

**Worship as Response**  
**Isaiah 28:23-29, Romans 8:18-25**

Well brothers and sisters, we've just wrapped up Season 4 of the TALK Show – and I'm sure that as we started this series at the beginning of March some of you were waiting, as Paul says in Romans 8:19 "*in eager expectation*" to see what we had planned for the various topics and shows...

However, I know that for some of you... going through a month of this Green worship experiment is more like – to borrow a phrase from Romans 8 again –being "*subjected to frustration not by your own choice... groaning inwardly*" and waiting patiently in the hope that it will soon end.

And I know these things because I'm the pastor –and your responses make their way back to me eventually, and either directly or indirectly I hear about it.

And this feedback, whether positive or negative, is a good thing because it shows me that you are engaging with what we are presenting in the TALK Show and **responding** to it.

And those responses help me to specifically identify where I need to offer further teaching and explanation - so that we have a better grasp of orthodox Christian teachings and so can grow into deeper relationship and experience of how God reveals Himself to us as a Triune God – 3 in 1, 1 in 3.

Now some of the feedback I heard shows me that we need to revisit what it means that God reveals Himself as a Trinity and why that is so important for our relationship with Him. So at some point we'll review the whole 3 Colors of Spirituality tool that we use for helping us relating to God as a Trinity.

And some of the feedback I heard shows me that I need to do more teaching on the four parts of the Bible glasses so that we better understand what constitutes Creation and the Fall into Sin and what is included in Redemption and what we are looking forward to in the New Creation.

But the majority of responses this year were focused on how people experience or don't experience the TALK Show as a worship service.

And I understand that challenge – the TALK Show doesn't have all the usual elements of our regular worship service in it, its format may seem too informal or irreverent, and some of the content may even seem inappropriate for worship...

So this is a good opportunity to review what we believe about worship by looking at what the scriptures teach us about worship – and the experience which you've had in **responding** to the TALK Show is a good starting point.

We've just experienced the process where someone creates something and we have a response to it - and this process is the foundational way in which the Bible begins to define worship, and describe the relationship that God has with all of His creation, and especially with us.

It is one of initiative and response; God acts and it brings forth a response... God speaks and the creation responds by coming into existence... God breaths into the earth, and Adam comes alive and take his first breath – whenever God acts, the creation responds in some way.

So God says in Job 38:12, 35 *“Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place”* and He boasts *“Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, ‘Here we are’?”*

And God says in Isaiah 55:11 that *“my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

So the most basic way to describe the relationship between the Creator and His Creation and lay the foundation for a biblical definition of worship, is this initiative and response dynamic – so let's look at this a bit more closely and ask ourselves – are we aware of God's initiatives?? And are we responding appropriately??

Because the truth is that all human beings come into God's creation with a sinful nature and whatever you might think sin is – the bible reveals to us that sin is an orientation of our nature that ignores and deliberately refuses to respond to God's initiatives – and causes us to respond incorrectly.

Sin affects every part of who we are, every aspect of what it means to be human - from our physicality to our emotional and rational capacity and to our spirituality – so much so that it necessitates God having to go beyond his creational initiatives to get our attention and response.

So God speaks to us in our scripture passage this morning from Isaiah 28 and says; *“LISTEN and HEAR my voice; PAY ATTENTION and HEAR what I say!”* So brothers and sisters God is speaking - we must listen and then respond.

Now one might think this headline introduction is for something super spiritual, powerfully prophetic, or really really religious – but God is talking about agriculture here...

And God says that a farmer’s knowledge of plowing, knowing where and how to plant different crops, and how to harvest and thresh these grains in the appropriate ways is taught to the farmer - by God Himself!

That’s the BIG news – but its big news because if this is true...

then by extension we can say that the knowledge of an engineer, or a physician, a carpenter, a marketing specialist, a fashion designer, or an investment banker, is taught to them by God as well.

Now this challenges us – first of all because we know that engineers, doctors, and carpenters and so on, they all go to school and study and take training and go through apprenticeships to become knowledgeable and skilled in their profession.

And secondly because we’ve never heard about instructors in these fields saying to their students; “I have a message from God for you today... about home renovation - thou shalt repaint and thin no more!”

Nor do we see professors choosing the Bible as their textbook for economics or fashion design.

And the instances where people try to use the Bible as a handbook of specific instruction for these sorts of enterprises

it usually doesn't take very long for their enterprise to actually fail and come up short in some way.

But – here in this scripture we have God himself saying that He is in fact the chief agriculture instructor, and by extension the chief instructor for any other field of expertise we might find in His world. What's going on here? How does this work?

Friends this is God breaking through the barrier which our sin puts up to tune out or filter out the God's initiatives and actions in His creation.

So God has to pointing out to us through scripture that whatever knowledge and wisdom we learn by studying the world around us, whatever we figure out through trial and error, whatever skills are passed on from teacher to student - this is in fact God at work and it is part of how His Creation reveals His Word to us.

