

May 10, 2026

“Why We Worship”

2 Peter 2:4-10

Intro:

Milestone events in our lives tend to leave a lasting mark. This mark is not always visible, or even regularly memorable, but they tend to rise to the surface in those moments where we are witness to similar milestone events in someone else's life.

Take, for example, a high school graduation. Our own graduation could be considered a milestone event, but it is not one we often reflect upon. But then, when we are far removed from our own experience, we attend the graduation of a son or niece or grandchild, and as we celebrate with them, we are reminded of our own walk to receive that diploma. And perhaps we smile.

Maybe it is a significant birthday milestone like a sweet 16, or maybe the passing of a driver's test shortly after that 16th birthday. As we celebrate, we remember our own experience even though it had been mostly forgotten until then.

Often people in attendance at a wedding will recall their own wedding and the moment of the saying of the vows, and in that present memory renew them.

In a couple of weeks, we will be joining in a milestone event for Christians – that of baptism. Perhaps as we gather to witness and celebrate, we will recall our own baptism and the joy we felt (and for some, terror at having to be in front of all those people). And we will recall the public commitment we made at that moment to live faithfully for Christ for the rest of our lives.

In the spirit of remembering, and considering the upcoming baptism service, I thought it might be helpful for all of us to take some time over the next several weeks to be reminded about baptism, and specifically the “what next” following that service.

The practice in our church, and indeed in most churches, is to walk those considering baptism through a baptism class. In those lessons, the significance of believing in Jesus, baptism, and where it will all lead for life are talked about. In the classes at Argyle Road, we begin with broadly understanding what is meant by the term “Christian”, who Jesus is, understanding Baptism and Communion, what the Church is all about, and finally how to live and grow as a believer.

Of course all of those topics are rich and deep and require a lifetime of exploration to understand, but we try to give a starting point to work from. Sometimes, while our intentions at baptism are good, we don’t always live as faithfully as we should and the passion we felt at that moment dims a bit. So, in these coming weeks we are going to focus on the later lessons – the ones that deal with living as a Christian – what the church is all about, how we grow in our faith, and how to live faithfully as a Christian. The first few lessons are there to reinforce and clarify the decision to follow Jesus that those being baptised have made.

The Church:

So let’s begin with the church. In our lesson booklet, the matter of the church is lesson four. It begins by briefly exploring the biblical background for the church – how it started, where it is going, and the imagery that the Bible uses to describe the church. Then we move onto the purpose of the church. This is where we are going to start.

What is the purpose of the church?

This is a big question, and quite frankly we could spend months just trying to list all the purposes that people feel the church has. With that in mind, I am not going to try and tackle every purpose that has ever been given to the church. There are many great books and resources out there that help us to a deeper understanding of the purpose of the church, and the many ways that Christians have viewed that over the centuries. The vast diversity of thought on this is why we have so many different denominations.

One helpful (and relatively short) book is N.T. Wright's "[For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church.](#)"

What is the purpose of the church? As we work through this in baptism classes, we settle on three things: To worship God; Live a kingdom life; and Share the Good News. The points of living a kingdom life and sharing the good news, flow out of our understanding and experience of worship, so we are going spend today and next week talking about worship, and then in the third sermon, look at how that comes out in our Christian life.

Why We Worship:

I will suggest here that many of the things that people define as the (or a) purpose of the church are really responses to the experience of worship. As an example, we serve the needy because we have, in worship, had our own neediness exposed before God and experienced His gentle care and provision for it. For most Christians (it should be all, but we are also imperfect people), worship is a given. Of course we go to church and we sing the songs and we listen to the sermon and pray. We worship.

Constance Cherry, who has written several foundational textbooks on the ordering of a worship service, has defined worship in this way:

"Worship is the regular, ongoing meeting of a local body of Christian disciples with the triune God, expressed in acts of corporate devotion done in partnership with one another, in order to give glory to God, bear witness to their identity as God's people, proclaim and celebrate the grand narrative of God's eternal activity, and be spiritually formed in Christlikeness and edified by the Spirit for living according to God's kingdom purposes."¹

¹ Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 303.

But why do we worship? Why do you worship? What motivates you, drives you, keeps you in anticipation until you are able to gather on Sunday (or Saturday, depending on your tradition)?

Earlier we read from 1 Peter chapter 2. Verse 9 tells us that we have been given the job of worship – Peter reminds Christians that we chosen, *Royal Priests*, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. It is that point of Royal Priests that is the calling to worship. The job of the priest was to worship, and to lead others in worship. So, by this standard, it is your job – your calling – to worship individually and collectively.

Added to this, I would suggest that worship is written into our DNA (as it were). The Westminster Shorter Catechism, which is a 17th century document designed to teach sound doctrine, asks the question “What is the chief end of man?” (what is the chief purpose of humanity?), and then provides the answer “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

This is worship – glorifying God and enjoying Him! Forever! Jonathan Wilson, who was at one point a professor at Carey Theological College, takes this question and answer from the Shorter Catechism and shows from the book of Revelation how enjoyment forever looks. It begins in Revelation 4:11 with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders joining in worship:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Then after the great drama with the scroll, those same worshippers sing a new song in Revelation 5:9-10:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.”

They are then joined by angels in verse 12 singing:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

And finally all creatures throughout the cosmos sing in verse 13:

“To the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”²

Wilson concludes his reflection on those verses in Revelation with this thought:

“And all creation worships. If you have ever heard a glorious piece of choral music or tens of thousands singing in praise, then you have heard and seen only a pale imitation of this scene. And even paler is our present knowledge of God’s glory and honour and wisdom and might! For those who have truly worshiped and caught, however dimly, a vision of God’s majesty, the declaration that we are to glorify and enjoy God forever is cosmic good news. It is to this activity as a practice that the church is called. It is this practice that most clearly sets the church apart, that most clearly displays our calling and constitutes the church as a community.”³

Conclusion:

There are some that might want to argue that we worship because we are told to, and certainly there is Biblical support for that thought, but if we only worship because we are told to, are we really worshipping? Worship is a response. It is often an imperfect and sometimes lacking response to the experience of God that Wilson talks about. Because we have encountered God in some fashion, we respond with praise and glory.

We read earlier the first 7 verses of Psalm 145. Many of the Psalms help to guide and express worship, but this Psalm gives guidance as well as reasons for worship. The first verses, that we read, exclaim the praise: “I will exalt you; I will praise you; Great is the Lord!”, and so on. The rest of the psalm helps to answer the “why” question: “The Lord is merciful; is good; keeps his promises; helps the fallen; righteous in everything he does” and so on.

² Jonathan R. Wilson, *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry, and Mission in Practice* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2006), 24–25.

³ Wilson, *Why Church Matters*, 25.

What is your “why”? The purpose of the church, of the collective gathering of Christians, is to worship God. Growing and deepening in your experience of worship and faith comes from answering this question. When you answer it, you see God in your life. You see where he has been faithful. You see where prayer has been answered. You see where he has brought blessing (and you more accurately understand what blessing is!).

When you answer the “why”, it opens the door to response and exploring how you worship – how you live that expression out in worship on Sunday, and in your lived experience of Monday to Saturday. The “How” is what we will look at next week.

Let’s pray.