

WORSHIP



THE CROWN JEWEL

***"LEARNING TO WORSHIP GOD
THE WAY HE WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED"***

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WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

(Introductory Message)

Intro ... This morning it is my privilege and delight to introduce a brand-new series of messages.

For the past five years at least, every new series of messages that I have preached has been suggested by the one just completed.

This one is no exception.

The title of this new series is ...

"WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL."

More than merely being '*suggested*' by the '*Apprehending Abba*' series it is virtually demanded by it. The new one is systemically linked to the former.

For the past eight months, we have opened our hearts and minds to and focused our wills upon the fact that "*Knowing God*" that is, entering into a personal relationship with our Awesome Heavenly Abba, is the very essence of Eternal Life. Jesus Himself said so.

30 distinctive aspects of our Heavenly Father's nature we have discovered in the Scripture. Each of them contributes to the personal relationship that He desires us to enjoy with Him.

These past months have been for us an awesome journey (as it were) into our Heavenly Abba's heart!

'*Coming to Know God*' - to know Him as He desires to be known - is indeed the greatest possible achievement and blessing in earthly life.

And the more we know God ... the more we come to actually '*Apprehend Abba*' ... the more we will find ourselves propelled (as it were) toward the realities contained in the series we launch today.

Here's our ***Series Key Scripture*** ...

OUR SERIES KEY SCRIPTURE ... John 4:24

(This is what ties this series in with our previous one.)

*"True Worshipers will **WORSHIP** the Father in **SPIRIT** and in **TRUTH** ...
They are the kind of worshipers that the Father **SEEKS**."*

So, what does it mean *'To Worship'*?

We could certainly call this our Series *Key Definition*:

WORSHIP: to ascribe (to attribute) **ULTIMATE WORTH**
to something or someone.
(To bow before - To honor most highly)

In Psalm 29:2, we seek the Psalmist David urging us to do just that ...

*"**ASCRIBE** to the Lord the glory due His Name;
WORSHIP the Lord in the Splendor of His Holiness."*

Here now is ...

OUR SERIES KEY CONCEPT ...

(This is the reality this entire series is built around.)

*Our Heavenly Abba is actively **SEEKING WORSHIPERS** ...
A particular **KIND** of worshipers:*

The kind that are motivated and energized by the **SPIRIT**;
The kind that are informed and directed by the **TRUTH**.

*"Motivated and energized by the Spirit" ... that means that if
we are **not** 'Keeping in Step with Pneuma' we can't do it!*

*"Informed and directed by the Truth" ... that means if we are making
things up as we go along or if we are developing our worship in
keeping with every new 'Spiritual Breakthrough'
that comes along, we can't do it.*

In a word, this **key concept** is telling us that our Heavenly Father
is actively seeking for those who will ...

'Worship Him in the way that He wants to be Worshipped.'

Hopefully this series of messages will help us do just that!

And now finally this morning in this introductory statement,
here is ...

OUR SERIES KEY DECLARATION ...

(This is what we will be discovering in the weeks to come.)

***"WORSHIP IS THE CROWN JEWEL
IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD"***

We will discover that:

WORSHIP is the Crown Jewel in the ***HEAVENLY REALMS.***

*"You are worthy our Lord and God to receive honor and
glory and power for You created all things and
by Your Will they ... have their being."*

(Revelation 4:11)

WORSHIP is the Crown Jewel in ***CHRIST'S CHURCH.***

*" ... they raised their voices together in prayer to God.
'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'You made the heaven and the
earth and everything in them. ... Stretch forth Your hand' ..."*

(Acts 4:24 ... vs. 30a)

WORSHIP is the Crown Jewel in the ***BELIEVER'S LIFE.***

"Be still and know that I am God ... I will be exalted in the earth."

(Psalm 46:10)

Final Thought ...

WORSHIP is at the very ***HEART*** of eternal life!

In other words, those who '*miss out on worship*' are
missing out on the best part of '*Kingdom Living.*'

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Reverently"

Intro ... Last week we began a brand-new series of messages titled:

"WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL"

We saw that '**Worship**' is the '**Crown Jewel**' in the '**Kingdom of Heaven**' and in the '**Church of Jesus Christ**' and in the '**Life of every True Believer**.' (Revelations 4:11/Acts 4:24/Psalm 46:10)

We also saw that our Awesome Heavenly Abba is actively '**Seeking for Worshipers**' ... He obviously delights in being the '**Object of our Worship**' - the sole object.

We also saw that those who would '**Bring Him Delight**' in their worship must '**Worship Him in Spirit and in Truth**.' (John 4:23)

Obviously, we want to bring our Heavenly Abba pleasure as we worship Him! We want to worship Him in a way that He will recognize and receive as '**True Worship**.'

We also want to '**Worship Him**' in the way that brings all the blessings of worship into our own lives.

As we begin this series of messages, I am convinced that by the power and presence and persuasion of the **Spirit** and by examination of the **Truth** contained in the Scripture, we will surely obtain ...

OUR SERIES GOAL ...

That **WORSHIP** will become the **CROWN JEWEL** of our lives so that our **RELATIONSHIP** with our Heavenly Abba will reach its **PEAK!**

What an aspiration for our lives!

What a life-focusing statement to make!

To say:

"I want worship to become the Crown Jewel of my life."

"I want my relationship with my Heavenly Abba to reach its peak!"

Does that strike a chord in your heart?

If it does, then all that remains for us is these little itty, bitty questions:

OUR SERIES KEY QUESTIONS

How exactly ***SHOULD*** we worship our Awesome Heavenly Abba?
What ***ATTITUDES*** should ***CHARACTERIZE*** us as we do?

The truth is: There are many.

Each of these '***Worship Attitudes***' that we will identify in the weeks ahead brings a distinctive flavor to our worship. Each of them causes a unique aroma to enter into the Courts of Heaven as well as into the Temple of our Souls. Both the Worshiper and the Worshipped ONE are blessed. It's the ultimate '***Win-Win.***'

So ... are you ready to begin a quest for ***Worship Truth?*** Are you ready to follow the Spirit (as it were) into the very Courts of Heaven?

Well, trusting that your answer has been a resounding "***YES,***" allow me to draw your attention to ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba REVERENTLY"

"REVERENTLY" ... With upmost ***respect*** and ***honor***
With ***awe*** and ***wonder***
In Overwhelming ***amazement***

Let's check out some who were doing just that ... **Revelation 4: 1-11**
Ask the Spirit to help you '***see it***' just the way the Apostle John saw it.

"After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said,
"Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

(2) At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. (3) And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald encircled the throne.

(4) Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

(5) From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

(6) Also, before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and behind.

(7) The first living creature was like a *lion*, the second was like an *ox*, the third had a face like a *man*, the fourth was like a flying *eagle*.

(8) Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night, they never stop saying:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."*

(9) Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and *worship* him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and *say*:

(11) "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Upmost Respect and Honor - Awe and Wonder - Overwhelming Amazement ... Those awesome heavenly beings expressed it all as they bowed before our Almighty Abba Father in worship.

Now just in case you missed it as I read, let me draw out from that passage the thing that caught all these heavenly beings up in *Reverential Worship*.

I would label it this morning:

A REVERENCE-STIMULATION TRUTH ...

"OUR ABBA FATHER IS THE CREATOR OF ALL."

*"You CREATED all things and by your WILL,
they were CREATED and have their BEING."*

(verse 11)

This is a stimulation that is being lost in our world today - lost even among those who identify as born-again believers. I would go so far as to say that one cannot truly worship God without it.

When we come to church to worship, (these heavenly beings would tell us) we are first of all coming to '*Worship the Creator of all things*.'

Notice the various elements of that *Creative Process* that these Heavenly Worshipers identify - things that cause them to ...

*"Fall down before Him who sit on the Throne."
(verse 10)*

And as we do *'take note of those things,'* I want us see how the Apostle Paul pointed out those very elements when he confronted the pagan Greek Philosophers in the Areopagus in Athens. (Acts 17)

*** FIRST THERE IS THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT HE HAS CREATED**

- That is, brought something (all things) into being that once were not -

"You created all things" - verse 11a

Isn't it amazing that Heavenly Beings who have no experience with any of the fallenness that we battle with, beings who have never been **without** the knowledge of God's immense creative power and authority, are nevertheless still amazed and in awe of it (and Him)?

Never does it become *'Old Stuff'* to them. **Never** do they cease giving utmost respect and honor to the ONE who has indeed *'Created All Things.'* **Never** do they fall into the trap of familiarity that could cause them to look upon their Creator casually.

The Acknowledgement that our Heavenly Abba has, in fact, created all things powerfully stimulates a sense of **reverential worship**.

When Paul found himself *'twiddling his thumbs'* in Athens while waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him, he noticed the altars and temples to the many so-called *'gods'* that the Greeks worshipped. He also noticed the presence of an altar with the inscription: **"TO AN UNKNOWN GOD."**

We could call that the *'Cover your bases'* altar. The *'Just in case there is a God that we don't know about, we will sacrifice to HIM as well'* altar. Paul took advantage of that open door and announced to the Greek Philosophers who were engaging in yet another daily discussion that he had come to make known to them the identify of **'That God.'**

Paul declares that that **UNKNOWN GOD** is, in fact, **THE CREATOR** ...

"The God who made the world and everything in it."

And then he goes on to say that:

*"The God who made the world and everything in it
is the Lord of heaven and earth."*

(Acts 17:24)

What Paul is implying without saying it directly is that:

***"Acknowledgement of Our Abba's Creative Activity
should result in Reverential Worship."***

But in these *'Truth-Bearing, Spirit-Given Scriptures'* we find that the ***acknowledgement*** that our Abba is the Creator of All is just a first element that leads us toward ***Reverential Worship***.

*** *THEN THERE IS THE REFERENCE TO HIS WILL***

- That is, there has been a plan and purpose in this Creative Process -
"By your Will they were created ..." - verse 11b

Worship is enhanced by the understanding that Our Heavenly Abba didn't *'have to'* create anything ... rather He *'chose to.'*

Those Heavenly Beings knew that they existed because the Father chose for them to exist. They owed their glorious existence to Him and they ***worshipped*** Him because of the choices He had made.

Paul developed this element of the creative process in some depth as he presented the case before the Greeks.

Here's how he put it:

"From one man He made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them, the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him."

(Acts 17:24, 26)

In other words (Paul is saying) ...

'Your very existence is the result of the Creator God's decisions.'

God decided eons ago that the world of men would come into being and that he would place into man a desire and even longing for Himself.

He planned that they would *'seek him'* and even *'reach out for him'* - that they might come to know the fullness of life through Him.

The wonderful ***willfulness*** of the Creator that brought mankind into being and that designed mankind as they are designed is cause for ***Worship*** ... for ***Reverential Worship***.

And now for the *third and final element* in this creative process that should rightly bring one to a place of sincere *reverential worship*.

This final element comes on the heels of the *Acknowledgement* that our Heavenly Abba has in fact **CREATED** all things and builds upon the *Reference* to (or the Recognition of) His purposeful **WILL** in designing all things.

Here's how we express this *third element* of the 'Worship-Creating Creation Process' ...

*** AND THEN THERE IS THE SUGGESTION OF HIS SUSTAINING**

- That is, providing the means whereby things continue on -

"They ... have their being."

Here once again is that whole wonderful statement ...

" for You created all things, and by Your Will they were created and (by Your Will they) have their Being."

Here's how Paul expressed it to those educated Greeks:

"... He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else ... for in Him we live and move and have our being."

(Acts 17:25,28)

It's like Paul himself has listened in on the same Heavenly Worship that John had been '*lifted*' into. Our Heavenly Abba not only has Willfully and Purposefully Created all things, He provides for the Sustaining of all things. Without His On-Going Watch-Care, all would be lost.

Can we - could they - draw any other conclusion than this:

**WORSHIP HIM - WORSHIP HIM - WORSHIP HIM ...
WORSHIP HIM REVERENTLY!**

Bow now before your Awesome Heavenly Abba with utmost respect and honor, with awe and wonder, in overwhelming amazement as we acknowledge *The Truth* contained in today's *final thot* ...

Final Thot ...

Worshipping our Abba Father **REVERENTLY**
is an awesome **STARTING POINT!**

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ...Exclusively"

(Ex. 20:3; Deut. 8:19; Rom. 1:25; Matt. 6:24; Jn. 17:1,3; Matt. 6:9; Rev. 3:12,14,21; 1Cor.15:24,28)

Intro ... Two weeks ago, we began a brand-new series of messages titled: "***Worship: The Crown Jewel.***"

We discovered in that introductory message that "*Worship is the Crown Jewel in the Kingdom of God and in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the True Believer's Life.*"

We learned that '*Worship is the very heart - the core component - of Eternal Life*' ... Our Life with Abba.

Last week I shared with you ...

OUR SERIES GOAL ...

That **WORSHIP** becomes the **CROWN JEWEL** of our lives so that our **RELATIONSHIP** with our Heavenly Abba will reach its **PEAK!**

I also shared with you ...

OUR SERIES KEY QUESTIONS ...

How exactly **SHOULD** we worship our Awesome Heavenly Abba?
What **ATTITUDES** should **CHARACTERIZE** us as we do?

Last week we began to answer those questions as we discovered that we should come before (that is, we should worship) our Heavenly Abba ... **REVERENTLY** - with awe and wonder.

