

Celebrating God

Sermon Series

June/July 2019

Introductory Notes for Small Group Leaders and Preachers/Leaders

Where we have got to

Earlier this year the church leadership agreed four key areas for us to focus on as a church in preparation for Simon's coming as new Vicar:

- Praying
- Meeting
- Serving
- Celebrating

Praying: Alongside our monthly prayer meetings we have put in place a prayer room under the tower which is readily available during the week and instituted PUSH on Wednesday evenings. The latter uses material from Pete Greig, the founder of the 24/7 Prayer Movement and gives a time of open prayer and worship.

Meeting: We have continued to encourage small groups and for people to make use of the coffee times on Sundays as well as some wider community events – including an Oram's Arbour picnic (with more to come), lunch hosted by SAGES on June 23rd and afternoon tea at Wolvesey on June 30.

Serving: Our sermon series on stewardship during May highlighted different ways in which we give thanks to God by using the time, gifts and money that he has given to us.

During June and July we will focus on the fourth area: **celebrating**.

Introduction to the Celebrating Series

The commandments (of Exodus 20:1ff) begin with the call to have no other gods but God and not to bow down to any idol – rather God’s followers are called to worship God alone, to celebrate God alone. We find a similar call in Romans 12:1 where we are called to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice ‘which is your true and proper worship’ (NIV).

In both passages the call to celebrate is based on the fact of God’s redeeming love. In Exodus, ‘I AM the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt (20:1 cf. 19:4ff). In Romans Paul writes, ‘Therefore ... in view of God’s mercy...’ The ‘therefore’ of this verse is a reminder of all that Paul has written in chapters 1-11 (from our fallen nature which means we do not worship God alone, through the justifying work of Christ, to the giving of the Spirit and the hope of glory).

In both passages the call to celebrate incorporates both our words AND our actions. The commandments move from our praise due to God alone to how we live that praise out in our lives. In the rest of Exodus (and in Leviticus and Deuteronomy) instructions are given for building the tabernacle as a focal point from which to worship God AND how to live out life in community. Similarly, Romans 12 leads on to the way we use spiritual gifts in the congregation, to how to live in a totalitarian state, how to face down persecutors with love and how to deal with human squabbling. All this (indicates Paul) is part of our ‘true and proper worship’.

So in this series on celebrating we will take certain attributes of God’s character and be asking two questions:

How do we celebrate God for that attribute, what does the attribute mean for us?

How do we celebrate God by living out that attribute in our lives?

As in our studies over the past few years we will look not just for theoretical answers but practical ways in which we can build ourselves up as a celebrating community.

Overview of the Series

Date	Passage(s)	Title and Focus
June 2 nd	Exodus 20:1-17 Romans 12:1, 2	Celebrating the God who calls us to worship <i>Introductory overview</i>
June 9 th	Acts 2	Celebrating the God who sends his Spirit <i>Pentecost</i>
June 16 th	Exodus 31:1-11 Psalm 148	Celebrating the God who is Creator <i>The created order worships its creator, the wonder of creation inspires us to praise God Humanity, in its turn is called to use all its creative gifts</i> <i>Challenge to the congregation will be to bring in something which displays their creativity on the 23rd. It may be a painting, a model, a photograph, a computer program, a motorbike they've restored....</i>
June 23 rd	Ephesians 2:1-10	Celebrating the God who redeems <i>In words: praise, wonder, realising that we are set free</i> <i>In deeds: sharing that good news with others and to do the good works prepared in advance for us to walk in</i>
June 30 th	Colossians 1:15-23	Celebrating the God who is reconciler <i>In words: let the words in the passage do the talking</i> <i>In deeds: we are to be reconcilers in our homes, our places of work, in the world</i> <i>'What's God been doing?' will include testimony on this</i>
July 7 th	Psalm 103	Celebrating the God who forgives <i>In words: let the words in the psalm do the talking</i> <i>In deeds: we are called to forgive</i>

Date	Passage(s)	Title and Focus
July 14 th	Genesis 18:16-33 Romans 12:17-21	Celebrating the God who is Judge <i>In words: the just judgment of God gives us hope in our praying and praising in a world that seems lawless</i> <i>In deeds: the instructions of Romans 12</i>
July 21 st	Psalm 24 Rev 7:9-17	Celebrating the God who is king <i>In words: let the words in the readings do the talking</i> <i>In deeds: worship is all that is</i>

One book that has influenced my thinking:

David Peterson *Engaging God – A Biblical Theology of Worship* ivp 1992

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