



**A NOTE FROM THE PASTORS' OFFICE:  
GUEST ARTICLE**

## **Does God Miss Our Worship**

BY W. ROBERT GODFREY

Many Christians have expressed disappointment and frustration in the last few weeks about not being able to gather for worship because of the COVID-19 crisis. I am one of them. I very much miss the preaching, the singing, the prayers, and the fellowship. I, too, wonder when we will be able to return to worship. But last Sunday, a new question came into my mind: Does God miss our worship?

God is sovereign over all things. "Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?" (Amos 3:6). So He is the One who has stopped our worship as the gathered body of Christ on the Lord's Day. Perhaps we should ask if He is teaching us something that we are not yet learning. Whenever calamity strikes, I think about Jesus' teaching that is recorded for us in Luke 13. Calamity should direct us to consider the judgment of God and lead us to repentance. Should the calamity of closed churches lead us to ask if we need to evaluate our worship and perhaps repent?

Various prophets at different times criticized the worship of God's Old Testament people. Paul criticized worship in the Corinthian church. Do we ever pause to ask if the worship that our churches offer to God is pleasing to Him? Do we hold worship up to be evaluated by the standard of God's Word? Perhaps God is tired of those churches that have priests offering sacrifices that God has not approved.

Perhaps God is tired of hearing preachers who present teaching that contradicts His Word. Perhaps God is tired of the noise of our false, invented praise. Perhaps the outward forms of our worship are proper, but our hearts and lives as worshipers are not right. Perhaps I am being too critical. But surely we can agree that we need to listen again to the prophets as we think about worship.

Amos makes many of these same points, sometimes even more strongly, in his complaint against Israel. His warnings of judgment and appeals for repentance cover many areas of sins in the life of the people, but the refrain is "yet you did not return to me" (Amos 4:6–11). Because they would not meet with God in righteous worship, God declares that He will meet with them in judgment: "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (Amos 4:12). In the name of the Lord, Amos, like Isaiah, rejects their sacrifices and their assemblies. In famous and powerful words the Lord declares:

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen." (Amos 5:21–23)

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Now is a time we should examine our hearts. Have we become cold or indifferent in our worship? As we see God’s care for the forms of His worship, are we willing to pause and reflect on the content of the worship we have offered Him? Have we been asking only what pleases us instead of asking what pleases Him? Have we ever made the effort to look carefully at the teaching of the Bible on worship and compare that with the order of worship in our churches? Do we have acts of worship for which we ought to repent?

Now is a time we should examine our hearts. Have we become cold or indifferent in our worship? Have we at times only gone through the motions? We do need always the mercy and grace of God to help us to be faithful worshipers.

Forms and hearts rightly engaged in worship fulfill the first commandment, that we love God. But those who worship acceptably must also live lives acceptable to God, remembering the second commandment as well. Jesus taught clearly that you cannot truly love God and hate your neighbor (Matt. 22:34–40). The prophets, too, clearly show that you cannot approach God if you despise the image of God in your neighbor. Immediately after his searing words on worship, Amos appealed: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). He specifies what this justice means: “You trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him. . . . You who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate” (Amos 5:11–12). God’s people must not be hard-hearted to the needy and oppressive and unjust to them. As Isaiah said, “Seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the

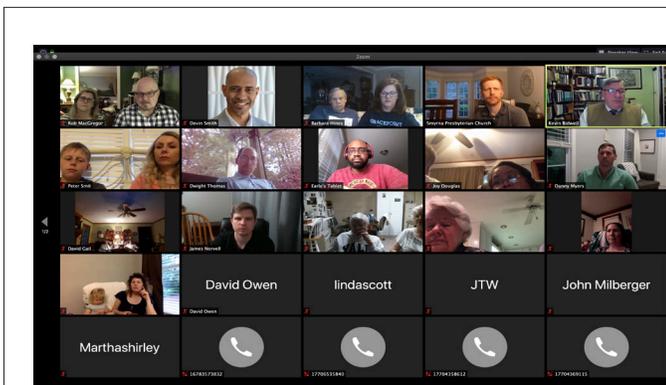
fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Isa. 1:17).

We, too, must listen to the prophets and examine our lives. Have we loved our neighbors as we should? Do we seek to be a loving people? Where must we repent?