Here now is ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

*"Worship Abba **EXCLUSIVELY**"*

"EXCLUSIVELY" ... solely - **WHOLLY** - only
- With no **RIVAL** or competing **ALLEGIANCE** -

The truth is ... that is harder to do than we might think.
To set our Heavenly Abba apart as the sole object of our highest worship and praise is contrary to everything the **world** around us and the **flesh** within us and the **devil** who comes against us would counsel.

But '**Exclusive Worship**' is what is required and those who will worship Him exclusively are the ones our Heavenly Abba seeks.

Consider this set of Inspired Scriptures. They are **Today's Key Scriptures**. They establish the fact that the worship we bring to our Heavenly Abba must be '**Exclusive Worship**' - worship given to nothing or no one else.

Here we go ...

Allow them to just snowball you into the Attitude of the Day:

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...

Here's the **first** and most foundational one:

*"Thou shalt have no other gods **BEFORE** me."
(or in **ADDITION** to me) - Exodus 20:3*

This is God the Father commanding that the People that He had chosen and delivered from bondage would have no other gods.
They were to worship Him **exclusively** ...

The identities of the other two members of the God Family would be revealed in due time but this is the Father's Voice and it was the Almighty '**Profoundly Wise**' - '**Breath-Takingly Purposeful**' - '**Mysteriously Purposeful**' - '**Powerfully Protective**' Abba Father who was '**Laying Down the Law**' (literally) to Moses.

Exclusive Worship is the only kind that will be accepted.

In our second **Key Scripture**, we hear Moses' voice issuing a **dire warning** to the people as they prepared to enter the Promise Land:

*"If you ever **FORGET** the Lord your God and follow other gods and **WORSHIP** and bow down to them, I testify to you today that you will be **DESTROYED**." - Deuteronomy 8:19*

Can't say it any more clearly ... Loss of Exclusive Worship leads to destruction in one way or another ... could be complete annihilation or '*simply*' loss of blessing.

* * * * *

Our third **Key Scripture** tells us that this command for singular worship has been known but violated by the entire human race.

*"They exchanged the truth of God for a **LIE** and **WORSHIPPED** and served created things rather than the **CREATOR** who is (to be) forever praised (exclusively worshipped)." - Romans 1:25*

For one such group of people, God's judgment came in the form of the Great Flood of Noah's day. Worship wrongly directed continues to be Fallen Man's great grievous sin.

* * * * *

Our fourth and final **Key Scripture** comes from our Savior Himself ...

*"No man can serve two **MASTERS** ...
You cannot serve (worship) both **GOD** and ..." - Matthew 6:24*

It simply cannot be done ... Worship by its very nature is **exclusive**. We are simply '*kidding ourselves*' if we think that our '*Worship*' can be shared among '*many*' or even two.

Wow ... what a set of Scriptures!

From the very beginning of time, Our Heavenly Abba has made it clear that we are to '*Worship Him Exclusively*.'

Now, coming out of those Scripture I would draw one **Key Observation** followed by what I'm calling '**An Unexpected Directive** ...

A KEY OBSERVATION AND AN UNEXPECTED DIRECTIVE ...

Here's the Key Observation:

If you are not worshipping Abba **EXCLUSIVELY**,
you are not **REALLY** worshipping Abba at all.

Now that's a pretty obvious observation, wouldn't you say?
I'm sure that's something that we would all say is a '*no-brainer*.'
However, it's an observation that should lead each of us to do
some soul-searching ... How exclusive ***are we*** in our worship?
Is our Relationship with our Abba Father our highest value?

And now for the Unexpected Directive:

Don't **CONFUSE** Jesus with Abba ...
Don't let him become a **REPLACEMENT** for Abba.

Some years ago now, we learned that we cannot and should not
'Confuse Jesus with the Holy Spirit' ... We learned that things
get spiritually '*out of kilter*' when we do so.

The Holy Spirit (*Pneuma*) is our Daily Companion - the Holy Spirit
(*Pneuma*) is the Divine One to whom we yield control
of our lives each day.

Our Risen, Exalted Savior is enthroned in heaven carrying out
incredibly important ministries on our behalf and He and the Father
have sent '*Pneuma*' to carry out the Plan of God in our lives.
We have learned that and have gained immensely as a result.

Today is kind of a '***Step Two***' in that clarification process:

"Don't Confuse Jesus with Abba" for to do so leads to as much
loss of blessing as does '***Confusing Jesus with 'Pneuma.'***

So how do we make sure that we are not doing that?
How do we '*Keep things straight*' and become the kind of
'*Worshippers of the Father*' that the Father is seeking?

GUIDELINES TO GO BY ...

1. FOLLOW JESUS' EARTHLY EXAMPLE:

Jesus PRAYED to the Father
He taught His DISCIPLES to do the SAME.

"Jesus looked toward heaven and said: 'FATHER ..."
"That they may know YOU, the ONE TRUE (Father) GOD ..."
(John 17:1, 3)

"When you PRAY, say 'Our FATHER in heaven..."
(Matthew 6:9)

There is no question that our prayers are to be directed to our Heavenly Abba ...

Prayers that begin '*Dear Jesus*' are directed toward the wrong member of the Family.

Oh, I surely believe because our Heavenly Abba is (as we just learned) '*Magnificently Merciful*' and almost '*Inconceivably Gracious*' and of course, '*Lavishly Loving*' and even '*Wonderfully Forgiving*,' that He hears those prayers and responds to them but why not '*Pray the way Jesus himself prayed and the way He taught his disciples to pray*'?

We should address the prayers of our heart to our Abba Father - It's one way that we make Him *Exclusive* in our Lives ...

Now here's a *second guideline* to follow and it may come as a surprise to you that Our Risen, Exalted Savior views His Father still today the same way that he did when he was on the earth.

2. FOLLOW JESUS' HEAVENLY EXAMPLE:

* **"His LETTER to the Church in PHILADELPHIA"** - Revelation 3:12

*"Him who overcomes,
I will make a pillar in the temple of **MY GOD**.
I will write on him the name of **MY GOD** and of the city
of **MY GOD** which is coming down out of heaven from **MY GOD**."
(Though now risen and highly exalted, ABBA is still Jesus' focus.)*

* **"His LETTER to the Church in LAODICEA"** - Revelation 3:14,21

*"These are the words of the Amen, The Faithful
and True Witness, the Ruler of **God's Creation**."

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me
on my Throne, just as I overcame and sat down with
MY FATHER on His Throne."
(The Father is still the Father and the Son is still the Son.)*

Here now is the most compelling of all the Scriptural revelations.
It's a revelation that should serve to keep our '**Worship Focus**' clear.

3. CHECK OUT OUR SAVIOR'S ULTIMATE ACT OF WORSHIP:

*"Then the end will come, when He (Jesus) hands over the kingdom to
GOD THE FATHER ... The Son Himself will be made subject to Him ...
so that **GOD** (Our Abba Father) may be **ALL in ALL**."
(1 Corinthians 15: 24, 28)*

That moment defines the ultimate '*Joy that was set before Jesus
when He endured the cross*' ...

It's the Joy of honoring His Heavenly Abba in this ultimate way ...
to turn the entire Kingdom, purchased by His Blood and produced
by His Heaven-Sent Spirit, over to Him.

What a day that will be - the **culmination** of all our Abba's Plans.

Final That ...

Worshipping Abba **EXCLUSIVELY** is absolutely **FUNDAMENTAL**.
There is only **ROOM** in the universe (or the human heart)
for **ONE GOD**. Worship Him **ALONE!**

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL"

'Worship Abba Reflectively'

(Psalm 46:10; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 6:32)

Intro ... The highest calling and the greatest privilege a human being can receive is to be '*A Knowledgeable Worshiper of the ONE TRUE GOD - the Abba Father Himself.*' There is no higher calling that ever comes to a human being or to any being for that matter and there is no greater privilege that any human being can ever receive.

To truly worship - to engage in '**Worthing**' the Almighty Himself, whom we have come to truly '**Know**' is the most note-worthy thing that you and I can ever do.

Here at *Sonlife* Community Church we aspire to build a congregation of such '*Truly Knowledgeable Worship-Centered People*' ...

We have spent the past 8 months working on the '**Knowledgeable**' part ... Coming to truly '*Know God the Father*' ... '**Abba Father,**' Jesus called Him ... '**Abba Father**' we are told to call Him.

And '**Abba Father**' we find ourselves increasingly calling Him. Indeed, we have been coming to know Him better and better and out of that '**Knowing**' arises genuine, spontaneous heart-felt **WORSHIP**.

And in the midst of those moments of genuine, spontaneous heart-felt worship, we feel our Heavenly Father's **Pleasure**.

It only stands to reason, then, that the more we worship and the better we worship, the more pleased with us our Abba Father will be and the more His Pleasure we will feel.

Is it any wonder then that I titled this newest series of messages we launched just three weeks ago: "**Worship - The Crown Jewel**"?

Worship **is** the Crown Jewel: In the Kingdom of God, in the Church of Jesus Christ and in every true Believer's Life.

This Summer we are seeking to learn '*How to Worship*' ... to discover what attitudes can enhance our worship and even perfect our worship.

So far, we have seen that we should Worship our Abba Father:

Reverently and Exclusively

Our Awesome Heavenly Abba is the Creator of all ...

We enter His Presence *reverently*: in a spirit of awe and wonder.

Our Heavenly Abba is the Father of all who have received new birth by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit - He is the *focus* of our worship.

He is our Heavenly Father - the *Head* of all things - He is our Abba Father - The *Source* of all things. We bring our needs to Him.

He hears and answers our prayers. We worship Him *exclusively*.

Today I would draw your attention to a third *Key Worship Attitude*.

It's an attitude that suggests a '*Worship Process*' that might aid us in our quest to become '*Worship-Centered*' people.

Here it is ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba REFLECTIVELY"

REFLECTIVELY - Quietly - Comprehensively - Wistfully

Quietly: Put your '*spiritual earbuds*' in and block out all other noise

Comprehensively: in depth not merely superficial

Wistfully: with a sense of longing and even nostalgia

In a word:

"TAKING into account ALL that He is."

Over these past months we have identified **30 Aspects** of our Heavenly Abba's Nature ... It's essential that we keep all of them in mind if we are to be the '*Worshippers who feel His Pleasure*'.

And so, we say: "**Worship Abba Reflectively**" ...
Quietly, Comprehensively and even Wistfully ...

Today's **Key Scripture** surely points us in that direction.

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURE ...

"Be **STILL** and **KNOW** that I am **GOD**.
I will be exalted among the **NATIONS**.
I will be exalted in the **EARTH**."

(I **WOULD** be exalted in your **LIFE**.)
(Psalm 46:10)

There's quietness called for in that verse: "**Be Still**"

There's a comprehensive awareness called for: "**Know that I am God.**"

There's cause for wistfulness in that verse: "**I will be exalted**" (please be!)

In a sense that verse is saying that there is coming a day when God will turn all living beings into '**Worshippers**' ... He will be seen as He truly is ... He will be elevated above all and all living beings will acknowledge Him and worship Him.

My addition to that verse simply points out that our '**Abba Father**' would turn all of us into worshipers '**Right Now.**' He desires to be '**exalted in our lives**' each and every day. Surely, we desire that too!

So, concerning '**Exalting Abba in your Life**' let me suggest several things that might be helpful ...

1. ZERO IN ON ONE ASPECT OF ABBA'S NATURE AT A TIME

I'm sure that you have already discovered that it's impossible to keep those '**Thirty Aspects of our Heavenly Abba's Nature**' in your mind at the same time. That '**Bookmark**' that we handed out some weeks ago, can keep the list before us but can also remind us of the vastness of the task.

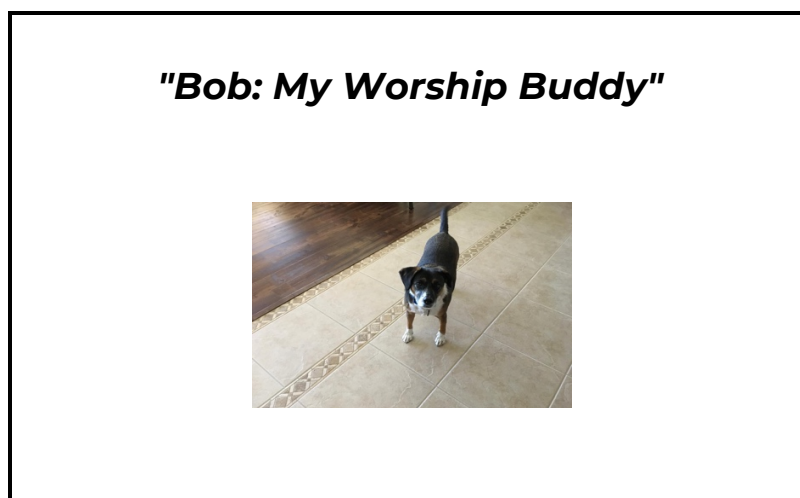
Our eyes can blur and our minds can cloud just looking at it though it certainly is nice to have.

Besides, it pretty impossible to actually *'Reflect'* upon 30 things at one time. The best we can do is look at the list and perhaps read a few of those familiar descriptions and conclude: *'My Abba is Awesome'* and let it go at that. We become *'Generic Worshipers'* ...

I've come up with a possible solution but first let me point out the importance of *"Finding a Time and a Place."*

My time and my place is generally 6:30 to 7:00 in the morning during my morning walk in the community where I live.

Here is ...



He accompanies me and seems to be quite in tune with the Creator's World and with my desire to share the wonder with him. The world is generally quiet and my own soul can become *'still.'*

Your time and spot will, of course, be yours but seek such a time and place out. Then comes the focus for your daily worship.

