

Living it out (Application):

If you have troubles or struggles, how can you see learning to worship God as central to facing these? What will you do this week?

Coming Up at St Mark's

Our website has had a makeover. Go to www.smch.org.uk and tell your friends about it. If there is anything you want on the website, let Guy know.

New communion ministrants' training: 4pm, 19th May, either at church or in-depth diocesan training at the same time.

Ops manager. If you are interested in applying, the closing date is May 16th.

Andy's ordination. Just to flag up, Andy P will be ordained a priest at 9.15 service on 30th June and celebrate communion at 11.15 that day..

Date for your diary. **Church hog roast and summer celebration**, for all the family...keep lunchtime on Sunday 14th July.



Please pray for...

Pray for **Christian Aid** week, particularly for our brave collectors!

Pray that there would be no splits in your life and worship. But also pray for our **musical worship leaders, and for a Musical Worship Director.**

Give thanks for a generous donation to **Neema Crafts** this week from the Cinnamon Trust!

Pray for **Susie and Dave** as they take on the role of churchwardens.

Pray for **Andrea O'Neill** having treatment this week, and **Philip Hawley** recovering at home.

Pray for the right person to be **Operations Manager** at St Mark's.

Pray for the **communication of our plans** for action over the next couple of months – for clarity and shared vision.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

Pray for **Paul Turner**, running the Lima marathon for Arco Iris children's home in Peru on May 19th.

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!

INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 12th May 2013

Worship/reflection:

The Way of Jesus: Three: Father, Son, Spirit...When you worship/pray, who do you relate most easily to? Why? Why not make a joyful noise in worship, whether in singing, clapping, blowing whistles, reading Scripture, in the privacy of your own home...then spend time in reverential silence.

Without action vision is a daydream: Worship

Briefly reflect on the main way God spoke to you through this Sunday's teaching: 2 Samuel 6: 16-22; Romans 12: 1-3 (I'm sorry – I know the text is small!) Some people seem temperamentally dissatisfied with life. Things are never quite what they want them to be. Others find life hard because it's simply overwhelming, or they have difficulties. As Christians, what is the solution to these problems? One possible answer would be to pray harder - and there's certainly some wisdom in that. But the biblical answer is perhaps simpler. **It is to learn how to be a worshipping person.**

As you know, we are unpacking the plans that we have for the future. You can find them all in the booklet and through short videos on our website week by week. Last week we started to look at how we are going to help each other grow as disciples. This week we are focusing on the key to our fulfilment and happiness as people - learning to worship, whatever our circumstances. As a church we've committed to a vision that says we are aiming to be a community where, **"Everyone is passionate about prayer and worship.** We change when we encounter the reality of God's presence. So we nurture a life of worship which is deep and engaging." This week our focus is on what that means, and how it could come about. Of course, **worship is as wide as life** itself. Its broadest meaning is **to give ultimate worth to something, with everything you are.** Paul says, "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice - this is your *true and proper* worship." In other words, **what ever you do, offer it to God.** But, week by week, we gather to worship God as a community through song, prayer, silence, words, dance, image, movements, music etc. This is how we express our worship **together** and we have a plan for **developing this.** So today, as well as focusing on why becoming a worshipping person can deal with your dissatisfaction or your struggles, we are also going to focus on what our plan is, and what we can expect from each other and from those who lead worship.

If someone asks me, "Why should I worship?" the simplest answer is, "Because throughout the Scriptures we are told to do so." Worship is always a choice. We are commanded, "Come, let us worship the Lord." "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God....**I urge you**, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.."

And if someone says, "How do I worship?" we can learn a lot from David's half naked dance before God. As David and Israel brought the ark into the City of David, they "were celebrating with **all their might** before the Lord, with castanets, harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles and cymbals....The main thing we notice is how worship **engaged his whole being**. The truth is that **worship that doesn't engage all of who we are isn't worship**. Jesus once said, "Love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul (or will), and with all your strength. So it's possible to be worshipping God in your actions, for example - mouthing the words - but if you are not simultaneously worshipping in your heart - being open to God's beauty and joy and allowing your emotions to be reached - it's not really worship. It's possible to be clapping, dancing, singing with great gusto (David made a racket!) - but at the same time not offering you're will, your choices, and your decisions to God. In which case, it's not really worship. Worship engages your whole being. I wonder whether you are someone who needs to engage the mind in worship? Or your heart - being open to joy, emotional expression, or your will - being willing to submit your life as you sing?

But returning to our initial thoughts about dissatisfaction in life, or being overwhelmed by difficulties - what is it that worship does us **to us**? A parable might help.. There was once a man who struggled to get by. Week by week he would just about gather enough money to keep him going, enough food to fill his belly. Yet he was not without a few possessions - in the corner of his lounge was an old oil painting. This painting had been gathering dust for years - shoved away in a corner of the room. The old man was aware of it, but as the years went by he hardly noticed it at all. It had simply become part of the background of his home.

