

# BELPRES CHURCH

## **Worship Through Music**

Speaker: Daniel Bates

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Well, good morning, church. As Pastor Scott said, my name is Daniel Bates and I get the honor and privilege to share about something that's near and dear to my heart, and it's on the topic of worship. So let's get into it. As he said, I want to address the name of the service and the name of the service is Worship Through Music. And that's because we understand that music in and of itself may or not be worship, but we use music and we use worship here in our services. We invest in it, we care about it deeply. So much so that we're having a synced service today that we get to see. We're standing in our modern contemporary service, but we get to say hi to our sanctuary friends. Can we say, "Hi, sanctuary?"

Hi, sanctuary.

So we got to worship the way that y'all worship, but we're here in a different type of service and there's more than that. We have our New Hope service, as you heard, which is a multilingual, multi-nation worship service. We have Seattle Chinese Covenant. And upstairs we have our kids worship. And if you haven't been there, you need to do that. So that's what we have going on here. But also all around the globe, we have our Latino brothers and sisters, we have our Asian brothers and sisters, we have our African brothers and sisters, and we have churches like ours that are planted from people out of the Western culture. And we do things very, very differently, but we still call what we do worship. Why is that? How is that? How can they be so different but it be the same thing? Well, worship is a big term and it's a little too big of a thing for me to tackle. But I want to talk about what we do here when we say worship, when we talk about the music portion here.

So if you will allow me to zoom out and get a meta narrative of this word worship, and then I want to allow us to zoom back in and look at some of the particularities of how we do worship here. Is that all right? Okay. So just so we can get all on the same page, let's define this thing worship. I'm not going to hold it too long because I don't have much

time, so I'm just going to tell you. Let's describe it. Worship simply is communion with God and communion with one another. Worship is communion with God and communion with one another. But when I say communion, I don't mean like Eucharist. I don't mean capital C, Communion. I don't mean the bread and the wine. I mean more connection, relationship, sharing, partaking. The word implies more than one party. It's something that you cannot do alone. Communion.

And I get that from scripture. And I want to take a look at the creation narrative out of Genesis because there's something in there that's profound that I think would help us understand what worship really is. If we look at the creation story, we get to see God's original intent for humankind. If we look at it, we see God's intention for mankind, and God's intention for Adam. We see a God that is provisionary, a God that provides everything that Adam needs to live a full life. We see a God that gives work. So we know that Adam wasn't a Millennial or a Gen Z because he would've been complaining, taking personal days, you know what I'm saying? He would've been asking for unmerited raises. Can he work from home, or something like that, right? But seriously, God gives Adam work and it's meaningful because in that assignment, he gets his identity, he gets his call, he gets a little bit of value and dignity.

We get those things from our assignments. We get to see a God that gives grace. We get to see a God that gives instruction. And we get to see a God who gives, in his love and grace, boundaries. We get to see a God who gives boundaries. So we see God create this for Adam, this world, but it's incomplete. Because though he has God all to himself, God looks at Adam and says, "You're not complete without fellowship, without communion with one another. You can't actually fully worship me without others." So we know the story. God pulls Eve out of Adam's rib, and he gives Adam a helpmate, and that's another sermon for another day because that word is deep. It's a helper. So we got to remember in this creation narrative, God creates all these things and he calls it good over and over and over again.

But has anyone ever stopped to think, how could Adam and Eve worship? There's no pastor, there's no sermons. Where's Lori Jensen? There's no all-in groups. Lori, what are you doing? We got to get this man in an all-in group. How could they worship without, there's no spiritual disciplines, there's spiritual practices. They just exist. So there they are, but God still provides a way for them to worship. There's God, there's Adam, there's Eve, and they have to find out a way to worship. Genesis doesn't go too deeply into it, but in the fall account, in Genesis 3, y'all know where the serpent comes to Eve and tempts her with fruit, and she says, "Does God really say that?" And then she gives the fruit to Adam, and then it says that their eyes were open and they realized that they were naked. That's Genesis 3:6, 7.

And in verse 8, there's something very particular. I'm going to read it to you guys. It says, Genesis 3:8, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Then the man and his wife heard the sound

of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day." See, walking in the cool of the day, this is a crazy thing. They heard the sound of God walking in the cool of the day. The implications are crazy. The implications of this verse is that God would regularly come to visit Adam and Eve in the garden, to spend time with Adam and Eve.

And now I can't say what that looks like, but the word says they heard the sound of the Lord, which means that, one, God has a sound. And two, they were able to recognize it. Adam, Eve, and the Lord God enjoyed each other's company effortlessly. They were aware of the Lord's presence. So this is a meta narrative of worship. We didn't even talk about music yet, and they're worshipping God. And this is the part that I think a lot of us can't agree upon, that awareness and acknowledging God's presence is actually what we're after. It's what we're seeking. We sing these songs to remind us of who God is to us and how God can act in our life. Amen. That's why we do it. But where it starts to get a little tricky is when we start to figure out how, when we start talking about how we worship. That's when we start to have a little conflict within our body.

