

Intro:

This afternoon I want to continue our occasional series, *Our Church*. I am working through a series of statements adapted from the Mount Calvary Baptist Church's "Non-negotiables of the Ministry."

A few weeks ago, the statement we considered had to do with worship. Here is the statement:

We believe in reverent worship (Jn. 4:23-24; Heb. 12:28).

Our main weekly services have specific and varied purposes. Our Sunday morning services are elevated, but not formal. Our desire is to worship God in an atmosphere that lost people in attendance will fall on their faces and worship God and declare that God is certainly among us (1 Cor. 14:24-25). Our Sunday study and afternoon service are more spontaneous, without slipping into an inappropriate casualness. Our Wednesday evening services typically involve greater congregational participation and concentrate on prayer.

In every service we desire to achieve Scriptural propriety and order (1 Cor 14.40)

We are going to mostly be looking at a text from Heb 12, but we will get to it after we define terms a bit.

Proposition: We believe in reverent worship.

I. Defining reverent worship

A. Key questions:

1. What is reverent worship?
2. What do we mean by propriety and order?

B. Negative examples:

1. A bar room church in Ohio

SIDNEY, Ohio (AP) Another round and amen! Beer was on tap and a mechanical bull inspired the sermon as a new church held its inaugural service in a western Ohio bar.

The Country Rock Church drew about 100 people to Sunday night's meeting at the Pub Lounge in Sidney, 35 miles north of Dayton.

The barroom church is an offshoot of Sidney United First Methodist Church, whose head pastor says he's been looking for creative ways to reach people in unconventional places.

The church's Web site for its new branch advertises "Top regional bands, pizza, wings, rowdy fun & a short message."

The Rev. Chris Heckaman says people really seemed to enjoy themselves so he expects the Country Rock Church will meet weekly.

Heckaman's sermon compared staying on the bar's mechanical bull to learning how to get along in life.¹

2. A contemporary church in America

Is church irrelevant? Author and pastor Tim Stevens thinks so. In fact, he believes that religious tradition advising the church to avoid 'worldly' culture for its 2,000 year history is misguided and that instead churches ought to welcome culture into their buildings and services. Stevens shares his take on culture in the church in a groundbreaking new book released nationwide titled, *Pop Goes the Church*.

Published by Power Publishing, the book outlines Stevens' philosophy and track record of success at Granger Community Church (GCC), in Granger, Indiana, where he serves as executive pastor. His church offers a revolutionary perspective on the 21st century church by designing services around movie and TV clips, drama and secular music during informal and quick paced services. That has translated into church services built on U2 and Beatles music and sermon topics featuring clips from movies like 'Spiderman 3' and TV shows like '24.'

Around Christmas the church offered a whole series on Beatles music. 'Our tag line was: 'The Christmas Story According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, George and Ringo' and our overall theme was we want to start a revolution. We've done U2 music and featured Bono sharing about his Christian faith, and we've used Madonna's 'Material World' in a series featuring 80's music.' But in church? 'Absolutely!' says Stevens.

¹ AP News, April 21, 2008.

'Here's the bottom line. The Christian message never changes, but methods must,' Stevens explains. 'Studies show spiritual hunger in the U.S. at an all time high, but church attendance at an all time low and dropping. A lot of people feel church is irrelevant so it's time to change. Church can't meet people's needs if people won't come in the front door.'²

C. Positive statements

1. Dictionary definition of reverent:

reverent

adjective 1. feeling or showing profound respect or veneration; "maintained a reverent silence" [ant: irreverent] 2. showing great reverence for god; "a godly man"; "leading a godly life" [syn: godly]³

2. Tozer comment:

Many of our popular songs and choruses in praise of Christ are hollow and unconvincing. Some are even shocking in their amorous endearments, and strike a reverent soul as being a kind of flattery offered to One with whom neither composer nor singer is acquainted. The whole thing is in the mood of the love ditty, the only difference being the substitution of the name of Christ for that of the earthly lover. How different and how utterly wonderful are the emotions aroused by a true and Spirit-incited love for Christ. Such a love may rise to a degree of adoration almost beyond the power of the heart to endure, yet at the same time it will be serious, elevated, chaste and reverent. Christ can never be known without a sense of awe and fear accompanying the knowledge. He is the fairest among ten thousand, but He is also the Lord high and mighty. He is meek and lowly in heart, but He is also Lord and Christ who will surely come to be the judge of all men. No one who knows Him intimately can ever be flippant in His presence.⁴

² Press release for the book, *Pop Goes the Church*, by Tim Stevens.

