



Sermon-Based Study Guide
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Good Shepherd Church - March 11, 2012

Sermon Title: Worship Begins After the Benediction

Sermon Text: Hebrews 13.1-8

Related Texts: Matthew 25.31-40; Genesis 18;1-15;
Genesis 2.22-24; Joshua 1.1-5; Psalm 118.1-9

I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

Forbes Magazine has just identified the 1,226 billionaires that are alive in the world today. If you were a billionaire, how would you use your wealth to meet some need in the world?

II. Introduction

The author of Hebrews has led the reader from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, and to Mount Calvary, to remind the reader that Jesus is God's Messiah and provision for a new covenant relationship with God. That new covenant will be fully realized when Christ returns, when the earth and heavens are "shaken", and heaven and earth are fully intertwined. That hope of God's Kingdom leads to gratitude. As N. T. Wright translates Hebrews 12.28: "...we are to receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken! This calls for gratitude! That's how to offer God true and acceptable worship, reverently and with fear." As we turn to chapter 13 the author exhorts the Hebrew Christians to offer true worship that flows from grateful hearts and expressed in some practical ways of living. It's how worship begins after the benediction is pronounced.

III. Study the Text – Read Through Hebrews 13.1-8

- 1) The Greek word in verse 1 - *phila + adelphia* - forms a compound word (*philadelphia*) that translates "brotherly love" or "the love of one Christian for another." As an aside, this is the term from which the city of Philadelphia has derived its name - "the city of brotherly love."
 - a. How does the love of one Christian for another demonstrate gratitude for God's love?
 - b. How is loving a brother or sister in Christ an act of worship (attributing worth to God)?
 - c. If you find it difficult to love another Christian brother or sister perhaps it would be helpful to reflect on the depth of God's love for you. Are you better able to value and care for another when you are more aware of God's love and care for you?
 - d. What is communicated when others see your love and care for another Christian?

Note: One reason you are encouraged to be part of a small group is so that you will have a better opportunity to care for other Christians and to be cared for by them. Please contact Pastor Paul (paul@gspc.org) or myself (jim@gspc.org) to become part of a small group.

- 2) Verse 2 suggests that hospitality, that is, extending loving care and welcome to strangers, is another way of expressing gratitude and true worship.
 - a. What is the cost of offering hospitality? What is the benefit according to verse 2?
 - b. Take a look at Genesis 18.1-15 to see an example of entertaining messengers (angels) from God without being aware of it.

Note: The Hebrews author moves from love of one Christian for another (phila + adelphia) to love for those who are part of the Christian community but not known to the person extending the hospitality (phila + zenia which means "stranger").

- 3) Before thinking about verse 3, read Matthew 25.31-40.
 - a. How do Jesus' words in Matthew 25 reinforce the idea that true worship flows from gratitude and is expressed in acts of love and care for others?
 - b. Notice the author says to "remember" which means "be concerned about" those in prison and those being mistreated "*as if you yourselves were suffering.*" Can one truly care for another without having empathy? How has God been empathic toward you?
- 4) Verse 4 points out that true gratitude and worship also involve sexual purity. Take a look at Genesis 2.22-24 the basis for understanding that marriage between a man and woman is God's intention for humankind.
 - a. By whom is marriage to be "honored" (the word translates: "deemed to be of exceptional value" and refers to that which is very precious - like "the precious blood of Christ" in 1 Peter 1.19) just those who are married or the entire community?
 - b. How does adultery dishonor marriage and God's intention for it? How does being sexually immoral (the word is "pornea" from which we get "pornography") dishonor God's intention for marriage as the context for sexual intimacy?
- 5) Verses 5 warns against putting money at the center of one's life..
 - a. How are depending on money and trusting in God mutually exclusive?
 - b. How does the love of money lead to discontentment?
 - c. Verse 6 offers two reasons to be content and trusting in God. Look at Joshua 1.1-5 and Psalm 118.1-9. How do these passages help you to trust in and worship God?

- 6) Verses 7 includes the same word - "remember" - used regarding prisoners (verse 3).
- a. How can you be "concerned about" those who speak or have spoken God's word to you?
 - b. How can you imitate the faith, focus, and perseverance that they have or had?

IV. Apply It –Reflect and Respond

- 1) How does the affirmation that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever reassure you? How does it motivate you to trust him 1) to forgive and forget your past, 2) to guide and transform and use you in the present, and 3) to be there in the future?
- 2) As you reflect on the exhortations in this passage, do you recognize ways you are not worshipping God by how you are living? What steps will you take to change this? How can you allow sincere gratitude to shape your worship and life to a greater extent?