Today we are surrounded by great dangers. How many of us see the loss of worship as one of our greatest dangers? What if God does not open the way back to worship for us? Amos had spoken of the greatest danger a rebellious people faced: “I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11). In such a famine, people will hate faithful preachers: “They abhor him who speaks the truth” (Amos 5:10). To avoid such a calamity, we need to cling to the Word of God with its directions, warnings, and promises. We need to pray for the Lord’s mercy so that we may rightly worship Him again. We need to pray for a great renewal in the churches and a great turning to Jesus in true faith throughout our world. We need to remember the call of Isaiah: “Hear the word of the Lord. . . Give ear to the teaching of our God” (Isa. 1:10).

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\*This article was originally published in *Tabletalk Magazine* and abbreviated for space. To read the whole article go to: <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/does-god-miss-our-worship-2020-05/>



## Wednesday Night Online Devotion & Prayer

Every Wednesday night at 7 p.m. until further notice. Details and reminders for the Zoom gathering are sent by email. If you know anyone who would like to be added to that list, they should let us know at [info@smyrnapres.org](mailto:info@smyrnapres.org).

# CHURCH NEWS

## Smyrna Pres Now Resuming In-Person Morning Worship

The church is now open to the public for corporate worship during the 11 a.m. service. The church reopened on May 17 with a number of new procedures and policies in place to limit person-to-person contact and lower the risks of sickness.

For the last two months, the 11 a.m. worship service was livestream only while all other activities were canceled or postponed. Those cancellations will continue until further notice.

If you would like to worship in-person, there will be weekly signups in order to help church leadership make sure appropriate seating accommodations are available. You will find that sign-up form and what to expect at <https://smyrnapres.org/reopening>.

## Two More Dates Set For Wednesday Night Drive-Thru Meal



Volunteers will be taking the Wednesday night dinner from the fellowship hall to portico once again for another drive-thru meal night. The first was held on May 13 with members picking up their pre-ordered meals that evening.

The Wednesday night meals are planned and made by Jenny Powell. Several other volunteers work to setup and clean up afterwards.

The next drive-thru meal is set for June 10 with another planned for July 8. Look for more information on the June menu and how to preorder meals in the coming days.

## Smyrna Pres Family Grows With Three New Additions

The Smyrna Pres family is growing after the birth of three babies during the last week of May.

Brandon and Kristin Soileau welcomed a baby girl, Audrey Ann, earlier in the week. Pastor Joel even had a virtual visit with the family and snapped a photo. This is the Soileau's second child. They also have a one-year-old.

The same day, Stuart and Carlie Ogburn welcomed their son, Easton James. He is the third child for the couple, who have a three-year-old daughter and a one-year-old son.

Then, on May 27, Matt and Keely Ogburn welcomed a baby girl. The two also have twins.

Praise God for all of these new additions!



Top: Kristin & Brandon Soileau. Bottom (l to r): Matt & Keely Ogburn, Carlie & Stuart Ogburn

# JUNE 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 7 p.m. Online Devotion & Prayer	4	5	6
7  11 a.m. Worship Service	8	9	10 5-6 p.m. <b>Drive-Thru Meal Pickup</b>  7 p.m. Online Devotion & Prayer	11	12	13
14 <b>FLAG DAY</b>  11 a.m. Worship Service	15	16	17  7 p.m. Online Devotion & Prayer	18	19 <b>JUNETEENTH</b>	20
21 <b>FATHER'S DAY</b>  11 a.m. Worship Service	22	23	24  7 p.m. Online Devotion & Prayer	25	26	27
28  11 a.m. Worship Service	29	30				

**NOTE: All regularly scheduled in-person events and activities outside of 11:00 a.m. worship will be canceled/postponed until further notice.**

## JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Debby Meyer
- 3 Lyla Grantham
- 4 Christopher Campbell
- 4 Josh Stevenson
- 4 William Wesley
- 8 Tim Joiner
- 11 Michelle Crooks
- 19 Linda Pruett
- 21 Helen Anders
- 21 Claresa Smith
- 22 John Milberger
- 22 Brandon Soileau
- 23 Ellen Milberger
- 29 Hattie King
- 30 Opal Tapp

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