

Tuning-In: Tune-In to Encounter

Today, we continue our Lenten sermon series, “Tuning-in.” In this series, we’re looking at how we can better Tune-In to hearing God better. This is important because when it comes to Christians, we have a relationship with God. So hearing God isn’t so much about what we do... but **who we are – a child of God.**

The big question through this sermon series is, “How can we hear from God?” Today we’re looking at another question that goes with it, it helps us enter and experience the presence of God, “Can we better hear God speak to us when we worship Him? The answer – YES!

There are many times when I am worshipping God, with a group of people or all by myself, God will speak to me or heal me or free from some stronghold.

- **Think a minute about what happens during a worship service at our church.** It doesn’t matter if it is **in-person or online** (Although I would encourage everybody to be careful about completely isolating yourself from other believers, we need to attend worship, be obedient to Hebrews 10:25).

Sometimes a worship service can seem like a list of items that you check off a list: Welcome. Announcements. Songs. Offering. Sermon. Benediction. If that is your experience at church, I encourage you to carefully consider what’s happening. I am certainly not knocking well-planned services at St. James/Community. **But I am urging you to make sure that you’re intentional in your worship,** that you’re meaningful in everything you do in worship... all of it, every time!

- Take for example the singing. Singing songs is not just singing songs! And the singing part of the service is not just the warm up for the message.

Rather... the singing is actually a vehicle by which we can worship the Lord and connect with God! We can enter into an awareness of God’s Manifest Presence. We best never worship the Lord as merely a rote exercise. We must take it seriously!

- And please don’t think that worship only happens at church. **Worship happens anytime and anywhere.** In your car, you may see an amazing sunset off in the distance, and just like that... you’re in prayer (with our eyes open if we are driving), but you’re singing songs of praise to God.
- Spontaneous worship can happen around the dinner table or in a small-group at someone’s house. Worship can happen when we are out hiking alone in the wilderness or in the quietness of our hearts while in bed before falling asleep.

- **Worship is an encounter with God!** Anytime we see God for who He is and then respond accordingly with or without music – that’s worship!

Did you know that we CAN often hear God’s voice BEST in worship???

God often talks the loudest and clearest to us when we are worshipping Him. If you are seeking to hear from the Lord, then I encourage you to enter into a time of worship. **Focus your heart and mind on God and let Him talk to you.**

Let’s look at 3 precepts that happen when we worship God. See how worshipping the Lord can help us better tune-in and hear God’s voice!!

1) It’s in worship that God meets with us and speaks to us

Like in Exodus 25, that’s where God met with the Israelites and told them to bring Him an offering and to build Him a tabernacle where He could live among them.

In today’s scripture, we hear about the mercy seat, and listen to where God’s presence manifests resided and where God spoke. Turn to **Exodus 25:10-22:**

Above the mercy seat, God said, “*There I will meet with you and give you my commands.*” God said, “That’s where I will speak with you. (**Exodus. 25:22**).”

There are 2 very important parts to what God said here...

- “I will meet with you. And...
- “I will give you my commands – I will speak to you!

*These two parts of the verse are closely related to each other.
But they don’t always happen at the same time.*

Many times in the Old Testament, God spoke to people through prophets, but He didn’t always meet with people when He did this. God essentially used a prophet as His messenger. **Today you can speak with people by phone, or Zoom, Facetime, email, or messaging... and not meet with them.**

Back in Genesis 28, God met with Jacob and spoke to him as he dreamed. When Jacob woke up, he said, “Surely the Lord is in the place” (V. 16).

Today, you can meet with people or be in the same area as people (Like two strangers standing near each other in the checkout line at Walmart, but never speak to them.) Yet in **Exodus 25**, God says - He meets with people and He speaks with them! How wonderful is that????

That is **my prayer for all of us** when we worship God – that God will both meet with us and speak with us – that we would really have an encounter with God.

God invites us into a place where we give God all our fears, worries, anxieties, and stress. In Exchange, we get from God, love, joy, peace, goodness, meekness, faith, and self-control – the Fruit of the Spirit Gal 5:22).

That’s a really good exchange if you ask me. We come to a time of worship with fear in our hearts, and we leave with peace. We come with stress and leave with peace. This is the core and essence of worshipping God.

In worship, we see God for who He really is – a great God who loves us and who holds the universe in his hands. God is God and is in control. When we worship Him, He meets with us.

One of the most exciting things about Exodus 25:22 is that God doesn’t just say, “I want to speak at you.” God also says, “I want to give you” – God wants to share, so many translations say “to speak **with** you!”

