
From: Dr Francis Nigel Lee <francisnigellee@dr-fnlee.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 20, 2001 6:08 AM
To: Douglas W. Comin
Subject: Worshipping Almighty God!

Doug, this is excellent. I'll spread this good virus!

----- Original Message -----

From: "Douglas W. Comin" <rprev@peoplepc.com>
To: "Dr Francis Nigel Lee" <francisnigellee@dr-fnlee.org>
Cc: "CarolynWSaunders" <CarolynWSaunders@msn.com>; <CTLeverett@aol.com>; "kent butterfield" <kbutter98@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 19, 2001 10:24 AM
Subject: Re: An unforgettable sermon

> Dr Francis Nigel Lee wrote:

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>> How 'bout if Pastor had first said from the pulpit:
>> "Could the Ruling Elders please assist that little boy in his
>> distress?" -- and then quietly sat down?!

>>

>> Dr. Lee, OZ

>

> Now that's a good suggestion! Fortunately, I have been blessed with
> ruling elders who wouldn't wait for the suggestion from the pulpit...
> they would
assist

> the boy and his family on their own. Have we become so "presbyterian"
> that

we

> think practical problems in the church can only be addressed by formal
action
> with a quorum?

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> A good part of the problem here is that few congregations receive any
guidance

> from their ministers and elders regarding what is expected in the
> public
worship

> of God. Below is a tract that our session has made available to help
> our
people

> understand why proper decorum in the worship service is important...

>

> Pastor Comin, Dixie

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PASTORAL ADVICE FOR PROPER DECORUM IN THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD Offered as a help to the congregation as they seek to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

By Pastor Douglas W. Comin

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. . . Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:22-25, 28-29)

It is to be lamented that in our age the Church of God has lost much of the fear of the Lord in worship. Solemnity, reverence, awe, and humility have largely given way to familiarity, casualness, disorder, and even flippancy. That these ungodly qualities have not been the predominant features of the worship assemblies of our own congregation affords us matter for thankfulness to God, who has given us a measure of due reverence in His presence. Yet we must be ever diligent to heed the wise counsel of Solomon who said, "Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil" (Eccl. 5:1) In order to encourage you, therefore, in this most important matter, I offer these thoughts for your serious consideration, drawn largely from the passage appearing at the beginning of this pamphlet.

I. Remember that you are in the presence of MAJESTY. Most people would not dream of entering into the presence of a human dignitary, or even a pop culture icon, with the same carelessness in which they invade the courts of the living God. Let the consideration of God's incomparable majesty result in the following practical behavior:

1. Fix your attention on Him alone, not casually conversing with those around you. There will be time enough for fellowship later, but it is insulting to God's majesty to have His subjects chattering and whispering to one another when He has called for their attention.
2. Be on time for worship, which is a divine appointment with the King of kings. The whole service of worship, and not merely the sermon, is appointed by Him for your edification. Wandering in late or leaving early shows contempt for His glory.
3. Do not wander in and out of the service, as if you were at liberty to forsake His presence at your whim. There may be times of true necessity, but these should be rare. If you have small children, make a point of arriving early in order to see to their needs. Do all that you can to ensure that the Majestic God before whom you appear will have your undivided attention, as He deserves.
4. Show due respect before God with the posture of your body, as well as your heart. Just as the words of your mouth are the overflow of the heart, so "body language" communicates a great deal about the inward thoughts.

Attentiveness,

eagerness, respect, and reverence are not conveyed through slouching, yawning, or dozing.

II. Remember that you are before the THRONE OF GRACE. The worship of God is an unspeakably great privilege and a means of immeasurable blessing. Jesus Christ suffered and died to give you access to God's throne of grace. He Himself presents you there before the Father and pleads for spiritual benefits on your behalf. The remembrance of this should move you to serious prayer as you enter the assembly of the saints.

1. Come with expectancy, praying in your heart that God will prepare you to enter into His presence. John Willison wrote: "The mariner who intends a voyage, not only provides for his tackling, but he is careful, before he sails, to put his ship off from the land, that he may catch the first fair wind. In like manner, Christian, if you would launch heavenwards upon a Lord's Day, be concerned to get the vessel of your heart put off from the earth beforehand."
2. Seek grace through Christ to benefit from every part of the worship service. Not only the preaching, but also the prayers, psalms, Scripture readings and sacraments hold matchless bounty for your soul if only you would apply yourself to seeking them diligently.
3. As you hope to receive a blessing from the Lord in worship, determine to concentrate your full attention upon the matter. "Fix your eye on the minister, your ear on the word, and your heart on God."

