

May 8 – Leader’s Guide: Worship: Restoring us - “re storying” us

1. For over two years we have been disconnected from the embodied life of a worshipping community. Instead, we have been formed by virtual ways of gathering. In what ways do you think we have been formed by livestream worship? What has been the impact on us personally and as a community?

In the sermon Tim mentioned a few impacts he has witnessed.

- i) Worship has become more individualistic. We are wanting worship to meet our felt needs, affirm our convictions.*
- ii) Worship has become more consumeristic. We have been given windows into churches around the world, we can pick and choose what we want.*
- iii) Worship has become “on demand”. We want our church to fit into our schedules rather than our lives being ordered around worship.*
- iv) It exposed some of our misplaced convictions. We were formed to believe that the goal was a personal relationship with Jesus grown through learning, being intellectually stimulated, fed on God’s word. Many though reflected that even though they were at home, alone, being fed by God’s word they felt they weren’t growing and experienced distance from God. It exposed that while a relationship with Jesus was important, learning was important it wasn’t all that was necessary. We are material creatures and need the materiality of sacrament, we are creatures of habit and need the kingdom habits liturgy forms, we are communal creatures and need the Spirit’s work in community.*

There is probably far more ways we have been formed by livestream worship and are feeling the impact. If your group brings more to the surface we would love to hear it as it will help us disciple our community as we come through the pandemic.

2. As human beings we are shaped by the stories we tell ourselves. As human beings what stories do we turn to - to help us understand who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going? What is the impact on us personally and as a culture in light of those stories we tell ourselves?

We reflected on the story that humanity is a cosmic accident and the resulting secular worldview that says this life is all there is – and so I need to fill this lifespan with as many beautiful things, experiences and joys as I possibly can. It is no wonder we are debt ridden, endlessly consumeristic, living for today with little thought for tomorrow.

In order to drive the economic growth needed to sustain our insatiable consumption companies regularly release a new model with new features we just have to have. Or they make inferior products that will break, are more expensive to fix than replace, and so we have to buy from

them again. This forms us as a “throw-away culture”, not just relating to stuff but to relationships.

There is the rising FOMO – fear of missing out – that is deepened by social media. Social media forms in us a pattern of shallow connections for instant self-gratification and self congratulation.

Again there may be other stories we tell ourselves as a culture that have an impact on us – but this was the one we reflected on in the sermon.

Read Genesis 1 – 2:3

3. This is the story we are invited to find our place in as followers of Jesus. What does this story tell us about who we are and where we have come from? What impact would it have on us to find our place in this story?

We are gloriously created in the image of God, and hear words spoken over us – “very good”

We are given the purpose – to have dominion – to rule in God’s stead, to be God’s representative. Our purpose then is to reflect God’s image and enact God’s loving care for his creation.

This would give us a rooted sense of self – every human being having inherent value as an image bearer.

It would give us a sense of purpose – that we are called to lovingly care for God’s creation – lovingly care for others created in God’s image.

4. Genesis 1 is a song, a song with beauty, pace, and rhythm. In the sermon Tim mentioned two of the rhythms of God’s story we are meant to find our pace by. First, the day begins not with activity, but with sleep, the affirmation that God is God and I am not. Second, our week begins with worship – delight in God, we therefore work from rest, live from worship. Which of these rhythms most resonated with you? What impact would it have on your life if you leaned more into this rhythm?

Obviously this is a personal reflection question. I might encourage you as leader to have your answer prepared to help start the conversation. Remember you can set the tone – the more vulnerable you are in your answer the deeper engagement you invite out of the group.

Read Matthew 3:13-17`

The God of community, of Trinity, that we see in the act of creation is present once more at Jesus' baptism telling us that God is about nothing less than new creation in Jesus. Jesus is restoring us to sing the song of creation, to keep pace with the rhythms of God's story. Our worship then is rightly focused on Jesus, the one who restores, re stories us.

5. How does worship immerse us in a different story of who we are, where we have come from and where we are going? In other words how does worship restore us, re story us?

We are constantly reminded particularly in the liturgy the story of God's work of creation and redemption in Jesus. Invited and equipped to take our place in that story. The liturgy always ends with a commissioning and blessing to pick up our role – to reflect God's image, and enact his loving care for his creation.

We are brought in worship to behold the God that we worship so that we are led to define ourself in relationship with Him. In Jesus loved, forgiven, chosen, an heir of his kingdom.

As we are brought to see the fullness of who God is, we are led to repent of where we have not carried the image of God, "fallen short of his glory" – and have his forgiveness in Jesus pronounced over us.

6. What is the role of the community in that re storying work?

This is the piece I would love for you to press into in your small group time. Taking some time yourself to reflect on the role the community has had in you being re storied in worship would be extremely profitable in this question.

With the radical individualism in our western mindset it is hard for people to think that they are anything other than "self-made".

In the sermon I simply touched on the encouragement we give to one another – the tuning of our voices to one another – that carrying of the beat of the rhythm of God's story.