Zero in on one aspect of Abba's Nature at a time.

Here's something that might help all of us do that.

I've called it ...

"MY MONTHLY WORSHIP FOCUS"

- Bringing 'Eternal Life' into 'Earthly Life' Every Single Day -

It's a 'Day by Day' Schedule through the month.

Thirty Days - Thirty Aspects to Reflect Upon.

Included with each one is a 'summary statement.'

They are in the same order as we discovered them.

Today I would share with you a way to go about using it.

We '**Zero In**' on Day One ...

Day One's Worship Example:

"My Abba is Intensely **PERSONAL**"

So ... Now that you have 'Zeroed In' on just one aspect of Abba's Nature,

2. EXHAUST THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT ONE ASPECT

(Reflect upon it quietly and comprehensively and wistfully)

Allow these **Three Questions** to guide your reflection:

*** Where and when has it been expressed in the SCRIPTURE?**

JEREMIAH: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."

(Jeremiah 1:5)

How do you think that made Jeremiah feel when the Almighty Himself revealed himself to be so '*personal*' ... the Almighty '*knew him*' better than anyone else.

The Almighty '*knew him*' and '*anticipated him*' before he was even conceived - before he was fully formed. In fact, God says to Jeremiah that He was the ONE who actually did the '*forming*' of Jeremiah in his mother's womb. Jeremiah was formed specifically for God's purposes and pleasure.

Now drop your name into the verse and **reflect** upon the fact that the ONE who would one day become your Heavenly Abba, had a similar personal involvement in your life long before you came to 'Know Him.'

What a Scripture evidence that our Abba Father is
Intensely Personal!

Here's Jesus identifying the same '***Intensely Personal!***' Aspect ...

JESUS: "Your Heavenly Father knows
you have need of all these things."
(Matthew: 6:32)

How encouraging those words must have been to Jesus' disciples. Remember how they desired to '*Know the Father*' the way Jesus did? Jesus seemed to know the Father so personally.

Here Jesus tells them that the ONE who would become their Abba Father was as personally connected to them as He was to Jesus. He knew all about them - He knew exactly what their needs were.

Drop your name into this Scripture as well. **Reflect** upon the fact that: He is your Intensely Personal Abba Father also!

Consider now this **Second** Reflection-Generating and hopefully Worship-Stimulating Question:

* ***Where and when has it been expressed in your LIFE?***

Where and when have been the times when your Abba Father has revealed Himself to you in an Intensely Personal way? Reflect upon those times ... When was the first time you became aware that the Heavenly Father knows you personally? What are the subsequent times? Reflect back upon them and rejoice in the fact that your Heavenly Father is personally connected to you.

Rejoice in the fact that He is an Intensely Personal Heavenly Father and that you are one of those in whom He has taken special interest.

And now the **Third** Reflection-Generating Question:

*** How might you need your Heavenly Abba to EXPRESS that ASPECT of His Nature to you RIGHT now?**

This, of course, calls for the most reflection of all.

It's the kind of worshipful reflection that then leads to Petition.

But how good to know that the One you would petition is one who is your '*Intensely Personal Abba Father*' who heart is linked to yours at all times. He will hear and respond to those petitions.

So ... continuing to develop your Worship Muscles as it were ...
After you **Zero** in on just one Aspect of our Abba Father's Nature and after you do your best to **Exhaust** the significance of that Aspect in your Reflections ...

3. ALLOW YOUR REFLECTIONS UPON THAT ASPECT OF ABBA'S NATURE TO DRAW YOU INTO WORSHIP.

* **BOW YOURSELF** before the ONE who has **REVEALED** Himself to be this way.

"Come, let us bow down in worship - Let us kneel before ..."

Our Intensely Personal Abba Father.

(Psalm 95:6)

* **REJOICE** in the fact that you **KNOW** Him as He is!

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know YOU,

I know you ... I have made you known to them."

(John 17:25-26)

* **RENEW** your commitment to **KEEP** in **STEP** with Pneuma Whom He sent to **COMPANION** you.

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

(Galatians 5:25)

"Worship Abba Reflectively" - with our minds and hearts fully engaged!

Consider now Today's Final Thot ...

Final Thot ...

The more we **REFLECT** upon our Abba Father
the more we will **REFLECT** our Abba Father!

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Submissively"

(Revelation 4:9-10; Matthew 6:9; Matthew 26:39; James 4:7)

Intro ... To bow one's head - to bow one's knee - to bow one's heart is an essential part of Worship and it comes pretty automatically to all who have gotten to '*Know God.*'

Jesus said that '*Knowing God*' was the very definition of the '*Eternal Life/the Abundant Life*' He came to provide.

Jesus said that the Father Whom we seek to know better and better is actively searching for those who will enter into a '*Worship Relationship*' with Him.

The truth is: "*Worship of the Heavenly Father*" is the Crown Jewel throughout the universe - there is nothing higher or better - nothing more attractive or impressive.

Worship is the response our Heavenly Father most desires from man and Worship is the response that mankind was designed to most naturally give. Sin has derailed that response - It's no longer '*natural.*'

We, however, as a congregation of Born-Again, Blood-Bought, Holy Spirit-Enabled Children of God are seeking to become a congregation of genuine Worshipers our Abba Father - worshipers in whom He will truly delight.

In this current series of messages, we are seeking to discover and embrace certain ***key worship attitudes*** - attitudes that cause our worship to be most pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

So far, we have discovered that we should

"Worship Abba Reverently and Exclusively and Reflectively."

Today, I would draw your attention to another ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... SUBMISSIVELY"

SUBMISSIVE - compliant - reliant - completely yielded

The other day as I was reviewing the 'Apostolic Way' series of messages, I came across this definition of **submission**:

"Willingly Yielding One's Personal Preferences"

Submission implies and always expresses itself in **surrender**.

That's the attitude that we must have if we would worship our Heavenly Father pleasingly.

That is the attitude that I find exemplified in ...

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...

*"Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne ... the twenty-four elders **fall down** before Him ... and worship Him ..."*
(Revelation 4:9-10)

*"This is how you should pray:
'Our Father in heaven, **hallowed** be your Name,
Your kingdom come - **Your Will be done** on earth as it is in heaven!'"*
(Matthew 6:9-10)

*"Going a little farther, **he fell with his face to the ground** and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet, **not as I will, but as You will**!'"*
(Matthew 26:39)

*"**Submit** yourselves, then, to God.
Resist the devil and **he will flee** from you."*
(James 4:7)

Submission always implies and expresses itself in **surrender!**
The surrendered saint willingly yields up all personal preferences.

Three Characteristics of a Surrendered (Submissive) Saint:

A Surrendered (Submissive) Saint:

1. Always RESPONDS To Abba's GREATNESS In WORSHIP

Feelings of worship are forever arising from the hearts of those who have truly come to know God.
Those 24 elders picture us!

2. Always PREFERS Abba's WILL More Than His OWN

What could possibly be better than having the Will of our Intensely Personal, Continually Available, Lavishly Loving, Almost Infinitely Patient Abba Father done in our lives?
What Born-Again Child of God would not want that?

3. Always LIVES In A Devil-Free ZONE

Where better to live and to enjoy this '*Eternal Life*' that Jesus died to provide and that '*Pneuma*' came to produce in each of us?
You want to be free from the devil's attacks - Worship Abba!

Worshipping our Heavenly Father ***Submissively*** is indeed ***Key*** to Worshipping God as He desires to be worshipped.

In fact, I have long said that perhaps the best test of whether we have truly '*worshipped*' on a Sunday Morning or not is this question:

"Do I feel more Submitted/Surrendered to Him?"

Final Thot ...

Those who **WORSHIP** best are
SURRENDERED most!

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Confidently"

(Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 3:16,19; Philippians 1:6)

Intro ... Let me begin today's message by telling you a story ...

A MODERN-DAY PARABLE

- The Miraculous MONEY Manager -

It goes like this:

Once there was a man who had an almost miraculous money manager handling all his investments: His '*Portfolio*.'

This money manager had a winning strategy for every conceivable economic situation.

Whenever the stock market rose quickly,
His clients would '*make a killing*.'

Whenever the stock market experienced
a major correction or even a '*crash*,'
His clients would '*make a killing*.'

Even when the stock market hit the doldrums and
just hovered around the same level for months on end,
His clients would '*make a killing*.'

He was truly a '*Miraculous Money Manager*.'

Now suppose you were one of His Clients and every dime you possessed, you placed under His Management.

You open up the paper one morning and read:

"The Stock Market set a new record high yesterday."

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

You feel great because you know that with your money manager handling your investments: "**YOU MADE A KILLING!**"

suppose you open that paper some days later and read:

"Yesterday the Stock Market suffered the greatest decline since the Great Crash of 1929 on Black Friday!"

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

You feel great because you know that with your money manager handling your investments: **"YOU MADE A KILLING!"**

Now months and months later, you open the paper and read:

"The stock market has been stuck in the doldrums for the past six months. There has been no significant movement in either direction."

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

You feel great because you know that with your money manager handling your investments: **"YOU MADE A KILLING!"**

In every one of those vastly different scenarios, your miraculous money manager has employed a most successful strategy.

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE?

Hopefully ... **EXTREMELY CONFIDENT!**

Well, what is the point of this parable and application?

The point (if you haven't guessed it already) is found in ...

TODAY'S KEY INSIGHT ...

Your Abba Father is your miraculous **LIFE MANAGER**.
He has a **WINNING STRATEGY** for everything that comes along!

And that **Key Insight** gives rise to ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

*"Worship Abba ... **CONFIDENTLY!**"*

CONFIDENTLY ...

*'With a sense of **CERTAINTY** -
With a spirit of positive **EXPECTATION**.'*

The '**Flip-Side**' is to say: With no **DOUBTS** or **WORRIES**.

Now, in a world where '*Curveballs*' can be thrown at us nearly every day ... In a world where the '*unexpected*' is actually more to be '*expected*' than its definition would indicate, this is a rare and blessed condition to be in.

To come into Abba's Presence from this fallen, broken world with a '*sense of certainty*' requires the services of a truly '*miraculous life manager*' - someone who has ...

'A Winning Strategy for everything that comes along.'

So, our *Twin Questions* today are:

DOES HE? and CAN I?

"Does my Heavenly Abba have a winning strategy for everything that comes along?" and ...

"Can I experience confidence in Him no matter what comes along?"

The answers lie in *Today's Key Scriptures*.
Let's look at them together.

First, we'll read them and then I'll share some '*Confidence-Building Convictions*' that arise from them ...

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...

1. "And we **KNOW** that in all these things, God **WORKS** for the **GOOD** of those who love Him (truly worship) Him, who have been **CALLED** according to His **PURPOSE**."
(Romans 8:28)

2. "And my God shall meet (supply) all your **NEEDS** according to His glorious **RICHES** in Christ Jesus." - Philippians 4:19

3. I pray that out of His Glorious **RICHES**, He may strengthen you with power through His **SPIRIT** in your inner being so that **CHRIST** (that is, Christ's very life) may dwell in your **HEARTS** through faith ... that you may be filled to the measure of all the **FULLNESS** of God!" - Ephesians 3:16,19

4. "(I am) **CONFIDENT** in this: that He who **BEGAN** a good work in you will carry it on to **COMPLETION** ..." - Philippians 1:6

FIVE CONFIDENCE-BUILDING CONVICTIONS ARISE FROM THOSE VERSES - FIVE TRUTHS WE CAN 'KNOW FOR SURE' ...

1. WE CAN 'KNOW FOR SURE' OUR HEAVENLY ABBA IS AT WORK IN EVERYTHING WE ENCOUNTER ...

"In all these things"

That is: In absolutely everything!

That's what the Scripture says. Now *'These things'* might be *'unexpected'* to us but they have been *'anticipated'* by our Heavenly Abba since the beginning of time.

The *'Spirit'* (Pneuma Himself) who has been sent to companion us has also anticipated them and is ready to perform the *'Work of God'* in them. ***We can be sure of that!***

2. WE CAN 'KNOW FOR SURE' THAT OUR HEAVENLY ABBA IS ALWAYS 'WORKING FOR OUR GOOD' ...

"God works for the good of those who love Him"

God has *'Glory in Mind'* every time He enters into one of our life circumstances. The Holy Spirit is never content to just *'Get Us Through'* or help us *'Struggle Along.'*

His motto for us is one which a Beloved Wheaton College President once used as a Book Title: ***"Not Somehow but Triumphantly."***

The Mighty Spirit of God, working in perfect coordination with our Heavenly Abba, will bring something truly *'Good'* - something even glorious - out of every circumstance that comes our way. ***We can be sure of that!***

3. WE CAN 'KNOW FOR SURE' THAT OUR HEAVENLY ABBA WILL ADDRESS 'EVERY ONE OF OUR NEEDS' ...

"Supply all your needs"

He will address all my *eternal* needs - the saving of my soul.
He will address all my *spiritual* needs - the healing of my soul.
He will address all my *earthly* needs - my day to day survival.
And He will do it according to (consistent with)
His Glorious Riches in Christ Jesus.
We can be sure of that!

**4. WE CAN 'KNOW FOR SURE' THAT OUR HEAVENLY ABBA'S
ULTIMATE PLAN IS TO 'FILL US WITH HIS OWN NATURE' ...**

"That you might be filled to all the measure of God!"