So as I mentioned in the beginning, there's a million ways to do this, especially when it comes to a church service. We got people all over the globe doing it differently, and we have about five ways here happening on this campus. Now, the fact that we don't worship together, is that such a bad thing? I don't know. I wouldn't say so necessarily. Scripture tells us different ways that we are to worship. It instructs us. Did you know that we are commanded to sing? That's not like, "Oh, I'm not a singer. That's not for me." We are commanded to sing over 50 times, and dance and clap and shout. It's in your word, it's in your word. We see different instruments. We see the Davidic instruments. We see the harp and the lyre, the stringed instruments. It says praise God with that. We see the symbols clashing. We see the harp. We see all of those things. We're instructed, did you know this? We're instructed to remember God and God's faithfulness as a form of worship. God calls us to that.

But we can't stick so literally to the scripture, because I don't know about you, but I don't speak any Hebrew. I don't speak any Aramaic. I don't speak any Greek. So we can't just do exactly what they did. But here's the thing. In God's provision, remember I said God is a God of boundaries also, in God's provision of those boundaries, we get to develop how we worship God differently. Those boundaries become a blessing because we get to worship God freely with our own voice and with our own song. Amen.

And guess what? When we do that, when we do that, God gets the glory. He gets glorified. "Come and magnify the Lord with me." That means come and make God bigger. And we get to see a fuller, well-rounded picture of who God is because of this. So dare I say it, this might be why we have preferences. See, preferences, they're usually linked with our culture, and in of themselves, they're not evil. As long as we're attacking the mission of worship, communion with God, communion with one another, we can have

different methods. But if the methods start to overtake the mission, that's when we start to get in trouble. Amen. Y'all with me? Okay.

So here's the thing. Preferences are fine. And there's even a psychology to it. Sounds and smells, as we know, are known to trigger different memories, are known to trigger different emotions within us. For example, for me, I love the electric piano. I love it. I love it. And out that Nord right there, that keyboard, y'all, I love it. I just feel like I'm being cradled. I feel like I'm in my grandma's rocking chair. You know what I mean? But because of that, I feel safe and I feel secure, and I'm able to more easily or more adeptly enter into the presence of God. I'm more inclined to worship God because I feel safe, and I feel secure. And that's my preference.

But it turns out the reason I have that preference is because as I was coming to know the Lord, that was a key element in the soundtrack of my spiritual formation. Y'all with me? That was a key element in the music that was happening around me as I was getting to know the Lord. So that's my preference. And I bet you all have your preferences too. And they're not evil, they're good. They're associations, right? That's a beautiful thing that we all develop differently.

But this is why we can't look down on different expressions of worship, right? Because what may be of value to you may be something different to the next person. And they might even be on your pew, on your row. They might be right next to you. So I'm going to close this up here, but we worship through music to put those differences on display. And we honor God. We honor God and his provision, in the things that he has given us, right? We honor God with what God has given us. And though he's given us different methods, the mission remains the same.

So I want to read a verse to you guys that I think encapsulates this very well. It's from the Book of Colossians out The Message translation. If you want to just close your eyes for a second while I read this and take in these words. Colossians 1. "We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank, after rank, after rank of angels, everything God started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together like a head does a body. He was supreme in the beginning, and leading the resurrection parade, he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end, he's there, towering far above everything and everyone."

I love this part right here. It says, "So spacious is he, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe, people and things, animals and atoms, get properly

fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross."

So we thank you, Jesus, we thank you, Jesus, that you hold it all together. Thank you that we get to see a bigger picture of you when we worship as you created us to worship. I don't have to be Pastor Scott. Pastor Scott doesn't have to be me. We get to use the tools that we have, and that's what honors you. May we never put the method above the mission. And as we enjoy and experience the rest of this service, may we reflect on the mission, communion with God, with you, Lord, and communion with one another. Thank you. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions:**

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*Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.*

**Opening Question:** Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following (note: we use the same scripture reflection questions each week so that we can practice using the same tools over time as we examine different scriptures):

- What do you feel when you read this scripture (excited, angry, worried, etc....)? Why do you think that is? (Explain in your group and then take that response to Jesus in prayer this week.)
- As you read this scripture, where does it challenge your current cultural context?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Share an experience you've had with worship that left you different than before?
- How has worship formed your spiritual life and do you have any scriptures that you use as a guide?
- What does worship look like for you outside of church?

**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the

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conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.