III. Remember that you are in the company of THE ANGELIC HOST. It is a peculiar privilege that is ours in worship, that we actually draw near to "an innumerable company of angels" and join our hearts and voices with theirs in pouring out praise to God. Respect for these heavenly beings is urged upon us in Scripture as a motive for hospitality, as the writer of Hebrews says, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Heb. 13:2). How much more should our consciousness of their presence with us in worship incite us to take care in regard to our conduct in the heavenly tabernacle.

1. The angels are in awe of your salvation, for Peter speaks of the mystery of the Gospel as consisting in "things which angels desire to look into" (1 Pet.

1:12). And would you be careless, as they look on, concerning the means of so great a salvation that are held before you in the ordinances of worship?

2. The angels are not distracted from the praises of God day or night, and yet they have not half the reason to rejoice in Him as we do. We are told in Hebrews 2:16, "He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham." Shall they which have never received the infinite gift of grace outdo us in fervency of praise and thankfulness to the God of our salvation?

3. The angels watch for order and proper decorum in the worship of the Church.

Thus Paul, in arguing the propriety for the woman to have a symbol of authority upon her head in worship says that it is "because of the angels" (1 Cor.

11:10).

Matthew Henry, referring this to the order that exists in the ranks of God's hosts, says, "We should learn from all to behave in the public assemblies of divine worship so as to express a reverence for God, and a content and satisfaction with that rank in which he has placed us."

IV. Remember that you are in the presence of JUST MEN MADE PERFECT. In our worship assemblies we are transported in the spirit to the heavenly tabernacle, where we join in ascribing glory to God with the whole congregation of the invisible Church. By faith we acknowledge that the elect of God who have departed from this world have not passed out of existence, but into glory, and it is our great privilege to gather with them as we worship. Let this spiritual reality direct your thoughts in the assembly.

1. Heed the words of David, who is present with you: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him" (Psalm 89:7).

2. Think of the prophets, who continually lifted up their voices to turn the people of God away from complacency and vain worship. Will you stand with them in the presence of the Lord and let your hearts wander after the worthless idols of the world?

3. As you begin to grow anxious for the conclusion of the service, consider the saints from Troas, who sat attentively listening to Paul until midnight. Or think of Amos, who chided the ungodly of his day for saying: "When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?"

(Amos 8:5).

V. Remember that you are part of a BODY. We come to "the general assembly of the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven." One of the prevailing sins of the church of Corinth was that the people came together without regard for one another. They were individualistic in their approach to worship, just like much of the modern church. But God commands us in our assembling together to be conscious of one another's spiritual interest. This is the rule that is to direct us when we come together as a church: "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (Romans 15:2).

1. Take care for the sake of your neighbor's edification that you do not distract him in any way from his pursuit of spiritual blessing. If you or your children are disorderly in the service of worship, others will be hindered from concentrating upon the means of grace. Do not allow your little ones to wander away from you, or to fidget visibly in their seats, lest those around you be drawn away from fixing their thoughts upon the word and prayer. If they become restless, take your children quietly to the back of the meeting room, or just outside the door, and help them to compose themselves to return to the service.

Make it your goal to train them to attend to the worship of God from the earliest age, for their spiritual growth cannot begin too early. Due solemnity in regular daily family worship will do much to prepare them for the corporate assembly.

2. See to it that you participate in all of the ordinances of worship, lest your neighbor be distracted by your awkward silence. John Willison offered a reproof to those "who sit dumb in the congregation, while their neighbors are praising God," saying, "Think not this work below the greatest of you, for it is your honor. Excuse not yourselves by saying you cannot sing musically; for, if you had any delight in the duty, you would sing as you can."

3. Encourage those around you by your own serious and eager attentiveness to the service, for carelessness and inattention are as contagious as spiritual fervor.

May this humble counsel serve to advance our experience of God's presence, to the glory of Jesus Christ, before whom it is our exceeding joy to gather as a worshipping congregation.