

# THE DANGEROUS ACT OF WORSHIP

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

John 17.6-23; Numbers 6.24-26;  
Ephesians 2

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## I. Introduction to this Study

*The Dangerous Act of Worship.* The title of Dr. Mark Labberton's book is probably a bit surprising. What's so dangerous about worship? What's so hazardous and treacherous about being with others to sing familiar songs, to offer praise and prayers, to give our treasure, and to hear God's word expounded?

We've already seen how worship is a wakeup call from the God who seeks to awaken us to God's glory and to transform us by inviting us to live in and for that glory. We have also recognized that there are false and real dangers involved in worship just as there are false and real objects of our worship - false gods and the Living, Loving God whom we know and connect with through Jesus.

Another danger in worship is the potential for finding ourselves face-to-face with God. There we see the heart of God and the love of God for this world. There we hear God's "unexpected benediction" which is call to move into a new place of living - living in God in the world God loves.

## II. Connecting with One Another

Have you experienced a major move from one home to another? What was that experience like for you? What makes moving to a new home so difficult?

## III. Study the Text

- a. Let's begin by looking at what is referred to as the "Aaronic Blessing" found in Numbers 6.24-26. This was pronounced by priests in Temple worship and continues to be used at the conclusion of worship services. A Benediction (from the Latin for "good speaking") is God's blessing conferred on a person(s) by God's designated human agent.
- b. Look at Numbers 6.24-26. How would you describe 1) who the source of blessing actually is; 2) the way God is exalted in the blessing; and 3) the authority of God in conferring the blessing of sustenance, grace and peace?
- c. How "dangerous" is it for God to 1) make his face shine upon you; and 2) turn his face toward you? What is your response to the possibility of being "face-to-face" (directly communing) with the living God?
- d. Now let's look at what could be called "Jesus' Benediction" found in John 17.6-23. Can you see some parallels with the Aaronic Blessing of Numbers 6?
- e. How do verses 6-8 suggest having seen God "face-to-face?"
- f. What does Jesus seek to confer upon his followers according to verses 9-12?
- g. What blessing is found in verse 13?

- h. In verses 14-19 Jesus prays that his followers would be in the world but not be of the world. How would you describe what this means? The word "sanctified" means to be set apart, made holy and Christ-like, and set apart for God's purposes in the world. Jesus prays that his followers would be sanctified and sent into the world. How is our being sent into the world a means of God blessing the world? What does this say about God's heart for the world? What does it suggest about God's love for all people in the world
- i. Verses 20-23. What does it mean to live "in God" and "in Jesus?" Compare this to Ephesians 2.4-7 and 19-22. How does Paul describe what it means to live in Christ?
- j. Do you agree that Jesus is suggesting that his followers are to be moved from residing in the values of a broken world into residing in God, in Christ, in the values of the Kingdom, and into a unity with one another that results from connecting with God? In what ways is it "dangerous" to be moved into God's household?
- k. Notice verse 23 of John 17. How is Jesus' "unexpected benediction" a blessing, not only to his followers, but also to the world?
- l. How can you live "in Christ in the world" so that others are blessed with the grace, peace, and joy Jesus gives - others in your family, in your neighborhood, at work, in the community, in other parts of the world?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Would you be courageous enough to pray that God would awaken you to where you truly live (in this world or in Christ)? Is it time for you to truly take up your real residence in Christ and be fully devoted to him, his values, and his purposes in the world?
- b. Pray for your family, friends, co-workers, classmates to become Jesus' disciples and find their heart's true home.
- c. Pray that our mission as a church - to enable people to become Jesus' disciples who connect with God, grow in faith, and serve in love - will be fruitful as we rely upon God's Spirit and as we live in Christ in the world.
- d. Pray for a heart for the world God loves. Is God prompting you to respond to the needs of the hungry, homeless, those who are abused and oppressed, or those who are exploited? You can't save the whole world, but you can pray for and respond to the needs of one or a few. Getting involved with our local ministry partners is a good option (Contact Elder Milt Houghton - [lcmilt@gmail.com](mailto:lcmilt@gmail.com) to find out more).

*The triune God welcomes us home into the loving, serving communion that is God's life. When we live in God in the world, we see everything, whether on the other side of the world or down the street, in a new way. Our primary lens is no longer our family background, our personality, prejudices, worries, or subculture; it is now the love of God for every person. I am gifted and called to express the passions of God's heart for the poor and the needy, the oppressed and the suffering... this is God's unexpected benediction.*

*Mark Labberton*