Our Heavenly Abba's Plan is that we come out of all '*these things*'
looking like a true son or daughter of His - like a true brother or
sister of Jesus Himself - Embodying the Character of Christ and
Filled to Overflowing with all the Traits of the Family of God!
We can be sure of that!

**5. WE CAN 'KNOW FOR SURE' THAT OUR HEAVENLY ABBA
ALWAYS COMPLETES WHAT HE BEGINS' ...**

"He ... will carry it on to completion."

Our Heavenly Abba will '*Get the Job done.*'
He always does when His Spirit is neither resisted nor grieved.
We can be sure of that!

So, neither resist nor grieve the Holy Spirit, it's crucial to the work
God would complete in our lives. That's why last week's message
on '*Submission*' had to precede this one.

So ... Take these ***Five Confidence-Building Convictions*** to heart
and (as our Final Thot directs) ...

Final Thot ...

***ENTER your Abba Father's Presence (Worship Him)
brimming over with CONFIDENCE.***

His COMPETENT hand is upon EVERYTHING!

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Thankfully"

(Revelation 4:9; Psalm 100:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:19-20)

Intro ... Here's the truth that underlies our current series of messages:

SERIES KEY TRUTH ...

If knowing our Abba Father is the ultimate human **EXPERIENCE**
(and Jesus said it is), then worshipping our Abba Father
is the ultimate human **EXPRESSION**.
Nothing can top it!

Thus, the title of this current series of messages:

"Worship: The Crown Jewel."

Those who indeed '***Live Lives of Worship***' live the very best lives of all
for (consider this):

Worship focuses the Mind;
Worship settles the Heart;
Worship energizes the Will; and
Worship satisfies the Soul.

(and this):

Worship mutes the World around us;
Worship sedates the Flesh within us; and
Worship drives the Devil from us.

Nothing is more important to our well-being than learning **HOW**
to **WORSHIP** our Heavenly Abba and then actually **DOING** it!

That's what we have committed ourselves to do this summer:
Learn how to worship Abba and then to practice it until it
becomes second nature to us.

Someone once said: "***Attitude determines Altitude.***"

Never is that more true than in our attempts to become competent
'***Worshippers of God.***'

And so, these past few weeks we have been discovering certain "**Key Attitudes**" that enhance worship:

- * We need to worship Our Heavenly Abba **REVERENTLY**
(In a spirit of awe and wonder - He's the Creator of all.)
- * We need to worship Our Heavenly Abba **EXCLUSIVELY**
(No god before Him or in addition to Him)
- * We need to worship Our Heavenly Abba **REFLECTIVELY**
(Taking into account all that He has revealed Himself to be)
- * We need to worship Our Heavenly Abba **SUBMISSIVELY**
(Completely surrendered to His Will and Ways)
- * We need to worship Our Heavenly Abba **CONFIDENTLY**
(Absolutely sure that His Will is being done in our lives.)

These various '**Attitudes**' build upon one another;
They each prepare the way for the next.

The **five** I just reviewed lay a wonderful foundation
for the ones I would share today and next week.

These next two ... will enable us to (as it were)
"Wear the Crown Jewel of Worship Gloriously."

Are you ready to hear what they are?

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... THANKFULLY!"

THANKFULLY ... with sincere appreciation and gratitude

TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...

"Thank You, Father" should be on our LIPS whenever we ENTER our Heavenly Abba's Presence.

That's what the psalmist said long years ago ...

*"Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.
Give THANKS to Him and praise His Name."
(Psalm 100:4)*

That's the understanding that Jesus Himself grew up with.

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ...

For WHAT should I be THANKING Him?

FOUR BIBLICALLY SOUND ANSWERS:

1. "I THANK YOU, FATHER FOR BEING WHO YOU ARE."

Key Scripture: Revelation 4:9 and 8

"... the living creatures give glory and honor and THANKS to Him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever ...

*Day and night, they NEVER stop saying:
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,
Who was, and is, and is to come!.'*

There's a reason our 'Apprehending Abba' Series preceded this one. That series of studies provided us with 30 outstanding reasons to say to our Heavenly Father:
*"I thank you, Father, for being **who you are.**"*

We've provided a handy guide so that we can do just that!

Today is Day Eighteen:

*"My Abba is Unwaveringly Righteous"
- He always thinks Right and feels Right and does Right -*

Does that fact not stir 'Feelings of Thanksgiving' within you?

Now that would be enough to keep us coming into the Father's Presence in worship filled with a Heart of Thanksgiving but there's at least three more Biblically Sound Answers to the question:

*"For **WHAT** should I be thanking Him?"*

Here's the **Second** ...

2. "I THANK YOU, FATHER, FOR DOING WHAT YOU DO."

Key Scripture: Psalm 118:21

*"I will give you **THANKS** for you answered me;
You have become my **SALVATION**."*

Oh, how big, how all-encompassing is that word '**Salvation**.' Long years ago now, my Seminary Professor of Old Testament Studies who seemed to me old enough to have lived in Bible days defined '**salvation**' this way:

"God moving us from a bad state of affairs to a good state of affairs."

He moved His People from Egypt to the Promise Land; He moved David from the Sheep Pasture to the Throne; He moved us from condemnation to justification - from Hell to Heaven - from meaninglessness to meaning - from darkness to light. Thank Him!

Reminding ourselves regularly '*Who our Heavenly Father Is*' and '*What our Heavenly Father Does*' should certainly '*Bring us into His Presence*' clothed (as it were) in the '*Garments of Thanksgiving*.' We are blessed and privileged we know it!

Now we could certainly stop right there ...

Those first two **Biblically Sound Answers** to the Question:

*"For **WHAT** should I be thanking Him"*

do indeed provide all the fuel we need to come into our Father's Presence in worship with our hearts on fire with Expressions of Thanksgiving.

But the Bible itself doesn't stop there because these answers just don't go far enough - they don't touch all the bases - they don't address those moments when we are *'not thankful'* ...

They don't take into account the fact that our current circumstances sometimes are so bad that they blot out or cause us to forget all the *'good stuff'* we know about **WHO** God is and **WHAT** He has done.

I'm talking about the *'situations of life'* that bring us into our Heavenly Abba's presence broken, or angry, or deeply hurt, or in dismay or disarray.

Sometimes we are anything **but** thankful when we enter His Presence.

On those days, our *'Worship Face'* wears a frown or maybe even is streaked with tears.

It seems that to come thankfully, we would have to empty our minds of the current realities and rest in the truths we have already discussed ...

Perhaps we need to do what one of the early praise songs directed:

"Just forget about yourself and magnify the Lord and worship Him."

Or as a popular Christian Inspirational Book of a few years ago encouraged ...

"Praise the Lord anyhow!"

But those approaches really are asking us to *'Deny Reality,'* aren't they? And though we might be able to do for a few moments at a time, we can't do it for long.

And so ... Thanks-Giving as a *'Worship Attitude'* becomes more and more of a foreign concept. We might yearn for a return of a thankful heart, but we suspect that it will take quite a change of circumstances for it to re-appear.

So, does the Bible say anything about this?

How should I enter the Father's Presence at such a time?

How can I maintain a *'Spirit of Thanksgiving'* when life circumstances are not at all what I desire?

Consider these next two Scriptures.

The Second follows from the First and ups the ante considerably but together they provide a framework within which worship can do its magic even when our lives are not seeming very magical.

Consider these second two ***Biblically Sound*** prayer responses:

3. "I THANK YOU, FATHER, FROM THE SITUATION I AM IN."

Key Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

*"Give **THANKS** in **ALL** circumstances,
for this is God's Will for you in Christ Jesus."*

This response does not deny the circumstances that we are in nor does it minimize them.

They might even be life-threatening in one way or another but this worship response says that compared to my Heavenly Abba and the Relationship that I have with Him, these earthly circumstances are just that: '*Earthly Circumstances.*'

They like everything else '*earthly*' will pass away.

Jesus told us that in this world we will have tribulation - troubles - but He has shown us by his own earthly life how to '*overcome*' that is, how not be **destroyed** by those worldly troubles.

How many times during the days of his earthly ministry when he was even accused of being demon possessed and declared to be a false teacher, when he had (as he once said) '*no place to even lay his head*' do you imagine he began his prayer time with these very words:

*"I thank you Father, **from** the situation I am in."*

He might have continued with these:

'This situation is real - it might never go away but what does it matter compared to the relationship I have with you?'

*In it all, I rejoice that I KNOW YOU - the ONLY TRUE GOD
and I am so **THANKFUL** that I Do!*

Our final verse of the morning takes 'Thanks-Giving' to the ultimate level and provides us with our final and Biblically Sound Answer to the Question:

*"For **WHAT** should I be thanking my Heavenly Father"*

Take a deep breath before this last prayer response hits the screen ...
Here it is ...

4. "I THANK YOU, FATHER, FOR THE SITUATION I AM IN."

Key Scripture: Ephesians 5:19-20

*"Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,
always giving **THANKS** to God the Father for **EVERYTHING**,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

That verse was written in the context of a 'Worship Passage.'

Paul was encouraging the Ephesian Believers to make worship a key part of their lives individually and corporately.

"Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord" he says.

Now we can 'make music in our hearts' no matter where we are and no matter what is going on. ... 'So, do it,' Paul says.

And then out of this general worship expression comes a very specific instruction:

*"Always giving **thanks** to God the Father for Everything."*

And there we have it ...

THE ULTIMATE **EXPRESSION** OF CONFIDENT **FAITH** -
THE **ULTIMATE** EXPRESSION OF OUR **TRUST** IN OUR ABBA -
THE ULTIMATE **EVIDENCE** THAT WE DO IN FACT **BELIEVE** THAT OUR
HEAVENLY FATHER WORKS IN **ALL** THINGS FOR OUR **GOOD!**

Our expression of thankful worship might go something like this:

"Father, by faith, I thank you for this - I thank you for the circumstances of my life for I know that your hand is upon them for my good and I trust you completely."

Here now is today's ...

Final Thought ...

A **THANKFUL** worshipper will always be
a **FRUITFUL** worshipper.

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Joyfully"

(Psalm 133:1; Psalm 145:7; Luke 19:37; Luke 15:5; Colossians 1:12; Hebrews 12:22)

Intro ... 'WORSHIP' ... it's the Crown Jewel of the Christian Life!
Are you finding it to be so? I hope so.

Over the past six weeks we have identified *Six Incredibly Helpful Attitudes* that will maximize anyone's *'Worship Experience.'*
They all build upon one another.

When we Worship our Heavenly Abba Reverently, we, of course, will worship Him Exclusively; and when we worship Him exclusively, we will find ourselves naturally worshipping Him Reflectively (for we will be forever reminding ourselves of all we know about Him); and when we successfully worship Him reflectively, we will inevitably worship Him Submissively (for how can we not bow ourselves before such an awesome heavenly Father?); and as we submissively worship the God we have deeply reflected upon, we will worship Him Confidently; and the more confident we are as we worship our wonderful Heavenly Abba, the more we will worship Him Thankfully.

We will find ourselves *'Thanking Him in everything and even for everything'* because we trust Him completely!

Now that's how far we got last week.

Today we come to a *seventh* key worship attitude and I trust that at this point, we will say **"Well, of course!"**

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... JOYFULLY!"

JOYFULLY ...

With DELIGHT ...

With a high degree of PLEASURE ...

With EXUBERANCE and PRAISE

*'With delight ... with a high degree of pleasure ...
with exuberance and praise' ...*

What a way to worship!

Do not the first six worship attitudes just naturally lead us to this one?

They certainly do; but this one blesses our Heavenly Father in ways the others don't or can't and so, He has revealed to us in the Scriptures that He desires it.

Joyfulness is a big part of the big picture!
Let's check it out ...

Here are ...

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...

Here's the directive given to the People of God ...

*"Sing **JOYFULLY** to the Lord, you righteous.
It is fitting for the upright to **PRAISE** Him." - Psalm 133:1*

Here's David testifying to the Almighty that His People are doing just that ...

*"They **CELEBRATE** your abundant goodness and **JOYFULLY** sing of your righteousness." - Psalm 145:7*

Next we see the Followers of Jesus, the Son of God, doing it ...

*When they came near ... the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began **JOYFULLY** to **PRAISE** God in loud voices for all the **MIRACLES** they had seen. - Luke 19:37*

Here's Jesus telling of the Joyful Shepherd who found his Lost Sheep and how that relates to the Heavenly realm ...

*"And when he finds it, he puts it **JOYFULLY** on his shoulders."
"There is **REJOICING** in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who **REPENTS**." - Luke 15:5,10*

Here's the Apostle Paul combining two of our worship attitudes in one exhortation ...

*"... give **JOYFUL THANKS** to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His Holy People in the Kingdom of Light." - Colossians 1:12*

And here in the Book of Hebrews we read this description of one who has entered the Heavenly Realms in worship ...

*"... you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in **JOYFUL** assembly." - Hebrews 12:22*

Here now, based upon those Scriptures is ...

TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...

Genuine Worship is evidenced by
A SPIRIT of JOYFUL DELIGHT!

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ...

What should CAUSE such a spirit of JOY to ARISE?

THREE SURE-FIRE STIMULATIONS FOR JOYFUL WORSHIP ...

1. JOYFULNESS IN WORSHIP SHOULD ARISE IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S OWN NATURE ...

"They celebrate Your abundant GOODNESS and joyfully sing of your RIGHTEOUSNESS." - Psalm 145:7

If you or I were writing that Psalm, we would list 30 awesome aspects of our Heavenly Abba's nature that would stimulate Celebration and Joyful Song ... Today's '**Worship Focus**' alone could certainly do it:

*"My Abba Is Inconceivably Gracious"
- I will never comprehend all that He has brought to my life -*

Joyfulness in Worship should certainly arise in Response to (our knowledge of) God's own **nature**.

And then by way of encouragement, David tells us that ...

"It is FITTING for the upright to PRAISE Him." - Psalm 133:1

"Fitting" indeed ...

It's proper, it's appropriate, it should be our '**knee jerk reaction**' in every situation ... to joyfully praise our Heavenly Father for simply being **WHO** He is!

Here's now another 'sure-fire stimulation for joyful worship' ...

2. JOYFULNESS IN WORSHIP SHOULD ARISE IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S OWN ACTIONS ...

"... the whole crowd of disciples began JOYFULLY to praise God in loud voices for all the MIRACLES they had seen." - Luke 19:37

Some of them had been with Jesus for his entire three-year ministry. They had perhaps seen them all: the water into wine, the healing of the sick, the casting out of demons, the feeding of the 5,000, the restoring of sight to the blind, the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

They had seen it all and it brought them to joyful praise.

***Finding** and **rescuing** the lost causes joyful worship to arise ...*

*"And when He finds it (the lost lamb),
He puts it JOYFULLY on His shoulders." - Luke 15:5*

*"There is REJOICING in the presence of the angels of God
over one sinner who REPENTS." - Luke 15:10*

Is there one '***sinner***' in our midst today who is ready to repent?

Do you know of one sinner who has repented?

Rejoice!

Now here's a '***Stimulation for Joyful Worship***' that perhaps you have not thought too much about before ...

Not only should '***Joyfulness in worship***' arise in response to God's Own ***Nature*** and in response to God's Own ***Actions*** ...

3. JOYFULNESS IN WORSHIP SHOULD ARISE IN RESPONSE TO OUR OWN HEAVENLY IDENTITY

"... give JOYFUL THANKS to the Father who has qualified you to SHARE in the inheritance of His Holy People in the Kingdom of Light." - Colossians 1:12

That, my friends, is an incredible statement! God has not just mercifully decided not to judge us for our sin and graciously opened the door of heaven to us, He has actually *qualified* us to be there.

When we get there, we will *belong* there. We have been made fully qualified! No heavenly being will look upon us as one who is only there '*By Grace*' ... one who is a kind of '*second-class citizen*.' The Father has granted us a *heavenly identity* and that identity will be recognized and valued by all who are there!

And now listen to what the writer of Hebrews tells us ...

"... you have COME to Mount Zion, to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in JOYFUL assembly." - Hebrews 12:22

He writes of these things as an accomplished fact:

"You have come."

Not '*You will come*' or '*You might someday come*' but '*You have come*.' You might question: "*When have I come?*"

I would answer: "*Every time you engage in worship.*"

Every time you engage in worship, HOLY SPIRIT - Pneuma Himself - lifts you (spiritually, of course) into the heavenly realms, into the very presence of your awesome Abba Father and there you '*have come*' to (and, dare I say, have joined with) '*thousands and thousands of angels in joyful assembly*.'

Catch their joy - share it with them. *Joyful Worship* characterizes the place. Let it characterize you. It is your own *Heavenly Identity!*

And now for today's summarizing final that ...

Final That ...

A JOYFUL SPIRIT warms the Father's HEART.
"Worship Abba JOYFULLY!"

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Receptively"

(Psalm 139:23-24; Psalm 51:2,8; 1 Peter 5:10; Isaiah 40:31)

Intro ... I can't think of a better worship attitude to possess on a Firstfruits Sunday than the one we identify today.

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... RECEPTIVELY!"

**RECEPTIVELY ... 'Anticipating ALTERATION'
Rejoicing in the Father's ATTENTION
EMBRACING the Father's DIRECTION.**

In a word ...

"Come into your Heavenly Abba's Presence READY to RECEIVE!"

THREE PETITIONS OF A RECEPTIVE WORSHIPPER ...

Note that all but one of the verses we consider this morning are from the Old Testament - especially from David who had come to 'Know God' as a boy and who wrote down many of his prayers as songs to be sung. The people loved them. From two of his most well-known, we receive instruction this morning.

David knew how to come to God **receptively** - He knew exactly what he needed to receive - things that he knew His Mighty God most desired to give. He asked for those things.

Consider with me this morning two of David's Heart-Felt Petitions:

*** "SEARCH me and REVEAL things about me to me."**

"Search me, O God, and know my heart ...

See if there is any offensive way in me."

(Psalm 139:23,24)

Do you ever stop to think how susceptible to 'Self-Deception' you are? How easily we 'overlook' the things about ourselves that are most in need of change - things that are completely out of keeping with the heart and mind and purposes of our Heavenly Father? We need to receive **TRUTH** about ourselves.

A receptive worshipper asks the Father to **REVEAL** such truth.

Here's the **second** of David's petitions ...

* **"CLEANSE me and REPAIR things within me"**

*"Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin ...
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice."
(Psalm 51:2,8)*

Another place where you and I are susceptible to 'Self-Deception' is in our mistaken belief that we can 'Fix Things Ourselves' ... that we can 'Make Things Right' - that we only need God (or someone God is using) to 'Point Out To Us' our iniquities and sins (to use David's terms) and then we can 'Take it from there' ... that we can:

"Cleanse ourselves and Repair things within ourselves."

David learned the hard way that it just can't be done - that his own efforts to 'Make Things Better' just piled sin upon sin.

*"O God", he finally prayed (to use our words of the morning) ...
"(You) Cleanse me and repair things within me."*

Now that is a prayer that your Heavenly Father desires to hear and one that He answers every single time!

And then after praying that God would **REVEAL TRUTH** and **REPAIR DAMAGE**, the receptive worshipper prays:

* **"RESTORE me and RENEW me for the task."**
(Our insights come from the Apostle Peter and
from the Prophet Isaiah)

*"And the God of all grace ... will Himself restore you
and make you strong, firm and steadfast." - 1 Peter 5:10*

*"Those who hope in (worship) the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles ..." - Isaiah 40:31*

Here is the end of the matter: Our Lavishly Loving, Magnificently Merciful, Unfailingly Faithful Abba Father always responds to the petitions of a truly receptive worshipper.

Peter says "He will Restore you" ... Isaiah says 'The Lord will renew their strength.' Our Abba Father hears and answers.

Final Thot ...

One who worships Abba **RECEPTIVELY** will
NEVER return from His Presence the same as he **CAME**.
He will not return **EMPTY-HANDED!**

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Individually"

(Romans 8:15-16; Matthew 6:6; Psalm 46:10; Revelation 1:10; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12;)

Intro ... Consider with me ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... INDIVIDUALLY"

INDIVIDUALLY ... *Personally, Privately, Independently
Discretely, Separately,
"As though you were the only one worshipping Him"*

And, of course, when we come before our Heavenly Abba individually, all the previous worship attitudes we have discussed apply.

We are to come *reverently*, and *exclusively*, and *reflectively*, and *submissively* and *thankfully* and *joyfully* and *receptively*.

However, as we come fully fortified by those wide-ranging worship attitudes, we come to Him with this very special perspective:

"This Experience is between Him and me alone."

It's to be carried out (as we have already said) *"Personally, and privately and independently and discretely and separately."*

*It's Individual Worship - one on ONE worship.
It's an anticipated part of our Life with Abba.*

Now this might be something that you haven't ever thought much about - You might think that **'Worship is worship'** but it's not.

There's **'Individual Worship'** (today's focus) and there's **"Corporate Worship"** (next week's focus).

Consider with me this morning these ...

Three Key Aspects of Individual Worship: (mine and yours)

I. MY FOCUS FOR INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

*"I am a Born-Again **CHILD** of God" - Romans 8:16*

*"You are my Abba **FATHER.**" - Romans 8:15*

*"All that **YOU** are is mine to **ENJOY.**"*

Let's take those statements one by one and ponder them a bit for each of them expresses an incredible reality.

Here's the **FIRST** of those three '*Focus-Forming Statements*' ...

"I am a Born-Again Child of God"

This is the reality that allows us to come in the first place.
Here's how the Scripture passage that supports it reads - **Romans 8:16**
"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's Children."

Our personal, individual worship **begins** with that testimony!

Here's the **SECOND** '*Focus-Forming Statement*' ...

"You are my Abba Father"

What earthly father cannot recall and did not delight in the moment when his child first recognized him as '*Daddy.*'

Here's the Scripture passage that tells us how that recognition comes about with our Heavenly Father - **Romans 8:15:**

"... You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him, we (you) cry: "Abba, Father."

When our Heavenly Father gave us spiritual birth by His Powerful Holy Spirit, He planted within us an **ability** and a **desire** to relate to Him as Father ...
As our very special '*Daddy God*' - our '**Abba Father.**'

Our personal, individual worship springs from that Spirit-Given **desire** and **ability!**

Here now is the **THIRD** of those '*Focus-Forming Statements*' ...

"All that YOU are is mine to enjoy."

Little children delight in discovering and declaring the amazing abilities that their father possesses. All that he is is for them to enjoy!

This is where our **Daily Worship Focus** list can come into play. Over the course of a month, we remind ourselves of and delight ourselves in 30 incredible aspects of our Heavenly Abba's Nature.

TODAY'S FOCUS IS: "My Abba is Mysteriously Purposeful"
- Though never obvious, His plans are marvelous -

So that's '*My Focus for Individual Worship*' ...

Consider now what we are identifying this morning as ...

II. MY PRACTICE FOR INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

(How should I go about doing it? - two Scriptural directives)

*"Go into your **CLOSET** - Be **STILL** and **KNOW** that I am God."*

(Matthew 6:6; Psalm 46:10)

(Three applications of those Scriptural Directives)

*Be **PRIVATE** - "Just me and my **ABBA**"*

*Be **INTENTIONAL** - "I am not here by **ACCIDENT**"*

*Be **RELAXED** - 'Nothing can **HARM** me or **STRESS** me"*

Now let's take those *Three Applications* one by one:

"Be Private - Just me and Abba"

That's why it's called '*Individual Worship*.'

Our Abba Father desires to have a meaningful, enjoyable relationship with each of his Blood-Bought Children. There is a part of His Great Heart that is devoted to each of them.

Being an infinite Spirit, there is more than enough of Him to go around. You never need to feel that you are intruding on someone else's time with your Heavenly Father when you come to him in worship and prayer.

He is available to you whenever you choose to come, and He is available to you for as long as you choose to stay.

"Be Intentional - I am not here by accident."

Individual worship begins with a personal decision to remove yourself from the society of men and enter into the presence of God.

Open the door of your closet as it were and close it tightly behind you. Here is where the stairsteps to your Father's Throne are found. Climb them intentionally.

(By the way, journaling is one very good way to '*enter the closet*!')

"Be Relaxed - Nothing can harm me or stress me."

"Be still and know that I am God."

That directive was given to the psalmist during
a great time of consternation in the Kingdom ...

It's a directive that we need to follow today ... Don't enter your prayer closet
with a copy of the New York Times or the LA Times in your hand.

Don't allow the anxieties of the moment to control your heart and mind.
Still yourself and remind yourself of the ONE to whom you belong.
Your life is in His hands - this world is in His hands.

Know that you have entered a Sanctuary -
a Safe Place when you enter His Presence.

Allow the Holiness and the Purposefulness of the place to calm you-to remind you
of all that you know about your Heavenly Abba - to assure you that He is more
than capable of caring for you and that He is committed to do just that.

Let this be '***Your Practice***' - Your Approach - to Individual Worship.

There's no doubt that '***Individual Worship***' should be part of every
believer's life ... Each of us should spent time personally worshipping
our Heavenly Abba ...

We've considered what ***My*** (and your) ***Focus*** for such worship should be
and what ***My*** (and your) ***Practice*** (or approach) for such worship should be.

Consider with me now ...

III. MY MODELS FOR INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

(Who can I see doing it?)

The Apostle ***JOHN*** and The Lord ***JESUS*** Himself

Let's look (as it were) into their private times of worship through
the window of the Scripture and see what we can observe.

* The Apostle JOHN exiled on the Isle of Patmos

"I was in the SPIRIT on the Lord's DAY..."
Revelation 1:10

Now we don't know if John had any friends with him during this period of exile, but we do know that this experience he describes here was singular: personal and individual. It took place on the Lord's Day and John was '*In the Spirit*' ... caught up in worship.

The things that he was told and shown filled the entire Book of Revelation ... Sometimes our personal, individual worship can lead to insights that we would not have otherwise gained.

This can certainly happen when you '*Worship Journal*.'

* The Lord JESUS himself - Two separate occasions

"... Jesus got up ... and went to a SOLITARY place where he PRAYED."
(Mark 1:35)

"Jesus went out to a MOUNTAINSIDE ... and spent the NIGHT praying to God." -
(Luke 6:12)

Jesus had to work to find a 'Closet' ... He was hardly ever alone. Here we see him twice choosing '*Time with His Abba*' rather than choosing sleep.

I'm positive he didn't spend the whole night in prayer because he had such a long prayer list ...

He was renewing his relationship with his Heavenly Father and enjoying entering into the presence of the Almighty.

Refreshment came and insights were gained as he spent those nights in Personal - Individual - Worship.

Final Thot ...

All true worship is first of all INDIVIDUAL.
We come into the Father's Presence ONE by ONE.