One day he entertained an old friend. He went out to the kitchen to make a cup of tea and when he returned to the lounge he found his friend standing in front of the painting, gazing at it, open mouthed. "Do you realise what you've got here?" the friend said. " Look at this painting. It must be a masterpiece. Look at its colours, its shades, its textures!" After the friend had left, **the old man spent time gazing at the painting once more**. The more he looked at it, the more he began to see things in it he hadn't seen before. The delicacy of the brush movements, the clever contrasts, the insights of the artist. The more he looked, the more he began to enter into its beauty, and he hung it on his wall. The following day, he was surprised by knocking at the door. "May I come in?" said his friend. "I've brought a few friends with me as well." The crowd gathered round the painting - and the old man realised that they were all art critics. The sounds of wonder and amazement grew as the critics recognised the painting as an old, long forgotten masterpiece. One of them approached the man. "Do you realise what you've got here? This is worth **millions**." As the old man saw the beauty of the painting, and realised its value, his heart, his mind, **and his life changed**. The painting now hangs in pride of place in the centre of the room, and each time he sees it his heart is filled with joy.

What does worshipping with others do? If you are in the midst of trouble, if your life is difficult, it enables you to **gaze upon God - to notice His beauty again**. It **lifts your perspective**. And you recognize the presence of the Master. You will notice too the importance of how **other people** helped the old man to recognise the beauty of what was before him. This is what a worshipping church community does. As we gather together, as we inspire each other, as we sing songs together, we are saying to each other, "Look! Taste and see how good God is!" But you will also have seen that as the old man recognised the value of the painting - and so as we see the beauty of God in worship, the worth of God - the place that God takes in our life changes. We realise that we haven't been living in accordance with what we've been given - in accordance with His love - and that if we

truly worship, if we truly see, then our lives will change. Worship is **worth ship** - to see what God is worth, and to give him what He's worth in such a way that we live our lives around Him. The difference between life which stumbles along through difficulty, and a life which is being changed is not whether you **believe**. It's whether you **worship**. And so worshipping together is of **utmost importance**, and the direction we go in as a worshipping community, as well as those who plan and lead community worship, really matter. **Our plans over the next months and years are in the booklet**. (Please read!) What do these plans say to you who are involved in musical worship leading? They are saying that we recognise that you have a big job - leading worship in church is one aspect of worship, but it's a life-giving, sustaining aspect of worship that we need. And so we want to support you, develop you, and pray for you. We recognise that you have a big responsibility, and we promise not to complain! I believe too that worship leaders, musicians, and singers are on the front line spiritually in a church. If you face conflict or difficulty, it affects all of us.

These plans are also saying something about the expectations and hopes we have of you. We expect you to be **spiritually alive** - to be growing in your own relationship with God and to be committed to being disciples. This is because the primary thing that we long for in worshipping together is to experience the **presence of God** - and we need those who lead us to be those who have an expectation and experience of growing in that presence. We expect you to be committed to time for rehearsal, and to be growing in spiritual relationship with each other - so that you can prepare well, pray well, and rejoice in your role. And we expect and hope for you to be competent in your skills. We know no one is perfect, but we need people who are able to be the best they can be - and we recognise that not everyone has the technical gift to lead. So if you are a musician, we expect you to be able to play accurately and in time and harmony with others. If you are a singer behind a microphone, we need you to be able to sing in tune, to know how not to dominate, and to harmonise. If you are in a choir we need you to be able to **blend in** your voice. In fact, one of the characteristics you need to have when you lead worship is the humility to blend in.

So, because it's a big ask, we are going to build up the structures that support you, and clarify the expectations we have of you. And to offer training wherever and whenever it's needed. Musical worship leaders, you lead a people who need week by week to be able to gaze upon God, and enter into the reality of His presence. This is above all because, in the midst of the challenges of life, being a worshipping person and community changes and heals us. A friend of mine was once depressed and decided to go out onto a hill and list all the things he could thank God for. He did it for two hours. He gazed at God in worship. He was depressed no longer. Paul and Silas were in jail in Philippi in chains. What does it say they were doing? "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them..." Worshipping. May we be led by the Spirit of God more and more into becoming a people for

Study

Watch the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hveUhNlnP8I> Any responses? What's your response to the actions being proposed in the pamphlet/video (with a particular focus on "Worship"?)

Study Psalm 95.

Where do you find worship being encouraged - with the heart, the mind, the will, the (physical) strength?

What reasons does it give for worshipping God?

What actions and expressions of worship does it offer? Why don't we do some of them?

What does it say can undermine our worship?

What is the link between worship and "entering rest"? How can worship become a duty or task?