. Before his retirement, Dad served as a bi-vocational pastor and worked in a paper mill in Kingsport. His role in the plant included shift work and a significant amount of overtime. He was also deeply committed to the churches he served and spent endless hours in ministry. Yet despite the level of my father's involvement, he invested much of his life in his children and wife. I never felt neglected. Dad was present at my

childhood and youth events. He involved me in his life and ministry. He helped to nurture me in the faith by taking me to church and being there for me. Dad had the greatest influence on me of anyone in terms of my becoming a pastor. Because of his investment and the grace of God, I serve in ordained ministry today and serve as the pastor of this great church. I have witnessed first hand what it is for one to worship God through their commitment to relationships.

Are you worshipping God through the relationships you have with those you love?

**Vocational worship.** A second area where we can glorify God in our lives is through our vocation or occupation.

One of the interesting aspects of Jesus' earthly ministry is that he did not begin until he was around 30 years of age (Luke 3:23). To many of us, that seems rather late, particularly given the average lifespan of people then. We have no biblical information why he waited until that point of life. I have heard some speculation that his mother was probably widowed at an early age and it was his responsibility as the oldest son to provide for the family. If so, he probably worked in his father's profession as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). If so, it is evidence that Jesus was committed to his secular vocation and responsibilities until he was able to launch into ministry.

Nearly all of us spend or have spent a significant portion of our lives in our vocational endeavors. While some among us may have worked at different jobs or for various firms or corporations, we invest much of our lives in our labor. Is it possible or should we try to honor God through what we spend our lives doing vocationally?

A few years ago in this area, a couple of businessmen advertized, by communicating through words and symbols (the fish), that they operated "Christian" businesses. One of these men was arrested for immoral practices and the other for dishonest business practices. Both events were broadcast on the news.

Their stories remind me of the story of the police officer who pulled over an irate driver. The driver, who was driving in heavy traffic, kept blowing the horn,

shouting out the window and saluting people with a single finger. When the officer walked up to the window, the driver asked, "What is the problem officer?" The officer replied, "When I saw all the Christian symbols and stickers on the back of your car and then saw your actions, I just knew the driver had stolen this car."

Godly actions and Godly lifestyle in our vocational life are means by which we honor God.

But the scripture provides another key in this area. In Colossians, Paul wrote: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord* (Colossians 3:23).

We worship God when we give our best in our vocation – whether we are tending to a patient, representing a client, working on a project, negotiating a business deal, dealing with a disgruntled customer, cleaning a restroom, etc. Half-hearted work fails to honor the Lord.

I want to take a moment to brag on one of our custodial staff here at FCUMC. Robert is no longer a young man and he is employed part time for us. He has particular tasks that he is committed to do and he is on the rotation to open up and prepare for Sunday Services. Robert does his job with all his heart. He is ready and willing to do what is asked of him. On Sundays after I have had my prayer time of walking through the building, he will ask me, "Do you see anything that you need me to do?" His work honors God. (When you see him in the hallway, tell him "thank you.")

**Avocation worship.** As followers of Jesus, we are called by God to do acts of ministry for people, his church and the world. Through doing these acts of ministry, we worship the Lord.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, his particular acts of ministry brought glory to God and moved the people to praise God. On one occasion some men carried a paralyzed friend to Jesus. The Lord forgave his sins and then commanded him to take up his mat and walk home. When the man headed home, Matthew recorded this reaction from the people: *"They were filled with awe, and they glorified God"* (9:6).

Jesus gave this encouragement to his followers: *Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven*

(Matthew 5:16).

LC Pollard played a vital role in his church. He was a greeter, par excellence. He was present every Sunday morning to greet children, youth and adults – guests and members. My first Sunday at the church, he was the first to greet our family and our small boys. He always had a smile, gave most people hugs and had chewing gum for those who wanted it. His light shined brightly as he served in the ministry of greeting.

To glorify God in ministry, we must commit ourselves to ministry and give it our best.

### **Worship through the work of death.**

The final area in worshiping God through the work of our life may seem somewhat odd or perhaps even morbid to some. But it is appropriate for our scripture lesson. It is glorifying God through the work of death. How Jesus came to and lived out his death brought glory to God. He had lived his life fully, given himself to what God had called him to do and died graciously.

One day each of us will die. For some, it will be sooner than for others. Some will have a sense of its nearness while it may come for others as a surprise. Regardless of the how and when, death will come to each of us. Can we, as Jesus did, face our death in a way that gives glory to God?

What would this look like? First of all it comes through living life well. We have given ourselves to living as I have spoken throughout this sermon. We face each new day without regret. We leave behind that which will continue to serve the Lord and meet the needs of people – whether it is through people we have served and touched, ministry created, and/or physical resources that continue to serve the church and ministry.

A few weeks ago, First-Centenary lost one of our faithful members who demonstrated how to glorify God in death. About two years ago, Dick Anderson was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. His physicians informed him that even if the treatments were successful, he would live for a period of time and then the cancer would return. During that period of time, Dick lived life to its fullest in relationship to his family and church. About two months ago, the cancer returned with a vengeance. Treatments held little promise and Dick was faced with the reality of death. Those of us

who visited with Dick during the final days were amazed at his extraordinary faith. He had a true peace and assured all that he was ready to die. He was not anxious but he rested in the hope he knew in Jesus Christ. Dick glorified God through his journey to his death. He inspired many of us to worship our Creator.

Jesus glorified God by completing the "work" he was given to do. Let us too, glorify God by completing the work God has given us to do. Did you know that the Greek word John used that is translated as "glorify" has the same root for our word "doxology" – "words of glory?" Our lives should be a living doxology to God.

During the 1600's, Thomas Ken served as an Anglican priest and became a bishop. Through most of his ministry before he entered the episcopacy, he had a strong connection to Winchester College as a scholar and priest. There he had a deep passion to uplift the spiritual lives of the students. He published a book of prayers in which he encouraged the students to sing the Morning and Evening hymns devoutly. Later these hymns were published with each having as its last stanza the words we call the *Doxology*. The morning hymn, "Awake, my soul, and with the sun" originally had 14 verses (<http://www.ctlibrary.com/ch/1991/issue31/3118.html>).

As an act of giving glory to God, I invite you to join in singing the verses that are found on the front of the bulletin that I believe capture the essence of what this sermon attempted to communicate. Its tune is that of the doxology.

Awake, my soul, and with the sun  
Thy daily stage of duty run;  
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise,  
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

Thy precious time misspent, redeem,  
Each present day thy last esteem,  
Improve thy talent with due care;  
For the great day thyself prepare.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,  
All I design, or do, or say,  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
In Thy sole glory may unite.

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.