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Corporately"

(Acts 15:14; Ephesians 3:14-15; Hebrews 10:25; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Philippians 1:3; Acts 2:42; Acts 4:24,31-32; Acts 13:2; Acts 14: 256-27)

Intro ... What a marvelously appropriate Sunday is this Anniversary Sunday to zero in on ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... CORPORATELY"

CORPORATELY ...

Collectively, Jointly, Cooperatively, Mutually

"Caught up in a SINGLE identity."

Two weeks ago, we examined "**Three Key Aspects of Individual Worship.**" This morning I would have us apply those same three key aspects to '**Corporate Worship.**'

Three Key Aspects of Corporate Worship:

I. OUR FOCUS FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

Note the pronoun change from "**I**" and "**My**" to "**We**" and "**Our**."

"We are His PEOPLE"

**"God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them
a people for His Name."**

(Acts 15:14)

There should be a strong sense of 'We' when believers gather together in worship. We together have an identity - We are **His People**. We have been given birth into His family by His Holy Spirit.

To those early Jewish believers, it was a revelation that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had decided, through the work of Jesus Christ, to also include Gentiles as His People.

"We together, through faith in Jesus Christ, are His People."

*"He is the **HEAD** of our **FAMILY**."*

*"I kneel before the Father, from Whom His entire family
in heaven and on earth derives its name."
(Ephesians 3:14-15)*

More precise than even calling ourselves '*Christians*' is calling ourselves '*Born-Again Children of our Abba Father*.' That's a key part of our **focus** as we gather together in Corporate Worship.

*"All that makes up **FAMILY LIFE** is ours to **ENJOY**."*

We could ponder that statement all day.
We should ponder it and delight in it
whenever we gather together.

Consider now ...

II. OUR PRACTICE FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

- Four **Key Elements** contribute to our **Practice** -
Physical ... Emotional ... Spiritual ... Historical

PHYSICAL ... In the same place at the same time
"Do not stop meeting together"
(Hebrews 10:25)

There's the answer to one who would somewhat glibly (and I might add even selfishly) say: *"I can worship God just as well and perhaps even better on the ski slopes Sunday morning as I can in church."*

Indeed, you can worship God **individually** perhaps on those ski slopes or on your patio watching the sun come up or go down, but you cannot worship God **corporately**.

You cannot connect with the rest of your family unless you are with them **physically**. Being in the same place at the same time is essential for corporate worship.

EMOTIONAL - Connected in genuine love and care
"Rejoice with those who rejoice; Weep with those who weep."
(Romans 12:15)

Families share the ups and downs of life together. Over the years, church family develops the kind of connection that only comes as much of each has been shared together.

Over the years, we have offered to this congregation exactly 1300 'Gardens of Prayer' where hands have been held and hearts joined during times of struggle and question. Many dear relationships have begun by the touch of a stranger's hand during one of those moments.

SPIRITUAL - Sharing the life of the Kingdom together
"You yourselves are God's temple."
(1 Corinthians 3:16)

"You are the Body of Christ and each of you is a part of it."
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

In both of those statements, the Apostle Paul focused upon what happens when individual Christians come to understand that the Church of Jesus Christ is a **corporate** identity.

Each of them is critical to its proper functioning; but only as they see themselves as part of the larger, beautiful God-Honoring thing the Spirit of God is constructing in this world.

HISTORICAL - Relationships built over time
"From the first day until now"
(Philippians 1:3)

It's a marvelous thing to share a common history with others - especially when it's the history of God's Working in one's life.

And now, consider with me ...

OUR Sonlife HISTORY

The '*First Day*' for *Sonlife* Community Church was September 18, 1994. That very first Worship Service was held in the beautiful, brand-new chapel of Victor Valley Mortuary.

We met in that chapel until June of 1998 when we moved to what was then called Vista Compana Middle School in Apple Valley where our own Matt Schulenberg was principal.

There is where we worshipped until we entered this wonderful building in June of 2007.

That's 25 years of history.

At the end of the service we will recognize four individuals (Gloria (Greene) Bastianon, Betty Dawson, Peggy Grant and Jodi (Mikels) McEachron) who have partnered in this ministry with Linda and me since that very first day.

Over those 25 years, some 3600 times our annual membership commitment has been signed by one who has '*Walked the Aisle*' and made the commitment to live the coming year as "*A Follower of Jesus Christ and Member of *Sonlife* Community Church.*"

Over those same 25 years, more than fifty of our members have cometo the end of their lives with their faith wonderfully intact and entered into their heavenly home. It's indeed a marvelous thing to share a common history with others.

And so, Our *FOCUS* for Corporate Worship is "*We*" not "*Me*."

Our *PRACTICE* in Corporate Worship contains *Physical* and *Emotional* and *Spiritual* and *Historical* Elements.

And now, consider with me ...

III. OUR MODELS FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

- Examples from the very beginning -

First of all, consider with me ...

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

"They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and to prayer." - Acts 2:42

"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God ... after they had prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit ..." - Acts 4:24,31

"All the believers were of one heart and one mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions his own, but they shared everything they had." - Acts 4:32

What an incredible congregation! From the very beginning they recognized the **Corporate Nature** of their salvation.

They recognized the fact that God by His Holy Spirit had joined their lives together in a marvelous fellowship. They felt responsible **for** one another and **to** one another.

Now consider ...

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

Antioch was where the 'Followers of the Way' were first called "Christians." It's where the new convert Saul first made his mark as an Apostle of Christ and an Instructor of the saints. It was a church of both Jewish and Gentile converts. It was also the church where Holy Spirit Directed Mission Activity was first initiated.

"While they were worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'." - Acts 13:2

Out of a time of corporate worship came '**Holy Spirit Given Direction**' ... A journey to preach the Gospel and to establish a network of churches.

"They (Paul and Barnabas) sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them ..." - Acts 14:26-27

There's the Key! That's what we, ourselves, are celebrating today ...

"All that God has done through Sonlife Community Church as it has expressed itself corporately over these 25 years."

Final Thought ... All true worship is ultimately **CORPORATE**.
The Father's Family gathered together expresses it **BEST**.

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL

"Worship Abba ... Continually"

(Psalm 34:1; John 17:3; Matthew 6:5; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Intro ... What a privilege on this wonderful Lord's Day to share ...

TODAY'S KEY WORSHIP ATTITUDE ...

"Worship Abba ... CONTINUALLY"

CONTINUALLY ... constantly, persistently, unceasingly

constantly - all the time, morning to night

(So, we are talking about a constant state of mind and heart:
A 'Worship Point of View' from which we approach life.)

persistently - in spite of whatever might be going on

(Nothing in life will change that 'Point of View' ...
We approach life as Worshipers of our Heavenly Abba.)

unceasingly - now and from now on

(This is not simply some 'Worship Phase' we are going through ...
There is no other way that we will ever approach life.)

That Worship Attitude is discovered in...

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURE ... Psalm 34:1

"I will BLESS the Lord at all TIMES:

His PRAISE shall continually be in my MOUTH."

There's our '**Key Word**' right from the mouth of David and the pens of the King James translators:

"Continually"

(constantly, persistently, unceasingly)

So how do we do that?

How do we '***Worship Abba Continually***' In the midst of the ever-changing circumstances of life?

Allow me to share this morning ...

A THREE-FOLD STRATEGY FOR WORSHIPPING CONTINUALLY ...

1. FOCUS ON THIS WORSHIP SONG: 'Awesome God'

*"Our (my) God is an awesome God.
He reigns from heaven above in wisdom, power and love.
Our (my) God is an awesome God."*

That is the underlying reality that makes continual worship possible.

2. CENTER EACH DAY AROUND A SPECIFIC ABBA TRAIT

"Bring 'Eternal Life' into Earthly Life every single day!"

*"Now this is Eternal Life: that they might know You,
the Only True God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
(John 17:3)*

Today's Worship Focus ... Day Six

***"My Abba Is Brilliantly Tactical"
- He carries out His Plans flawlessly -***

Using a tool like "***My Monthly Worship Focus***" can help immensely ... Take advantage of it - Don't try to '***Reinvent***' a wheel that has already been invented. Use the one that you have - the one we discovered together.

In addition to the '***My Monthly Worship Focus***' Tool, '***Nudges and Hugs***' provides a daily reminder of our Heavenly Abba's Provision and Plans for each of us - plans communicated to us and fulfilled in us by the '***Divine Companion***' He has provided for us.

3. PRACTICE BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE WORSHIP

"Go into your closet ..."
(Matthew 6:6)

Get **ALONE** with your Abba

Use the 'Worship Song' and the 'Worship Focus'
to sensitize you and excite you as you enter His Presence.

Enter His Presence Expectantly and Regularly.

"Let us not give up meeting together ..."
(Hebrews 10:25)

Get together with other members of the **FAMILY**.

Turn the '*I*' and '*Me*' in your relationship with
your Heavenly Abba into '*Us*' and '*We*' as you join
together with others like yourself.

Enter The Gathered Congregation Eagerly.

"Pray continually ..."
(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Never lose your **GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS**.

Take to heart what the Apostle Paul said about our
Heavenly Abba, the Creator of all things, to the
Greek Philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:28):

"In Him we live and move and have our being."

That's the truth that all God's Born-Again Children should know.

Don't Lose Your Grasp On That Truth Ever!

Final Thot ...

There is no **TIME** or **PLACE** or **SITUATION** of **LIFE**
that **WORSHIP** doesn't **IMPROVE**.

So ... worship Abba **CONTINUALLY!**

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL"

(Series Conclusion: Part One)

Intro ... A little more than three months ago, on July the 7th, we began this series of messages entitled:

"WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL."

I shared with you on that Sunday ...

A SERIES INITIATING DECLARATION ...

***WORSHIP is the CROWN JEWEL
in the KINGDOM of GOD.***

(In the Heavenly REALMS - In the CHURCH of Jesus Christ -
In the LIFE of every Born-Again Believer)

In other words, there is nothing more precious, more delightful, to our Abba Father than to receive Worship from all who are His.

In contrast, the greatest disappointment that our Abba Father ever experiences comes from actions like these recorded by the Apostle Paul ...

*"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised."
(Romans 1:25)*

Is it any wonder that Jesus would report that the Father actively seeks out those who willingly worship Him and who, in that willing worship, discover intimacy with Him?

Here's how we expressed the goal of this series ...

OUR SERIES GOAL ...

That WORSHIP will become the CROWN JEWEL
of our lives so that our RELATIONSHIP with
Our Heavenly Abba will reach its PEAK!

We followed up the announcement of that *Series Goal* with ...

A SERIES DEFINING OBSERVATION ...

Our ***RELATIONSHIP*** with our Heavenly Abba
will ***REACH*** its ***PEAK*** as we Worship Him
in the ***WAY*** He ***WANTS*** to be Worshipped.

But how does our Heavenly Father '*Want to be Worshipped?*'

Over the past three months we have discovered ***Eleven Bible-Based Answers*** to that question.

Today in this '*Wrap-Up Message,*' I would remind us of them all.

Keep your note-sheet from this message handy as a daily reminder ...
As a reminder of '*How to worship your Heavenly Abba in the way that most pleases Him and most blesses you.*'

Here then are our ...

ELEVEN WORSHIP SERIES DISCOVERIES ...

As we review them together, allow the Holy Spirit to impress them even more permanently upon your heart ... allow Him to identify for you the ones that are most needful in your life right now. See them as eleven doors to Eternal Life!

*** *ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED REVERENTLY***

(In a spirit of awe and wonder - He's the Creator of all.)

Regularly expose yourself to the wonders of His Creation.
Thrill yourself with His Glory and Goodness!

*** *ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED EXCLUSIVELY***

(No god before Him or in addition to Him)

Worship by definition is singular - if there are multiple targets for your worship, you are not yet a worshipper of any but are merely working through your options.

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED REFLECTIVELY***

(Taking into account all that He has revealed Himself to be)

Thirty Worship-Inspiring Aspects of our Heavenly Abba's Nature captured our attention in the series: "*Apprehending Abba.*"

Each of them provides opportunity for worshipful reflection upon our Heavenly Abba's Nature.

Today's (Day 13) is:

"My Abba is Awesomely Glorious"

- He is splendorous - He would have me share His Glory -

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED SUBMISSIVELY***

(Completely surrendered to His Will and His Ways)

'Bowing the knee' is automatic for one who is truly *'caught up in worship'* ... It's actually the best way to tell if you, in fact, *'are worshipping.'*

No debating or arguing or demanding or resisting - Willing, even eager surrender is what pleases our Heavenly Abba.

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED CONFIDENTLY***

(Absolutely sure that His Will is being done in our lives)

This is why our surrender can be made willingly and even eagerly. Because our Heavenly Abba is trustworthy. He is committed to us and He involves Himself in every circumstance of our lives for our good.

His Spirit, Pneuma, has been sent to fulfill the Purposes of our Heavenly Abba in our lives.

Our Heavenly Abba delights in knowing that we come to Him Confidently.

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED THANKFULLY***

(With a heart of appreciation and gratitude)

"Father, I thank You"

are words that greatly please our Heavenly Abba.

Those words show that we understand - Those words indicate that we have indeed gained full confidence in His Will and His Ways.

Those words communicate that we are comfortable with Him being at times *'Mysteriously Purposeful.'*

We are thankful in and through it all because we trust Him completely.

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED JOYFULLY***

(With exuberance and praise)

It only took one glance into the heavenly realms (Revelation 4)
to see that that's the way it's done in heaven itself.

Our Heavenly Abba wants us to be excited by the thought of entering
into His Presence - no matter what our earthly circumstances might be.
He is our God and Father.

