

Greetings to the beautiful Saints at Manatee Life,

**SCRIPTURE:**

John 4:24 (MSG) – Larger reading: John 4:1-26

*“It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.”*

**STORY:**

From the pen of Dwight Bradley:

*For worship is a thirsty land crying out for rain,*

*It is a candle in the act of being kindled,*

*It is a drop in quest of the ocean,...*

*It is a voice in the night calling for help,*

*It is a soul standing in awe before the mystery of the universe...*

*It is the time flowing into eternity,...*

*A man climbing the altar stars to God.*

**OBSERVATION:**

The question keeps being asked: “When are we going to get back to worshipping?” My normal response is, “When did we stop worshipping?” Coronavirus hit, the building was shutdown, activities ceased and in the minds of many, worship came to screeching halt, but did it?

Worship is not located in time and space. It doesn’t depend on a building, others, music, preacher, singers, special furniture.” These “things” are just the trappings of what we have come to call worship, but actually doesn’t produce or create worship. Worship is your spirit communicating divinely with God’s spirit... it’s that moment when two spirits become one.

I’ve been told hundreds of times that the individual doesn’t need a special building to worship God. And that’s true. So, what are we pursuing in reference to worship? Is it a “special” feeling? Is it the sights and sound of people gathering in the name of the Holy Other? Is it the fellowship of others, a hug, a smile, “our” special seat in “our” pew? Just what is it we desire?

One pastor removed the pulpit and was confronted by an outspoken lady who stated: “Well, there goes worship! How can I hear God speak to me if you aren’t standing behind the sacred desk?” This pastor simply reached into a pew, pulled out the Bible and handed it to the dear soul saying, “Here, trying reading this.”

We can have a packed sanctuary, a beautiful choir, a well constructed sermon (with robes and all) ... and still not have worship. Worship is only when a soul climbs the stars to God's altar and there become one with the Almighty.

Like you, there is much that I miss by not gathering in our sanctuary (it is hard to preach to an empty sanctuary). I miss my hugs, the friendly greeting, the soaring music (although, Stephanie and Sam lifts my spirit every time we do the recording of our service), the ebb and flow of the service ... but I wouldn't call any of that worship ... that's just the "stuff" that passes off as worship and too often, gets in the way of real worship.

Read again the last sentence from John 4:24 ... *"Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration."* And then allow your soul to climb the stars to God's altar. And by the way, it will have your soul soaring when we do gather once again in our sanctuary as the Saints of God.

**QUOTE:**

*"When we lift our hands in praise and worship, we break spiritual jars of perfume over Jesus. The fragrance of our praise fills the whole earth and touches the heart of God."* – Dennis Ignatius

**PRAYER:**

Forgive us when we think too small. Enlarge our understanding. We earnestly seek to have our spirits join up with yours so that we can truly worship you in all of your majesty. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim  
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