



Digging Deeper

December 21, 2025

Behold Him

Greg Froebel

I've heard it said that "worship culture is more caught than it is taught," where you learn more by observing something being modeled than through explicit instruction. But I think there are times, like today, when it's important to articulate and dive into some of the why behind the what and the how when it comes to worship. I just want you to know I'm coming clean. I have an agenda this morning. I am here to articulate my vision to you all, to help all of us, myself included, grow in our understanding and capacity to worship the Lord and to make you hungry for worship.

WORSHIP IS A VALUE IN THE KINGDOM

I don't want to get into too much of my life story because it's mostly uninteresting. I would know, I was there for most of it. I've been leading worship since the early 2000's. I gradually got involved in the worship team at the church I grew up in in Minnesota, and it's been a whole journey since then. But my first and foremost assignment is not a worship leader. My first and foremost assignment and identity is a worshiper.

And, yes, it happens that my passions, my interests, and my skill set all lend themselves to being a worship leader. But the first thing I am, the first thing I call myself, is a worshiper. I think that's what we're all called to be, all called to do.

Interestingly enough, I never wanted to be a worship leader. I never wanted to be a pastor. And I've certainly never wanted to be a teacher. This is the first time I'm teaching on a Sunday morning, which is always a great thing to say to a congregation because it's like, Oh, that makes us feel very uncomfortable. But you're getting in on the ground floor of something; who knows what it is. Even though I've been leading worship for a long time, I still have so much to learn.

What I want to share this morning is just really what the Lord has been teaching me all of my life, and I want to impart whatever I can to you. I'm not coming from a place of ultimate authority. Oh, I'm the worship pastor, so I know so much. I'm really just a student of the Lord, and I think we're all called into the endless discovery of who He is. And this isn't me as the worship pastor trying to convince you that worship is important because I'm sure you could sit there going, Well, of course he thinks worship is important. He's the worship pastor. It's job security.

If you've been around Vintage for a long time, or any amount of time, even just today, you would see that worship is a massive value in this house. But as we read in the book of Revelation, and currently where we are in chapters 4 and 5, you see that worship isn't just a value at Vintage, worship is a massive value in the Kingdom.

As the pastoral team was talking about me teaching on worship, it was meant to really just be a standalone message about worship. It really wasn't designed to connect to a Revelation series. But it

just so happens that where we're at in Revelation 4 and 5 are what I think are the two most significant chapters on worship in the entirety of Scripture.

DEFINING WORSHIP

Before we get too far in, I want to lay out a few foundational ideas and I want to define a few terms. Definitions can sometimes be overly restrictive and a semantic barrier, but I think sometimes they're a helpful foundation to distinguish the nuances between ideas. I want to bring some precision to what I'm talking about, specifically in regards to the terms thanksgiving, praise, and worship.

Obviously, there's a fair amount of overlap between the three. But looking at Psalm 100, it says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise". I think that as we read that verse, we see there's a progression and a protocol for entering into His presence. It's literally designed as if we're entering the temple. We're entering through the gates, and then we're going further into the courts, and then eventually, if we're following the pathway of the temple, we're entering into the Holy of Holies where the worship or the offering takes place. So following this progression we're talking about entering through thanksgiving, into praise, into worship.

Now, thanksgiving is a response to what God has done. Praise is a response to who God is, His character and His nature. So in thanksgiving, I'm responding to what the Lord did. In praise, I'm acknowledging who He is: His goodness, His kindness, His faithfulness, His strength, His power. And then, as we go further into worship, it's a response to God's holy presence.

The word worship in both the Old and the New Testament carries this picture of lowering yourself, bowing, and surrendering, this intimate picture of reverence in awe-filled adoration. This is what I'm really hoping as a church, we grow into all the more, that intimate space of just holding His presence.

THE PICTURE OF WORSHIP IN REVELATION

So why do I say that Revelation 4 and 5 are the most significant pictures of worship in Scripture? Well, because we see a picture of worship that is happening in Heaven. We see the elders and the living creatures, and eventually, how all of creation, all of Heaven, all of everyone on Earth, is worshiping the Lord. If we believe in this idea that on Earth as it is in Heaven, I think it's important that we observe and identify what is happening in Heaven, and then we step into that reality here and now.

Paul Billheimer says this: "Surely that which occupies the total time and energies of Heaven must be a fitting pattern for Earth."

I want to explore worship through these three lenses:

What it means to behold Him

What it means to minister to Him

What it looks like to do these things in our house as the people of Vintage City Church

Now, I'm not going to do all of those things today. When I first turned in my notes to the teaching team, they were like, Hey, I don't think you have a teaching on worship. I think you have a series on worship. So rather than try to unpack all three of those massive things in one talk, we're going to spread it out at some point in the future. They saved you from what I think would have been a whirlwind roller coaster ride; but not like a fun ride, like a ride that makes you nauseous.