It's all Good when we make contact with Him.
When joy fills our worship it greatly pleases Him.

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED RECEPTIVELY***

(Ready to receive - Anticipating alteration)

No two worship encounters are ever the same.
Our Heavenly Abba would have us come away
with something different every time.

He would have his Love and His Grace and His Mercy
and His Wisdom and His Joy and His Faithfulness
profoundly affect us each time we enter His Presence.

Seeing us '*Ready to be altered*' indeed pleases Him.

And then, after making those eight discoveries concerning
the way in which our Heavenly Abba wanted to be worshipped,
we discovered two very specific applications of them ...

We discovered that ...

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED INDIVIDUALLY***

(As though I am His Only Child - This is between Me and Him alone)

It's in this '*Individual Worship*' where the pronouns
"*I*" and "*Me*" become prominent as in ...

*"I praise you, Abba, for Who You are and I thank You, Abba,
for all that you have done for me."*

Each of us can bring all eight of those ***Worship Discoveries*** into our Individual
Worship as we personally worship our Heavenly Abba: ***Reverently*** and
Exclusively and ***Reflectively*** and ***Submissively*** and ***Confidently*** and
Thankfully and ***Joyfully*** and ***Receptively***.

And then, we discovered the balancing worship application:

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED CORPORATELY***

(Caught up with others in a single identity)

The truth is ... we are not our Heavenly Abba's Only Child though it pleases Him for us to come into His Presence as though we were - as though all of His Goodness and Grace is for us alone and for us to feel the specialness of His '*Father Love.*'

We are, in fact, members of an immense world-wide '*Family of Faith*' gathered together in local congregations of Christ's Church.

Those congregations come before the Father in worship collectively. They sing with one voice and they bow before Him with one will and their praises arise as it were from one heart.

Our Heavenly Father gazes with delight upon His many children joined together in worship as One.

The *eleventh* and *final* worship discovery we made is this:

* ***ABBA WANTS TO BE WORSHIPPED CONTINUALLY***

(Constantly - Persistently - Ceaselessly)

This worship relationship begins in this life and continues for all eternity!

Final Summarizing and Challenging That ...

KNOWING Abba is the ultimate Human EXPERIENCE.

WORSHIPPING Abba is the ultimate Human EXPRESSION

BECOMING a Worshipper of Abba is the ultimate Human ACHIEVEMENT.

THEREFORE ...

BECOMING a Worshipper of Abba is the ultimate Human ASPIRATION.

Let's ***MAKE*** it ***OURS!***

WORSHIP: THE CROWN JEWEL"

(Series Conclusion: Part Two - "*The Trinity Thing*")

Intro ... I know. Some of you chuckled to yourself as soon as you opened your bulletin this morning and saw the title of Today's Message: "***Series Conclusion - Part Two***".

So last Sunday wasn't the final message or the last time that we will look at this beautiful "*Crown Jewel*" image that's on the screen right behind me right now.



Last Sunday's message '*Wrapped Up*' the series and reviewed for us every one of those ***Eleven Worship Attitudes*** that bring us worshipfully into our Heavenly Abba's Presence ... Attitudes that please Him and enable us to worship Him in the way He wants to be worshipped.

Last Sunday's message concluded with the declaration that "*Worshipping Abba is the ultimate Human Expression*" and that "*Becoming a Worshipper of Abba is the Ultimate Human Aspiration*" ... the thing we desire more than anything else in our earthly life - the thing that we should most want to be '*When we grow up.*'

Today's message seeks to place our '***Abba Worship***' in its fullest context. To do that I want us to take a bit of a journey this morning - a journey into some things historical and theological and most of all practical and practicable.

Let's begin with ***prayer*** that our Heavenly Abba might bless our efforts through the enlightenment of Our Heaven-Sent Companion, Pneuma, and to the glory of our Heaven-Seated Savior, Jesus.

This journey that we take today actually began quite a few years ago and what a journey it has been!

We have '**Looked At**' the Heavenly Jesus and discovered **twelve marvelous 'Ministries'** that He is engaged in on our behalf.

We have '**Fallen In Step With Pneuma**' and begun to experience the amazing reality of '**The Almighty**' companioning us and conforming us to the very image of Jesus - making us, as it were, His '**Mirror Image**.'

We have '**Apprehended Abba**' and awed and delighted ourselves in the discovery of **thirty distinct aspects** of His Infinite Nature.

We have discovered that our Heavenly Abba desires a worship relationship with each of His Born-Again Sons and Daughters and we have committed ourselves to worshipping Him in the way that He, in fact, wants to be worshipped.

Eleven specific Abba-Pleasing **Worship Attitudes** we have discovered. We are engaged in seeking to practice them all.

Over these past years, during the course of this '**Journey of Enlightenment**' we have been on, we have discovered the awesomeness of our '**Three Person God**.'

'**Abba**' - '**Jesus**' - '**Pneuma**' ... we have personal intimate names for them all! We can relate personally to them all!

Three Awesome Divine Beings that govern the universe and shape and bless our lives ... **Three awesome Divine Beings** who are bound together by **Nature** and **Purpose** and **Love**.

THEY ARE THREE and THEY ARE ONE!

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ...

So ... **ONE** God or **THREE** -
WHICH is it?

Are we **UNITARIANS** or **TRINITARIANS?**

That question has haunted and confounded men and women of faith since the very beginning of the Church Age ...

It has challenged the thinking of the brightest minds and the various answers given have divided and flummoxed the Church of Jesus Christ for centuries.

Men and women have been excommunicated and cults have been created in the quest to answer that question definitively.

The reality is: 'Inquiring minds' have always 'wanted to know,' even if some of their inquiries might take them into places where angels themselves 'fear to tread.'

In the first 300 years following the Birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, various teachings regarding the Nature of God arose ...

Some, no doubt coming from a more Jewish perspective, asserted that there is, of course, but **ONE GOD** but HE, singular, has revealed HIMSELF in different forms at different times.

In Old Testament Days, He revealed Himself as the **Creator** of all things and in Gospel Days He revealed Himself as the **Savior** of mankind, and in these days since Pentecost has revealed Himself as the **Holy Spirit** ministering powerfully on the earth. Three different revelations or expressions of Himself but just ONE GOD - ONE DIVINE PERSON. So said and still say some.

Another version of things asserted that there is, of course, only ONE GOD and He has never revealed Himself as anything but the ONE GOD AND CREATOR OF ALL THINGS.

Jesus was not God but was a man like any other man. Upon him the '*Spirit of the Christ*' came (at his baptism) and he ministered mightily in God's name, declaring God's Truth and doing God's Work.

That '*Spirit of the Christ*' (so this account goes) left Jesus prior to his death on the cross for Jesus' work was completed in the godly example he left behind. He was **just a man** who lived a wondrous life and died. There is, and has always been, but ONE WHO IS GOD!

And, of course, there were always those - in fact, the bulk of the Church who believed that God had invaded the human race in the person of Jesus Christ. They believed that Jesus was truly God and that the ONE he called his '*Father*' was truly God and that the ONE that come on the Day of Pentecost was also truly GOD.

But somehow, we worship not THREE GODS but ONE so how is that to be understood?

The Biblical data itself sets up this conundrum:

"Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God" (Deuteronomy 6:4)
"I and the Father are One." (John 10:30)
"He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)
"I will send another (like myself)." (John 14:16)

And, even among those who believed in the Divinity of Father, Son and Spirit, there were disputes. Put bluntly, the debate was over '***Who was Top God?***' What was the heavenly '*pecking order?*' Were Jesus and the Spirit as much '*God*' as the Father was? Was Mary to be known as '*The Mother of God*' or simply as '*The Mother of the Christ?*'

The Catholic Church actually split over that issue.
The ramifications of that split would be profound.

Finally, in the interest of the conformity and stability that all politicians crave, the Roman Emperor Constantine demanded that all the great leaders and thinkers of the Christian Church come together and settle this issue once and for all.

He called for a Council in the city of Nicaea in 325 AD where an '*Official Statement*' was created. There was a follow-up Council in 382 AD which expanded the statement a bit.
Of course, no Spirit-Filled Apostles were still alive to attend!

After many days of presentations and discussions and deliberations (and no doubt) many rough drafts, they came up with their answer to the issue and their answer to the question "*Is our God One or Three?*" was ...

"YES!"

TODAY'S KEY NICENE ANNOUNCEMENT ...

There is a Wondrous **'THREESOMENESS'** in Heaven:
Three Distinct Divine **BEINGS** - One Unique Divine **ESSENCE**
Our God is both **THREE AND ONE!**

Here are some of the words they actually decided upon.
I imagine that each descriptive phrase was suggested and favored by a contingent of the scholars who were there. There were probably as many phrases voted on and discarded as there were phrases voted on and kept. Here's what they kept:

"We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life Who proceedeth from the Father and Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified."

Notice that they did not use the word "***Trinity***" ... not only is the word: "***Trinity***" not used in the Bible, it is not used in any early Creedal Statements of the Church, though the concepts of "***ONE GOD***" and "***THREE DIVINE BEINGS***" are present.

However, the term '***Trinity***' and the designation '***Trinitarian***' have become part and parcel of the Christian Heritage and the attempt to '***Explain them***' has challenged us all.

"Mommy, explain the Trinity" asks a child.

"Pastor, explain the Trinity" asks the new believer.

"You know, the word Trinity is not found anywhere in the Bible" says the cultist who knocks on our door, as though that fact deals an absolute death blow to our faith.

How did we ever get to the place where '***Defending or Explaining to people's satisfaction a term not found in the Bible***' has become so crucial?

Before I seek to answer that question, let me seek to answer this multifaceted one for us here at *Sonlife* Community Church:

TODAY'S MULTIFACETED QUESTION:

So, where do we **STAND**?

What is the essential Biblical **REALITY**?

How should we **DEFINE** ourselves? (and then)

What causes such **DOCTRINAL** Disputes to arise?

Allow me to begin by sharing ...

**SEVEN ESSENTIAL BIBLICAL REALITIES
REGARDING OUR THREE-PERSON GOD**

1. Our Heavenly **FATHER**, Abba, is a Divine **BEING**.
2. The **SON** of the Father, Jesus, is a Divine **BEING**.
3. The **HOLY SPIRIT**, Pneuma, is a Divine **BEING**.
4. They all possess and share the very same Divine **NATURE** and Essential **ATTRIBUTES** - They are the only **ONES** of their **KIND**. Could say that there is but **ONE** God Family.
5. They each possess unique **ROLES** and **PURPOSES**.
6. They **RELATE** to redeemed human beings **UNIQUELY**.
7. We cannot **EXPERIENCE** the fullness of spiritual life without a personal **RELATIONSHIP** with each of them.

Let me continue by sharing this ...

THREE-FOLD DEFINITION OF OURSELVES ...

- 1. We Are WORSHIPPERS of our FATHER GOD: ABBA**
- 2. We are MEMBERS of the CHURCH of our Father God's SON: Jesus, our LORD and SAVIOR, who is Himself fully DIVINE.**
- 3. We are Daily COMPANIONS of the HOLY SPIRIT, Pneuma, who has been SENT to us by our Father God and our Lord and Savior Jesus to bring all the POWER and the PRESENCE of the Almighty into our EARTHLY LIVES. He is Himself fully DIVINE.**

Now before I close this message this morning, allow me to expand the discussion a bit as I seek to answer the *final part* of the multifaceted question we are working on.

THE CAUSE OF DOCTRINAL DISPUTES AND DIVISIONS ...

In a word, here's my take.

The ultimate cause of doctrinal disputes and divisions is:

"HUMAN ARROGANCE"

(Coupled with the Devil's INFLUENCE)

That arrogance (disguised, of course, as the search for Spirit-Led Enlightenment) expresses itself in at least these two ways:

- * The DESIRE to KNOW more than God has REVEALED
(Think Garden of Eden)

Remember the old saying: "*The Devil is in the details*"?

Today I would say it this way: "*The devil loves the details because the 'details' are what God frequently leaves out and it's the details that men most want to know so he is happy to provide some.*"

- * The DRIVE to SYSTEMATIZE Biblical TRUTH
(Think Human Configuring)

Men (especially the '*thinkers*' among us) seek to turn everything into an '*ology*' - which means '*the study of*' with the intention of '*getting to the bottom of*' some topic or thing:

Think **PSYCHOLOGY** ... The study of the human psyche or soul

Think **PHYSIOLOGY** ... The study of the human body

Think **SOCIOLOGY** ... The study of human society

* * * * *

Think **THEOLOGY** ... The Study of the Divine.

Theology broadly is Man's attempt to organize all Biblical Truth into one coherent, comprehensive system of thought ... usually with one central interpretive principle that ties everything together.

The '*Neat Little Box*' approach.

It's the task of a lifetime - I have known men who have invested their entire lives in that task. Men who teach their systems to others - usually they are professors in Seminaries.

However, every theological system has some verses that are its foundational verses and other verses that are somewhat troublesome ... There are verses that support and even demand its central interpretive principle and verses that could be understood to actually invalidate that central interpretive principle. It generally works out that each system only focuses on the part of the Bible that easily fits.

Calvinism is a theological system stressing God's Grace expressed to human beings who are bound in sin and absolutely unable to respond on their own to God's Call. Unless God enables them to respond, they will be lost. Once saved however, they are eternally saved.