³ reverent. Dictionary.com. *WordNet® 3.0*. Princeton University.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reverent> (accessed: November 15, 2008).

⁴ A. W. Tozer, "The Art of True Worship" from *That Incredible Christian*, cited on the Tozer

3. A comment from Fairfax Baptist Temple, Fairfax, VA

The intrinsic value of music derives from its ability to elevate humans to a noble plane above carnal desire. Great music transcends the nature of man at his very best.

At Fairfax Baptist Temple, we believe that the primary purpose for which we live is to bring glory to God and to evangelize the world. Part of the way in which we glorify God is through adhering to principles of worship that uphold the rich musical tradition that centers on pleasing Him, and not ourselves.⁵

D. What do we mean?

1. We mean that our style of worship should be sober and reverential, not flippant and casual
2. We mean that our style of worship should seek to turn the soul towards God rather than seek to give a ‘religious feeling’ to man
3. We mean that our style of worship should be distinctly Christian, not imitative of worldly indulgence
4. We mean that our aim is to please God alone

II. The rationale for reverent worship (Heb 12.18-29)

Read Heb 12.18-29

A. A note about the theme of Hebrews

1. Hebrews is written to primarily Jewish Christians who are beginning to experience imperial persecution for their Christianity
2. These Christians are tempted to lapse back into Judaism as a “safe haven” where one can still worship the true God but escape state persecution
3. The admonitions of Hebrews are intended to counter this temptation

Devotional page of the Christian and Missionary Alliance web-site,
<http://www.cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer/tozer.jsp?id=625> (Accessed 11.15.08).k

⁵ Rudy Cordeiro, “Celebrating the Majesty and Joy of Classical Christian Music” *Temple Trumpet*, Vol 36, Issue 1, 2008.

- B. The mountain to which we have come contrasted to the mountain to which the Jews came (18-24)
1. The incredible fearfulness of Mt Sinai (18-21)
 - a. Mt Sinai was a fearful physical place and experience (18)
 - b. Mt Sinai was an intimidating auditory experience (19)
 - 1) Blast of the trumpet
 - 2) Sound of words

Both of these are representations of the voice of God heard in the mount.
 - c. Mt Sinai demanded an exacting personal standard (20)
 - d. Mt Sinai intimidated even Moses (21)
 2. The heightened fearfulness of Mt Zion (22-24)
 - a. Mt Zion is the city of the living God (22)
 - 1) A heavenly city
 - 2) The dwelling place of myriads of angels
 - b. Mt Zion is the dwelling place of the general assembly of the church of the firstborn (23a)
 - c. Mt Zion is the dwelling place of God (23b-24)
 - 1) God, the judge of all
 - 2) Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant

Mt Zion is described in less terrible terms, but it is intended to be higher, greater, and mightier in our consciousness than Mt Sinai.
- C. The imperatives God places on those who come to Mt Zion are even more demanding than those he places on those who came to Mt Sinai (25-29)
1. If those who were warned on earth do not escape God's imperatives, much less will we be who have been warned from heaven (25)

2. A reminder of the voice that shakes and what will be shaken (26-27)
 - a. His voice shook the earth at Sinai
 - b. He has promised to shake not only earth but heavens
 - c. He intends to remove shakable things (earthly things)
3. The consequence for those who receive an unshakeable kingdom (28)
 - a. Show gratitude
 - b. Worship acceptably
 - c. Worship reverentially
 - d. Worship 'awfully' — *i.e.*, full of awe
4. The final rationale: 'our God is a consuming fire' (29)

Conclusion:

We don't mean to be narrow, sour, unhappy, unjoyful in our worship!

On the contrary, the greatest thing possible has been done for us.

- We are redeemed from our sins!
- We stand before this consuming fire uncondemned!
- We who are failing, faltering men have the privilege of truly worshiping the God who made us and redeemed us!

So let us worship Him with joy and reverence, seeking first and only to bring glory and honour to His name.