So, we're going to focus today on what it means to behold Him.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BEHOLD HIM

I believe that worship begins with beholding. Looking at the beginning of the book of Revelation we see John, who identifies in front of him the fully glorified Jesus. If we're to believe, as most people believe,

that this is the apostle John, the John that followed Jesus, the John that wrote the Gospel of John, then he is now seeing Jesus not in just His human form, but in His fully glorified form with eyes like fire and hair like wool.

Jesus tells John to write letters to the seven churches. We've been for the last several weeks exploring, through chapters 2 and 3, those letters to the churches. And then it gets to Revelation 4, and the immediate thing that happens is the Lord says to John, Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this.

Now, why is this important?

Well, John has seen the fully glorified Jesus; he's delivered some encouragement and correction to the churches, and then he's told, Come up here, I need to show you what needs to happen. What do we find? It's a scene of worship taking place in Heaven, where continuous glory, honor, thanksgiving, and praise are offered to the Lord.

The throne, and the One seated on it, sits at the center of everything in a position of authority, in a rested position, indicating the finished work of victory. When the elders who are surrounding the throne fully see who the Lord is, His beauty and His splendor and His majesty and holiness, their natural, appropriate, almost automatic response is just bowing down before the Lord in continuous worship.

Regarding the worship in Heaven, everything is focused toward, centered on, and pointing at the One who is seated on the throne. So it begs the question: Is that true of our worship? And worship doesn't just mean this wonderful, beautiful corporate time that we have together, where we lift up our songs and our voices to the Lord. Worship is so much more than that. It's a heart posture. It is a heart posture and a lifestyle of devotion.

I believe the invitation that was extended to John is also extended to us. Come up here; I want to show you what needs to happen. Worship needs to take place.

WORSHIP IS A CHOICE

After we see this beautiful scene, John sees that there is a scroll, which represents the judgment of God. He observes that there's seemingly no one worthy to open this scroll of judgment, and what does he do? He starts to weep, to the point where an elder says, "Weep no more, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered..."

Now, why is this important? John, if we again are to believe that this is the apostle John, is the last disciple alive. He's seen all of his fellow friends and disciples arrested and executed. He himself has been persecuted. He's been arrested. He, according to church history, was boiled in oil (he was unharmed, but it's still a significant thing). He's been exiled to the island of Patmos. He's born witness to the various joys and struggles challenging the early church. And then he's told directly by Jesus to deliver these letters, which are, in some cases, beautiful encouragement, but in other cases, very strong rebukes to the church.

Now, I think it's important to acknowledge that this isn't just John sending letters to local communities that he had no part in. These are churches that he had a hand in pastoring. These are full of people and leaders that he knows and loves. In some ways, it's almost a rebuke of his leadership that some of these churches that he helped build are struggling pretty significantly. He hears that, without repentance, some of these people whom he loved are destined for destruction.

So with all this going on in his heart and mind, he sees that there is no one worthy to open the scroll of judgment, no one who can open the judgments of the Lord to make righteous decrees and set everything right. He's overwhelmed, and he begins to weep loudly.

Why is he weeping? Well, it's in response to his circumstances on the Earth. And I think this is significant because John is in Heaven, but I dare say he's missing the point. So much so that an elder says, Hey, I know you're not from around here, but we don't actually do that. We're not weeping; we're beholding the Lamb.

I think it's significant for us because that means we can be in a worship environment and even taking part in the activity, but not actually encountering the person of Jesus because our eyes are not on him.

When the elder tells John to look at the Lamb, he sees there's a lamb as though slaughtered yet standing, which is not something slaughtered lambs tend to do. But we see the Lamb standing in victory, having conquered death itself.

I don't want to minimize the struggles and challenges in the world. I'm certainly not saying, Hey, all your challenges, all your problems, all the brokenness, all the things that you encounter—that doesn't matter. Just put it aside, put on a happy face, and worship. That's not at all what I'm saying.

Bill Johnson says it like this: "Faith is not denying that a problem exists, but it is denying it as a place of influence".

Many of us might have heard this observation from Bill Johnson, but I heard him talk about it when his father passed away from cancer many years ago. And then he articulated the same thing just a couple of years ago when his wife passed away from cancer.