- There’s a difference! **It’s with not AT.**
- This is the point, if someone just talks to you, then it’s a one-way conversation. **But the emphasis here implies conversation.**

It’s a 2-way conversation where God wants to talk with us.

God wants this personal aspect of communication to come through. It’s like God is saying, “*I want you to talk with Me, and I will talk with you too. I want us to talk together.*” That’s good news... it means that we can talk with God in a real conversation about what is happening in our lives.

Paul the Apostle, emphasized this in 2 Cor. 6:16; when he said, “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they will be My People.’” God doesn’t just live **among** us, God lives within us! Christ lives in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17)

2) Next, when we worship the Lord, God gives us perspective

When we worship, that is when we are actually meeting with God, and God is talking to us. It’s in public and personal worship when we learn how big God is, and how God takes away and frees us from those things – SIN - that hold us back in worship and from the abundant live God created us for.

- Luke, who God used to write the Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts, he explained how times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord in Acts 3:19. **There is a pattern for refreshing**, “*Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*” **Did you hear it?**
Repent – your sins may be wiped out – refreshing may come from the Lord

- 1) **Repentance: This is the challenge from the Lent Experience!** It starts with **Confession** which is to acknowledge or agree with God that a behavior or sin is wrong, it is keeping you from the life and presence of God that you need. Then you **Repent** which is to start thinking differently... then that leads you to act differently.

Repentance is a gift from God! Acts 3:19 explains, repentance wipes out your sin and then refreshing can come to you from God! Satan loves to condemn you and lie to you – telling you that you are unlovable or unforgivable or hopeless! But that is not true, God loves you, forgives you, cleanses you, and accepts you, **He helps you hit the reset button and THEN the refreshing comes!**

Repentance in worship empowers us with perspective to see God for who He is and recognize how much God loves us!

When we see the width, the depth and the height – how great God loves and forgives, cleanses and accepts you and me...

When we see how great God is... **then** we get perspective to see how small our problems are compared to the Lord. Nothing is too difficult for God!

When we realize how holy God is, then we see our weaknesses and frailties in light of Him.

We see our own sinfulness and how far short of God's glory we fall.

It's not a bad thing to see that!

It can bring us to Jesus and into the worship experience!

With our sins taken care of, restoration, refreshing and fellowship happen in God's presence. When we are in worship, we get our eyes off of our problems, and see how great and powerful, loving and forgiving God is. We know our sin has been removed and life comes into God's perspective!

3) It's in worship, God empowers us and makes us bold

What is so important about worship - personal or public worship? **God can talk to us.**

Worship is not just singing or checking items off a list when you're at church. Worship can happen anywhere, anytime we can enter into God's presence... **anytime** we can see a fresh glimpse of God and hear His voice.

- **When we worship the Lord, we look intently at Him, we listen to God's voice, and we learn from Him.** To look at God is an experience very much like when Moses stopped what he was doing, drew near to the voice in the burning bush and focused on the Lord in Exodus 3:1-5.

That's our invitation in worship too. If we're sitting in church, there are always a million things to think of – maybe the news we read on an app on our phone, or the paper we need to

write for school, maybe the carpool schedule for next week. **One big temptation is to let our mind wander.**

But Jesus invites us to focus our thoughts and hearts on Him! This requires a deliberate action on our part!

- Here is an important principle for worship and prayer! We need to intentionally – stop focusing on everything going on in the world around us – and set our focus on the things of heaven!
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 explains, “*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*” **When we start to focusing on God in worship, we get empowered to quiet out minds and hearts and lean God’s direction.**

Like talking to my kids when they were young – and some adults today. When I had something important to tell them, **I would tell them to look at me first!** Once I had their visual attention... it was amazing how much better they could hear me. Myself included, if you talk to me when I’m in the middle of something, I won’t hear all of what your telling me. **I have to stop and listen!**

God is the same way! He wants our full attention!

Remember.... Worship brings you into the presence of God, so no matter where you are, you can experience the presence of God.

- God is with us! God is great and He loves us! Where ever we are, we need to remember that the Lord wants to meet with us and talk with us!

Why is worship important?

God can talk with is when we worship, when we enter the presence of God... then we can get a fresh glimpse of God... and then we will hear God speak with us.

Jesus is talking in Revelation 3:20 and says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Jesus wasn’t talking about food, it’s about being in communion with God. The emphasis is on the One we are eating with.

When we worship the Lord, we look intently at God and draw nearer to God. The person who placed their trust in the Lord, and worships God, that person is emboldened and empowered... and ready to hear the voice of God.

PRAYER: