

# Sermon Text for January 15, 2017

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Exodus 32:1-6, Romans 1:18-25

## ***“Worship the Creator”***

Yesterday we took the confirmation class to LCBC just to be able to expose them to another style of worship which is different from what they are accustomed. In a few weeks we will be gathering at St. John Neumann Roman Catholic Church to be able to exchange ideas about who we are and hopefully see that what makes us similar is so much more important than what is different about us. That is a lesson that I think civic society in general should be able to learn, but we are trying to do it at a micro level.

We find ourselves today on a weekend that for me is probably the most significant weekend of the year. It has nothing to do with our liturgical calendar, in fact we are in ordinary time today. But today we celebrate as a nation a man who was quite extraordinary. He was no saint, but he was a prophet. I'll take a prophet over a saint any day. We find ourselves in the history of our nation when the racial divide might be the most pronounced it has been in decades, and yet it is for the most part a hidden covert divide which every now and then flares up. Even as churches we have not done what we ought to bring healing to that divide which is witnessed by our very homogenous make-up. We don't try very hard in worship, or in our daily lives to find ways to heal that divide.

Today Paul speaks very directly in Romans to this topic of worship. Worship we hear needs to come as a response to the joy of our salvation, not from a sense of obligation. Paul tells us that we worship the creator not the creature and it is for the sake of the creator and not the creature.

Worship has as its goal the ability to be worship not just for the saints gathered but also for those scattered outside of the church. The most sure way to implode as a church is to focus internally, what do we want, as opposed to looking out what does the world need? Today in Romans Paul reminds us that our lives ought to be worship, not just a Sunday morning event. What we do here is practice for our real worship which is our lives in the world out there.

Have you ever wondered if someone has not heard about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, could they in any way be saved? These verses speak of fire and brimstone. My grandfather was a missionary in the Congo before and after WWII and my mother grew

up in Africa until she was 13. He passed away before I was born, he literally ran into a pack of goats on his motorcycle and died as he was taking the Gospel from one village to another. But my mom had stories. She told of my grandfather being the first white person who had ever walked into some tribal villages and the people there treating him as a god, literally. Entire villages would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and his passion was so that they would be without excuse.

Paul answers that question of if people would be saved without hearing the Gospel by stating that they are without excuse. “Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through things he has made. So they are without excuse.” All people, regardless of who they are have an opportunity to worship God the creator if they have had no exposure to God the redeemer and sustainer.

We have our own villages here in Lancaster County where the Gospel has not reached. Brett and Emily are on a retreat with 10 of our senior high youth and many of them have never heard the Gospel before. This is their first contact with church and with Jesus. Our confirmation class took on a couple new members last week and this is their first exposure to the church. We have entire families who are raising their kids in a secular setting where church has no part of their lives and the Gospel has no footing. We have a mission field in our own neighborhoods.

But what about those of us who know God through Jesus Christ. How much more will be required of us to worship him and make our lives lives of worship? Paul in Romans addresses those who take the truth about God and exchange it for a lie and end up worshipping the creature instead of the creator.

The Scriptural example is found in Exodus in our first reading. You know the story. The Israelites, the people of God, not some unbelieving, radical, rebellious uncivilized group but rather the people whom God had chosen to follow him since Abraham’s time are waiting for Moses after he has been gone for a while to be with God. These people knew only one way to worship God and that was the way that the people of Egypt had taught them. Moses was in the process of bringing in new commandments, new ways and Aaron as the priest was supposed to be helping Moses in bringing the people out of what they knew, this worship of many gods to what God wanted, a life of worship to the one true God.

But Aaron upon coaxing by the people succumbs and almost joyfully gathers the gold and makes a calf, which was such a familiar object of worship in Egypt to worship because that was what they were familiar with. When our family went to Egypt and went to the Cairo museum you saw everywhere how the Egyptians worshipped cows and the cow or the bull was one of their primary gods, known as Hathor. The people without the direction of Moses showed themselves to be unfaithful, undisciplined, but God did not disinherit them. They were creatures of habit, they could only do what they knew.

One aspect of this sin is that God did not stop them from sinning. Sometimes as we turn away from God our punishment is that God allows us to follow our desires, our wishes just so we can see how much trouble we can get in all by ourselves. This happened here. The problem was not that they had broken or violated a law, the problem was that they were in violation of God.

But God did not give up on them. He allowed their sin to be carried out to its inglorious ending which was death. For the wages of sin are death. But the next generation was ready to carry on the task. This church has been worshipping God for over 9 generations. There have been years in the wilderness where the Holy Spirit has tried to work but it has been quenched. But I feel confident that we are very close to the promised land. We have come a long way together and we are able to be patient, to wait and see how God is working things out in God's perfect timing.

You know, sometimes we give up on people so easily. It is seen in business, you get one bad oil change and you're looking for something else. You see it in churches, you get one bad Sunday and we're looking somewhere else. We want to treat church as an institution that offers us something rather than as a family and the body of Christ that we ought to serve and love and where God is worshipped instead of ourselves as we seek to have our needs met.

How we worship God is not nearly as important as the fact that we do worship God and are able to worship God. Calvin stated "We cannot open our eyes without being compelled to see him." He stated the skillful ordering of the universe is for us a sort of mirror in which we can contemplate God, who is otherwise invisible.

Every single one of us can say that we know God, we believe in God, but do we truly worship God? Do we truly consider the Creator our Lord, are our lives based upon our worship of him? Or is this time limited and then we go on and live our lives. Allow the beauty of creation, the ordering of life to reflect upon the orderer. Hebrews 11:3

states “by faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.”

Fight the urge to try to make visible, to create idols among the possessions that we have. For if we do not allow Christ to be our Lord then Christ will withdraw his lordship from us and let us live the lives that we want to live without his direction or guidance and that will lead to our eventual ruination. Acts 14:16-18 states: In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways. Yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good-giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.

You can be a Christian and never truly worship God. You can be a Christian and Jesus never has been your Lord. Romans doesn't just pertain to people in the Congo, but Paul speaks to us. Is your life a worship where as you drive down the road to work and step into your office you are a living example of a person whose life is run by the creator of this universe. Are you a person who when you get home from work with your wife and kids you are an example to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord. You see, it is easier to play the game with people who don't know you, but with your family, with the tribe of Israel then the idols come out.

If there are lapses then they are times when we worship the creature instead of the creator. Let us worship God and only God. Amen.