You know, they believed in divine healing, they prayed for people, they saw people healed, and yet these people who he loved and adored passed away. At that moment, there is a decision. In all that confusion, brokenness, pain, grief, and loss...he chose to step into worship at that moment. To not allow those things to take his eyes off of Jesus, but to allow those things to inform his worship. He observed that this was an offering here on the Earth that he could only give now. In Heaven there is no pain, there is no death, there is no loss. And so here and now, in that moment, he was choosing to worship the Lord.

We are to turn our eyes from the problem and lift them to the solution. When we do that our focus becomes eternal versus temporal. We see not what is common, but what is holy. It's like that old song that says, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace".

WHERE YOU LOOK IS WHERE YOU'LL GO

The importance of worship begins with beholding. What does that word mean? In the Greek behold means this idea of arrested attention. Not just a casual, quick glance, but I stop and look, halting my life as I know it and choosing to direct my attention towards something of interest continually.

So, the first act of worship is taking your eyes off of the things of life and putting them firmly on Jesus.

Said another way, the fundamental first step in worship is the choice to behold, to be completely captivated. In the book of Colossians, where it says that Christ is preeminent in all things, this is a shift in perspective. Are my eyes on Him or are they on other things?

Who or what you are beholding shapes who you become in the course of your life, because what you behold determines what you become.

There are so many things vying for our attention. There are so many counterfeit things trying to steal our attention: counterfeit beauty, security, identity, and meaning. Where we look determines the course of our life. When my wife and I were teaching our kids how to ride their bike, there's this principle that says, Where your eyes go, your wheel goes, and then therefore you go. So if you look where you want to go, that's where you'll go.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE TURN OUR GAZE FROM JESUS

This reminds me of the apostle Peter, when he walked on the water. This story always fascinates me. The disciples were on a boat, and Jesus was on the shore, praying, when all of a sudden, this storm came. The disciples are freaking out, and to add to it, this ghostly figure starts walking on the water toward them. Someone says, I think that's Jesus, and Peter says, Lord, if that's You, then call me out on the water to You. What's so fascinating to me is he actually started to do that; he was walking on the water to Jesus. But when he saw the wind he became afraid and began to sink.

We can easily give Peter a hard time with this. It's like, Oh, another added to the long list of Peter's failures. But he was the one who got out of the boat. The rest of the disciples were still in there freaking out, probably being like, I don't know if I would do that if I were you. He actually got out of the boat. The problem happened when he turned his attention from Jesus and noticed the wind. That's when he began to sink.

I think refusing to behold Jesus invites doubt into our hearts. In the Book of James, it says that when you ask for something while doubting, you are like a wave that is tossed and tossed about by the wind, unstable and double-minded in all of your ways. Refusing to behold Jesus allows us to be unsure of His goodness and unconvinced of His power.

I imagine when Peter got to Jesus, His message to him was, Just keep your eyes on Me, and you won't sink. I'm the one who can calm the storm.

We also observe this in the history of the people of Israel. They saw God's miraculous work, but they became so consumed by the problems around them that they failed to see who God was. That's why I think the progression from thanksgiving to praise is so significant. Israel saw firsthand what God had done, how He delivered them from Egypt, how He led them, how He provided for them, but still time and time again they complained and they turned away from Him.

They saw what God did, but because of the stubbornness in their hearts, they didn't see God's nature, which is what the deeds were meant to point to. What He did was meant to point to who He is. God rescuing them was meant to point to Him as the rescuer. God providing for them was pointing to the fact that He was a provider.

KNOWING ABOUT GOD VS TRULY KNOWING HIM

Israel was acquainted with the acts of God, but Moses was acquainted with His ways. In Exodus, Moses says, "Let me know Your ways, God, that I may know You." In this exchange, Moses understands that Israel is meant to be a people in the presence of God. He says, If you, Lord, don't come with us, we don't want to go anywhere. It is Your presence with us that distinguishes us from all the other nations on the Earth.

I think it's very easy to look at some of the stories in the Bible, such as Peter and the people of Israel, and become agitated. We can say things like, What are you doing? You're missing it. You're messing it up. You're seeing God, and then you're forgetting. But how often do we do that? It's pretty easy to realize, Oh, I'm not exempt from that cycle unless I intentionally return my focus to the Lord.

So, seeing what God does is a great way to begin. We give thanks, but that is only meant to get us through the door. We're meant to go further. We're meant to go deeper. I can acknowledge what He has done for me, and then praise follows, and I can behold Him in His personhood.

This is why studying who God is is so important when it's unto worship. I love how J.I. Packer puts it: "Theology is for doxology and devotion". This is a fancy way of saying the study of God is for the worship

of God and a life lived unto God. It's possible to know a lot about God and not actually know Him. But this doesn't mean we shouldn't know who God is.