Arminianism is a theological system stressing Man's Free Will and the responsibility of human beings to respond to God's Call. All men (Arminianism declares) have the innate ***ability*** to respond. All men can freely choose whether to respond or not. The outcome is up to them. However, just as they can freely choose Christ, they can also lose Christ and their salvation if they turn from Him.

Thousands of churches and Biblical Scholars are found in each of these '*Systems*' ... Pastors in each camp regularly point out the limitations and the error of the other.

Now in light of our discussion today, let me point out that it's the result of the '*ology work*' of theologians that the Term and the explanations of the Trinity have arisen.

Neither the term nor the explanation is in the Bible, but men want to know - even demand to know -

How an obvious '*One can be Three*' or
How an obvious '*Three can be One*.'

So, men seek - arrogantly, I believe - to go beyond what God himself has revealed and in their searching and their deliberating, they inevitably wind up giving less than the Bible gives rather than more. They reduce the Truth even as they seek to expand it.

I declare myself today to be a *Biblicist* not a *Theologian* though there was a time when Theology was my passion.

Let's content ourselves with what the Bible clearly says. The Bible, for instance, says ...

*"Whosoever will may come." AND
"There is none that seek after God - no, not one."*

And yet, you and I '*have come*' ... We have responded to Christ. Many in Jesus' day came - they responded to Him. However, the great majority in our day and in His day turned away.

In those who have come, our Loving God has somehow intervened in the normal flow of things ... Praise His Name!

Don't invest yourself in trying to figure out '*Why*' or '*How*' such a miraculous intervention has come about, just continue to urge people to '*Come to Christ*' and '*Receive him as Savior*.'

Allow me now to share with you some ...

CLOSING COUNSEL ...

(The Thing that is really on my heart this morning)

Don't **ALLOW** '*Our Magnificent God*' to become a mere '**LOGY**' in your mind.

Don't allow yourself to believe that Something Infinite and Glorious far beyond words can be stuffed into a box formed by words and captured in high-sounding but frequently obtuse statements of men.

Our *Abba* Father, our Lord and Savior, *Jesus*, and our Daily Companion, *Pneuma*, have been revealed to be '*Relational Beings*' - living, loving multifaceted Eternal Divine Beings. *Identical* in Nature though *Distinct* in Person.

Our God's Love and Care and Purpose and Merciful, Gracious Heart is expressed uniquely to each of us through each of them.

We have three awesome Divine Beings in one glorious Godhead that bring to us incredible measures of blessing!

REJOICE in that!

REVEL in that!

RELY upon that!

RELAX yourself in that!

Consider with me now this series concluding ...

Final Thot ...

"LOOKING unto Jesus" ... "WALKING with Pneuma"

"APPREHENDING and WORSHIPPING Abba"

Let's continue to ***DO IT ALL!***

A BELIEVER'S MORNING PRAYER

(Formulated by Pastor Mark Allen Mikels)

MY ALMIGHTY ABBA FATHER IN HEAVEN ...

I come into Your Presence in the exalted Name of Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord, the pioneer and the perfecter of my faith, who continually holds open the door into Your Presence for all who are His ...

I come companioned by the Eternal Holy Spirit who has breathed new life into me and who would create Christ-Likeness within me.

And as I enter Your Presence, Abba, **I bow myself** before you ... **I surrender my life** completely to You ... **I yield myself** entirely to Your Will and **I declare my desire** to walk in Your Ways this day.

I come, Almighty Abba, **confessing my need** of continual cleansing and healing. **My soul** (the source of my passions, yearnings, impulses and inclinations) is in great need today of Your Gracious Touch. **My soul** is far from a state of complete salvation and yet I know that full and complete 'salvation of soul' is **Your desire** for me.

And so, Abba, **I ask you** this day to further 'Save my Soul' ... **Bring** health and wholeness to me. **Free me** from anything and everything that has established a '**Hold**' upon me. **Release me** ever more completely into Your Spirit's control.

This is my **desire** – This is the **petition** I bring –
This '**Full Salvation of Soul**' is what **I seek**.

I yield myself now this day completely to You, my Heavenly Abba, and **I rejoice** in the great privilege that is mine of being known as Your Child!

I will as well **completely yield myself** to the One that You and Your Beloved Son have sent to companion me through my earthly life, for He is in perfect harmony with both Your Wishes and Ways.

I will, this day, **allow Him** to walk me into and through every circumstance that comes my way. **I will believe** with all my heart that each and every one of them is Your Will for me and that Your Marvelous Grace will be '**More than Sufficient**' to sustain me. **I will believe** that in every one of them You are somehow '**working for my good.**'

And so, with **my hand** firmly placed in the hand of my Earthly Companion and with **my eyes** purposefully and productively fixed upon Jesus, my Savior and Lord, and with **my heart** fully given to You, my Gracious and Merciful Heavenly Abba,

I enter expectantly into this day!

GOD'S CALL TO SALVATION

God's Call to Salvation is above everything else a 'Call to Surrender' - a call to repudiate the 'Life Attitude of Independence and Indulgence' chosen by Eve and then Adam in the Garden of Eden.

That '**Attitude**' of *Independence and Indulgence*' has been man's natural condition ever since its birth in the garden ...

It's an attitude that sets man in opposition to God and to His Purposes and Plans for man.

It's an attitude that 'separates' man from any meaningful relationship with God. It's properly called '**Sin.**' **It's an attitude** that expresses itself in all manner of self-centered actions – each of them an offense to the ONE who has created man for his OWN fellowship and pleasure.

It's become the core of man's being. **It's an attitude** of heart and mind that closes the door of heaven to man. It closes the door of Fellowship as well.

Spiritually speaking, man, in his natural state is a woeful wanderer in this fallen world.

Man, in his natural state, is under the **Curse of the Creator God** whose Plan for Man has been rejected, whose Purposes for Man perverted.

However, in the heart of God resides a deep **love** for man – for the entire rebellious human race – and God yearns for man to be restored to what was once the norm – wondrous, joyful fellowship between the Creator and the '*Being in His Own Image*' that He fashioned.

And so, **God's Plan of Salvation** was designed ... God would provide a way for man to be restored to fellowship – for man to move from a position of rebellion to one of reliance, from a sense of self-rule to an experience of complete submission to the Will and Ways of God.

God would send His Own Beloved Son into the Human Race to model just such a life – a life completely surrendered to the Heavenly Father and thus completely obedient to him – a perfect example of a '*Restored Human Being.*'

And then, having fulfilled that task – having lived a perfectly sinless and flawless life in complete surrender to the Father's Will, enabled by the Powerful Spirit of God with Whom He walked obediently – Jesus, God's Heaven-Sent Son, was offered up as a sacrifice for all mankind.

He paid the price of man's rebellion with his own life's blood.

And the Father accepted that sacrifice and demonstrated His acceptance by raising His Crucified Son from death, and positioning Him at His Own Right Hand in heaven and giving Him the '*Name that is above all Names*' – the '*Name*' at which one day all living beings will bow!

And then, the Father and the Exalted Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world to begin the process of '**Calling Men To Salvation**' – to announce to the world what God has done in Jesus Christ and that '*Forgiveness of Sins and Restoration to Fellowship*' was now possible for man. That '**Call**' is positively responded to by all who truly '**Hear it.**'

It's a '**Call to Surrender**' ... surrender to Jesus Christ and the ONE He has sent (The Holy Spirit) to carry out the '*Work of Salvation*' in the world.

This '**Surrender of Self**' involves the confession of one's sinfulness before God and of one's guilt before God and of one's utter inability to atone for one's own sin.

This '**Surrender of Self**' involves a repudiation of all attempts to '*work out one's own salvation*' – to earn God's favor. This '**Surrender of Self**' involves an embrace of Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior from Sin and a recognition that '*New Birth*' is the only way one can experience '*New Life*.'

'**New Birth**' is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in all those who '*Hear His Voice*' and respond in faith to '*His Call*.'

This '**New Birth**' is a work of God and provides immediate membership in the Family of God and in the Church of Jesus Christ. This '**New Birth**' is a profoundly '**miraculous**' work. This '**New Birth**' begins a **process** by which a fallen, sin-filled human being is brought into fellowship with God the Father and is transformed into the very Likeness of Christ.

Those who truly '**Hear God's Call To Salvation**' respond thusly:

*Oh God, I **confess** that I am a sinner by nature and by choice. I **confess** that I rightly stand under your judgment and condemnation. My life of independence and indulgence has been an offense to YOU – to your Plans and to your Holiness. I have no claim on you, but I **appeal** to your Great Love.*

*I **know** that you sent your perfect Son, Jesus, not only to **demonstrate** perfection in this fallen world but also to **die** in my place. I do **believe** He died for me and I also **believe** that He rose from the dead and that He sits at Your Right Hand in heaven this very moment.*

*He is the Eternal Son of God and I **embrace** Him as my Savior and Lord and, in His Name,*

*I **ask** YOU to forgive me for my sins. I **ask** YOU, for His sake,
to grant me **New Birth** into Your Eternal Family by the **Power** of Your Holy Spirit.*

*I **acknowledge** your Sovereignty over all things, and I **yield myself entirely** to YOU as my 'Abba' Father. I **yield myself as well** to the Lord Jesus Christ, my Exalted Savior, and to The Holy Spirit (Pneuma) Who has been sent to companion and guide all those who through faith in Jesus become Your Children. I will endeavor each day to '*Keep In Step with Him*' as He seeks to develop '*Christ-Likeness*' within me.*

MY LIFE IS YOURS!

May **YOUR WILL** be perfectly accomplished within me!

AMEN

MY MONTHLY WORSHIP FOCUS:

Bringing *'Eternal Life'* into Earthly Life Every Single Day!

DAY ONE: "MY ABBA IS INTENSELY PERSONAL"

- He knows me intimately -

DAY TWO: "MY ABBA IS CONTINUALLY AVAILABLE"

- I have access to Him at all times -

DAY THREE: "MY ABBA IS LAVISHLY LOVING"

- He has provided everything I need -

DAY FOUR: "MY ABBA IS ALMOST INFINITELY PATIENT"

- I can confidently *'Wait on Him'* -

DAY FIVE: "MY ABBA IS BREATHTAKINGLY STRATEGIC"

- His Plans for me *'touch every base'* -

DAY SIX: "MY ABBA IS BRILLIANTLY TACTICAL"

- He carries out His Plans flawlessly -

DAY SEVEN: "MY ABBA IS WONDERFULLY FORGIVING"

- He cleanses, heals and energizes me -

DAY EIGHT: "MY ABBA IS MYSTERIOUSLY PURPOSEFUL"

- Though never obvious, His plans are marvelous -

DAY NINE: "MY ABBA IS PROFOUNDLY WISE"

- He takes absolutely everything into account -

DAY TEN: "MY ABBA IS POWERFULLY PROTECTIVE"

- I could not be safer anywhere than in His Hands -

DAY ELEVEN: "MY ABBA IS WHOLLY HOLY"

- In His Presence, I am completely removed from sin -

DAY TWELVE: "MY ABBA IS UNCONDITIONALLY CONNECTED"

- He will never disassociate Himself from me -

DAY THIRTEEN: "MY ABBA IS AWESOMELY GLORIOUS"

- He is splendid - He would have me share His Glory -

DAY FOURTEEN: "MY ABBA IS AMAZINGLY TRUSTING"

- He has entrusted a portion of the Family Business to me -

DAY FIFTEEN: "MY ABBA IS TIRELESSLY VIGILANT"

- His eyes are forever upon me; He watches out for me -

DAY SIXTEEN: "MY ABBA IS MASTERFULLY COMMUNICATIVE"

- He expresses Himself in clear and compelling ways -

DAY SEVENTEEN: "MY ABBA IS SUPREMELY CONFIDENT"

- He knows His Plans will be fulfilled in me -

DAY EIGHTEEN: "MY ABBA IS UNWAVERINGLY RIGHTEOUS"

- He always thinks Right and feels Right and does Right -

DAY NINETEEN: "MY ABBA IS ABSOLUTELY JUST"

- Evil will not endure forever - He will judge evil-doers -

DAY TWENTY: "MY ABBA IS SUPRISINGLY SYMPATHETIC"

- He remembers I am just dust - He makes provision for me -

DAY TWENTY-ONE: "MY ABBA IS FABULOUSLY WEALTHY"

- All that I have is His - I manage it for Him -

DAY TWENTY-TWO: "MY ABBA IS EMINENTLY TRUSTWORTHY"

- I can confidently put my entire life in His Hands -

DAY TWENTY-THREE: "MY ABBA IS UNDENIABLY CREDIBLE"

- It takes greater faith to '*not believe*' than '*to believe*' -

DAY TWENTY-FOUR: "MY ABBA IS MAGNIFICENTLY MERCIFUL"

- I will never forget what He has lifted from my shoulders -

DAY TWENTY-FIVE: "MY ABBA IS INCONCEIVABLY GRACIOUS"

- I will never comprehend all that He has brought to my life -

DAY TWENTY-SIX: "MY ABBA IS UNCEASINGLY CREATIVE"

- I will embrace every alteration He makes in my life -

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN: "MY ABBA IS CONTAGIOUSLY JOYFUL"

- I will allow His Joy to infect and affect my entire being -

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT: "MY ABBA IS FLAWLESSLY PERFECT"

- He has a complete grasp of and firm grip on everything -

DAY TWENTY-NINE: "MY ABBA IS UNFAILINGLY FAITHFUL"

- He will never cease being Who He is or fail to do what He says -

DAY THIRTY: "MY ABBA IS ETERNALLY MINE"

- Every hour of the day, every day of the year, forever and ever -