

April 7, 2019
Sermon Worshipping God
Rev. Mark Moline

Here we are nearing the end of our Lenten Series in which we have diligently searched for a brief, concise, easy to understand answer to the question, "What is the Episcopal Church?" We know what it is, but still don't have an easy answer for others. Not because we are uniformed or errant, *but -/// I suspect - /// we struggle to explain it because the Episcopal Church gives precedence to conventional worship, and there is an unescapable holy mystery to true worship.*

The Episcopal Church is more about worship than it is about evangelism, although we have some very efficient evangelists among us. It is more about worship than it is about teaching, although we have had some truly great classes in my brief time here, it is more about worship than it is about, church growth, emotional manipulation, entertainment, politics, endowments, attendance, charity and other lessor facets of organized religion.

In our series we've acknowledged the Latin phrase, "*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*", *We Believe as we Pray - (that is) We Are as we Worship.*

The distinguishing characteristic of the Episcopal Church is it's worship. And the holy mystery of worship has led us to the conclusion, that perhaps the questioner who truly desires to know what this church is all about, must first come and join us in experiencing the sacraments.

"Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing." We find worship irresistible, and so this morning we have come to worship God at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer. No one is required to be here. You all chose to spend part of this day worshipping God here in this place. Of all of the different things we

could be doing this morning, we chose to worship God, and of all of the different places and different worship traditions that we have to choose from, we came here.

Long-time member or first-time visitor, we are first and foremost thankful you chose to worship God today; that's the important first choice, but then we are likewise thankful God led you here. It is good to worship with you.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me." Why did you choose to come here this morning? Again, I'm not addressing this question merely to the newer folks. But, even to those who have attended here for decades; *What motivated you to be here today?* Could it be that you've heard the voice of the Shepherd in the midst of previous Church of the Redeemer worship?

We read from John's Revelation: "For the lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. (A lamb becomes the shepherd...that's an odd concept.) And they worshipped God, singing, Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." That is what our worship is all about - which just naturally begs the question, "What are we all about?" Are we about following the shepherd's voice of Christ - a Christ who is God - a lamb who is the shepherd?

We can at times forget what worship really is about. How quickly we can become side-tracked into believing it is all about us. We can be distracted by believing worship is all about a religious program, or it is about us being entertained. If we can just present a more attractive worship program we could attract even more people which would mean more money. If we used a California wine, or real home-baked bread instead of little Styrofoam-looking wafers, if the music was faster and more uplifting or if the music was just slower and more traditional. If

we had big screen TV's and simulcasted beautiful scenes from nature or some famous televangelist. It's sometimes if and if and if again.

I think *IF* can be an easy distraction for us to fall into in the midst of our worship. There is nothing wrong with wanting a more attractive worship service; the lamb deserves the best we have to offer. However, we must remember the very essence of WORSHIP.

We are worshipping God, not packaging a product. It is a holy sacrament not an infomercial for Jesus.

It is *not* primarily about us and our wants and our tastes. It is about this man who said, "The Father and I are one." He was truly God, Son and Holy Spirit.

J. B. Phillips, Priest in the Church of England, and one of the first to para-phrase the New Testament leaves the literary critics in the dust and gets into real theology when he notes: "If New Testament Christianity is to reappear today with its power and joy and courage, we must recapture the basic conviction that this is a "visited planet." The modern intelligent mind, which has had its horizons widened in dozens of different ways, has got to be shocked afresh by the audacious central fact that, as a sober matter of history, God became one of us." End of quote!

Come let us worship together - let us shock the world afresh. Jesus and the creator are one. The lamb is the shepherd. "Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD our creator. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."