I've also heard that we cannot know God exhaustively, but we can know Him accurately by studying who He is in the Bible. I've done this from time to time. You all have a homework assignment. Go in your Bible and find, highlight, and write down all the different descriptions of the Lord. The titles for God, the names of God. They're sometimes in a list form, like Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Adonai, Elohim. I would challenge you to investigate all of these descriptions of who God is, write them down, pray through and meditate over them, and see if worship doesn't bubble out of you.

WE BECOME LIKE WHAT WE BEHOLD

What we behold determines what we become. We see this in Scripture in a negative sense. In Psalm 115 it's describing the idols of the world, these works of human hands, and it describes them this way: "They have mouths, but cannot speak; they have eyes, but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear...they have feet, but cannot walk...Those who make them become like them, as do all who trust in them".

Now idolatry in the modern age doesn't typically look like literally crafting something out of gold or whatever. I don't know if you have any gold, but it doesn't often look like what we think of as idolatry. Idolatry in the modern age looks more like money, power, influence, entertainment, politics, consumerism—all those things that steal our attention from God. The prophet Jeremiah describes Israel's idolatry by saying, "They went after worthlessness and became worthless".

But we also see this relationship of beholding and becoming in a positive way in the Bible. In 2nd Corinthians 3, it says, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another".

There's a lot that's packed into that and a lot of context around that, but the main idea is that we have the privilege to behold the Lord and when we do, transformation into His image takes place. The renewal of our mind that's described in Romans 12 begins to happen when we rightly see Jesus.

Worship starts by seeing, but it also helps me see Him more clearly. When we behold Him we see the one we're intended to reflect, and those attributes of His take root within us.

So when we look to Him, are we surrendering? Are we allowing Him to refine us, to shape us, to mold us and transform us to become more and more like Him? We are called to continually behold someone who is endlessly fascinating and in-articulately beautiful.

AN INVITATION TO BEHOLD JESUS

But this beholding is a decision. It's a choice. I've heard it said that there are two things in all the Earth that God does not possess, and that's my attention and my affections. We are meant to pray the prayer of David, when in Psalm 27 he says, "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple".

Charles Spurgeon says, To worship God is to gaze upon Him with adoring amazement and rapturous love.

So when we study the book of Revelation, and we observe Heavenly worship, I think it shows us that if we do the disciplines of Heavenly worship, we will have the Heavenly encounter.

I just wonder what it would look like. When we gather on a Sunday morning, what would happen when we come together as the Church, as the Bride? What if the space was just filled with people who had personally determined to behold Jesus, to set their gaze on the living God, to fix their eyes on the King

of Glory with no other agenda but to adore Him? What if we were here to pour out our affections on Him? Not waiting to be persuaded or prompted by a leader, but firmly planting our attention on Him for a time of intimate exchange and communion.

That is the cry of this house. That this space would be a dwelling place for His presence. That His glory would not just come, but it would rest. That He would be welcome here. The church needs the glory of the Lord, not another sermon series on how to be a nice fella.

We desperately need to behold the beauty of the glory of the Lord. Each and every one of us is called to do this. We see people like Moses going up the mountain and encountering the Lord, or we see the invitation to John, being told by the Lord to come up. But I think this is an invitation that's extended to all of us. We are meant to see for ourselves. We are meant to behold the Lord personally, consumed rapturously in love, transfixed in intent, and nothing else can steal our attention away.

The Bride that the Lord is worthy of is not made up of a people mildly interested in Him, vaguely acquainted with Him, temporarily enthralled with Him for a part of a Sunday morning and then an afterthought the rest of the week.

We're all issued the same invitation. He's saying to each and every one of us, Come up here. I have so much I want to show you about who I am. Then, we respond with our whole being. As it says in the Psalms, we respond with all of our glory. We respond with our whole being to the King of Glory, giving Him glory and honor and praise. We step into what we will do for all of eternity. We don't have to wait, we can do that right now.

Psalm 63 has been gripping me for the last several weeks and months, and I just want to pray it over us right now.

"God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands."

Lord, we love you. I pray, Lord, that the Holy Spirit of wisdom and revelation would open the eyes of our hearts so that we could see You more fully. So that we could then respond more fully to what we've seen. That we would allow You to transform us into the people that You've called us to be. That we would come before You acknowledging and seeing who You are. And then in turn, knowing who we are, that You've called us to be a kingdom of priests, ministering to Your heart.

We are Your people. We're a holy nation of people for Your own possession, so that we could proclaim the excellencies and the praises of the One who brought us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Lord, let that be true. Let that happen. We yield to You, we surrender to You. We love You. We adore You. In Jesus' name, amen.