

## **Better Together**

What can happen when we align ourselves with God's mission and purpose  
Message #5 – "Worshipping Together"

1 Chronicles 16

St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown

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Grace and peace to you in the Name of God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. I'm David Woolverton, I'm one of the pastors here at St Paul's Church and it's my honor to share with you God's Word for us today. As we prepare, would you join me in prayer?

*Lord, open us up to Your word and open Your word up to us. Teach us what You would have us learn as You conform our lives into the disciples that You have called us to be. In Jesus's name. Amen.*

Today we are finishing up our sermon series called "Better Together." Throughout this series, we have been learning that

**You get the most out of something  
when you use it the way it is designed.**

The Bible has been showing us that we are called to do life together. We're better together. ***We were designed to do life together***—on mission for the Kingdom of God. Today, we're looking at one of the most important ways that we're better together – worship.

Now, as we start, we need to realize a fundamental truth that is taught throughout the Scriptures – Genesis through Revelation – namely, that

**We become like that which we worship.**

Let me say that again... we become like that which we worship. Hold onto that thought, we will come back to it in a few minutes. In the meantime, I'd like to look with you at a powerful passage of Scripture. It comes to us from 1 Chronicles 16. As you're turning to it in your Bible, let me pose a question: If it's true that we become like that which we worship, then we have to ask ourselves,

**Who or what is the "god" that we worship?**

Alright... let me set the stage for our Scripture. Just before this passage is the story of King David and the Ark of the Covenant. During a pretty serious battle, the ark had been captured and taken from Jerusalem. Then after another battle, David gets it back – and tries to bring it back to its rightful place. However, on the journey, the procession hits a snag and the men who are carrying it stumble; the ark looks like it's about to fall off of the platform and so one of the men reaches out

and pushes it back to prevent it from falling. Unfortunately, because he touched it, he ends up dying – showing the intensely powerful holiness of the ark. David becomes angry with God for what happened – and instead of finishing the procession, he places the ark in the home of one of his leaders. After a while, David sees how the Lord is blessing the home of this leader and decides it's time to bring the ark back to Jerusalem, into the Tabernacle that David had set up for it. It's a fascinating account that I invite you to read.

That's where we pick up today. Let's look together at 1 Chronicles 16.

*<sup>1</sup>They brought in the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and they offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before God. <sup>2</sup>When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord; <sup>3</sup>and he distributed to every person in Israel—man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins **(1 Chron. 16:1-3)***

[Funny – here we have our first reference to going for “take out” after church!]

*<sup>4</sup>He appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, to **invoke**, to **thank**, and to **praise** the Lord, the God of Israel **(1 Chronicles 16:4)***

Let's pause there for a moment. Notice those three words – invoke, thank, and praise. This is a picture of what worshipping together is all about.

Now, we don't use that word “invoke” that frequently. In Hebrew, it's a special word. It has its root in the word – **zakar** – which means “to remember.” So, to invoke – in this context of worship – is to remember. Remember what?

**We are to remember:**

- **The many ways that God has been faithful,**
- **the many ways that God has provided, and**
- **what God has called us to be and to do as His followers.**

We are to remember God's faithfulness – and to bring those “memories” back to the present, for they continue to impact who we are, why we're here, and where we're going.

Notice also the way verse 4 ends: “. . . to invoke, to thank, and to praise **the Lord, the God of Israel.**” This is so important when we think of worship. Remember that question that I asked earlier – who or what is the “god” that we worship? – Well, let's define it a bit more. Let me ask it in a different way:

**To whom or to what will you bow your knee,  
your heart, and your life?**

By “bowing your knee” I’m referring to how we submit our thoughts. By “bowing our heart” I’m referring to what or who receives our devotion. By “bowing our life” I’m meaning to whom do we surrender our lives? Or more specifically,

### **who or what gets our first and our best?**

For King David, it was “the Lord, the God of Israel.” **Psalm 22:3** says, “*Yet You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.*” God shares His glory with no one. He is the Almighty, the Savior, the One and Only God. When we, as followers of Jesus, worship, we must remember that we are not to be the object of our worship. God is. Let’s continue with verse 5 –

*<sup>5</sup>Asaph was the chief, and second to him Zechariah, Jehiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jehiel, with **harps** and **lyres**; Asaph was to sound the **cymbals**, <sup>6</sup>and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow **trumpets** regularly, before the ark of the covenant of God. (1 Chronicles 16:5-6)*

Notice all of the instruments? Music was – and is – essential to worship. Raising a song before the Lord, adding instruments of all types – this gives us the ability to not only remember, but also thank God, to praise God. In fact, King David did it regularly. Look at verse 7 –

*<sup>7</sup>Then on that day David first appointed the singing of praises to the Lord by Asaph and his kindred (1 Chronicles 16:7)*

What did they sing that day? A song that David wrote. We have it here starting in verse 8. Let’s look at just a part of it ---

*<sup>8</sup>O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. <sup>9</sup>Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works. <sup>10</sup>Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. <sup>11</sup>Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually. <sup>12</sup>Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, <sup>13</sup>O offspring of his servant Israel, children of Jacob, his chosen ones. <sup>14</sup>He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. <sup>15</sup>Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations . . . (1 Chronicles 16:8-15)*

Do you see those words – remember, thank, praise? That’s what it means to worship. And it’s most powerful when we do so together... when we remember together, when we sing, when we thank, when we praise God together.

For me, the best way that I know to illustrate this with the words of that wonderful hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” Listen with me to those words – in fact, why not sing them with me...

*Great is Thy faithfulness  
O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee  
Thou changest not  
Thy compassions they fail not  
As Thou hast been  
Thou forever will be*

*Great is Thy faithfulness  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
And all I have needed Thy hand hath provided  
Great is Thy faithfulness  
Lord unto me.*

Never doubt the power of worshipping together. No matter what you and I are called to face into – especially in this year 2020 – worship reminds us who we are, Whose we are, why we're here and where we're going. Worshipping together gives us strength—God's strength—to live life in faith, not fear; in hope, not despair; in love, not isolation.

Let's pray...

*Father, thank You for reminding us of all that we have, all that You have provided, all for which we are truly thankful. As we gather around family this Thanksgiving, or even as we are by ourselves because of this pandemic, we still remember Your faithfulness, Your goodness, Your providence. And we give You thanks and praise. We love You, Lord. Thanks for loving us first. In Jesus's name. Amen.*