We know God created everything by His WORD but consider that Colossians 1:17 tells us that ALL things continue to hold

together and exist by that same Word – whom we now know as Jesus Christ – the Word become Flesh.

So when we discover and observe and describe how *“any two bodies in the universe attract each other with a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them...”* we're not just witnessing what we call gravity at work – we are uncovering how the creation holds together in the Word, and we are witnessing the creation responding in obedience to the Word by existing as God commands it to.

And this applies to everything friends, whether it is  $2+2=4$ , or measure twice and cut once, or the fact that a cake takes longer to bake at higher altitudes than at sea level, or the fact that a particular style of dress really compliments your body shape, or that a baseball thrown with a particular spin will curve, drop or seem to wobble in the air...

These are all examples of how the Creation is governed by the Word and responds to the Word and reveals God to us.

God's Word governs the heavenly bodies and galaxies far far away, it governs biology and chemistry, it governs engineering and mechanics and technology, it governs the arts and aesthetics and athletics, it governs society and politics, and it governs education and thinking and logic.

Hebrews 1:3 says that *"the Word made flesh; our Lord Jesus Christ - sustains ALL things by His powerful Word."*

And what this means for our day to day life is we start to see God's initiatives going on ALL around us in EVERY aspect of the Creation – and this calls for a response from us – obediently and appropriately. If Creation functions obediently – it challenges us to do so also.

And then in Psalm 148 we discover that these Creation responses are linked to our understanding of worship. David says *"Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills,*

*fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds..."* How do they praise Him?

By functioning obediently in response to God's creating and sustaining Word... and here's the amazing part friends, our response to this, our interaction with how the Creation praises God in this way is also considered praise and worship, in fact it is the most basic definition of worship throughout scriptures.

God acts, God initiates and we respond – and our response to God is considered worship. That why I'm always saying all of life is worship – its way bigger than an hour on Sunday morning, and includes so much more than music!

Our opening worship video asks *"will this be your first action of worship this week – or your last?"* Perhaps the follow up question to that is "how do we worship God at work, or in playing sports, watching a movie, when we eat, or post on FB?

There is more to worshipping God in our daily life than simply being a good and honest and upright person? Atheists do that

So are we supposed to be constantly singing worship music?  
Are we supposed to be constantly praying? Should we only  
post inspirational scripture verses with nice nature pictures??

Brothers and sisters, those all have their appropriate places in  
our day to day lives, but that's not what it means that ALL of  
life is worship.

The key to having ALL of our life become the opportunity to  
Worship lies in understanding how the various parts of the  
Creation functionally respond in obedience to God's Word,  
and then we are able to worship by responding accordingly  
and appropriately to what we have observed going on in the  
Creation – just like the farmer does in Isaiah 28.

Now I can, and I have, done lots of teaching on this biblical  
definition of worship over the years – but getting it to actually  
translate into something that you actually do and experience  
in your day to day lives is a bit more difficult to achieve.

In many ways it's like learning to drive; you start out with the  
in-class instruction, which is needed and necessary – but you  
don't actually learn to drive in class... for that you need to get  
out on the road with an instructor and practice driving a car.

So one way to understand how the TALK Show functions as  
worship is to see it like a driving simulator where you get to  
practice at worshiping in daily life situations and in ways that  
are not like regular Sunday worship at all.

This is where we get in the car, so to speak, and take it out on  
the road to help you learn to worship in ALL areas of life as we  
explore and look at the various topics through our bible  
glasses.

And we are very obvious in pointing out how we look at a  
topic with the perspectives of Creation, Fall, Redemption and  
New Creation in the show – so that you get practiced up and  
experienced at how to do this on your own when it's not being  
obviously pointed out and thus you will be able to know how  
to respond... to worship. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Because brothers and sisters, as I read and study and understand the message of the scriptures on worship... it would seem to me that what we do here on Sunday morning is judged by how it impacts our response to God throughout the remainder of the week. Right?

This is why God says to Israel through the prophet Amos *“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”* (Amos 5:21-24)

Justice and righteousness in our daily lives brothers and sisters comes from understanding and being able to see how God’s Creation is governed by His WORD, so that we can co-operate faithfully and obediently with the WORD of God governing the Creation, that’s what the bible means by justice and righteousness.

If our Sunday worship does not equip us to do that then we are living a contradiction in how we worship God on Sunday and how we respond to Him in our life on Monday.

So brothers and sisters, if we truly believe and desire to put into action what the scriptures teach us about worship, and that ALL of life is worship...

If we can become proficient in using our Bible glasses so that we not only see the WORD in scripture but we are equipped to see the WORD of God working in His Creation...

If we are willing to worship God in our daily life by responding appropriately to the WORD in Creation...

Then we are enabled to experience the TALK Show as more than just worship simulation – it can be a genuine worship experience like any other regular Sunday service and we can declare what Isaiah 28:29 concludes... that *“all this also comes from the Lord Almighty, whose plan is wonderful and whose wisdom is magnificent!”* AMEN?!

But what about the things in the TALK Show that we know don't come from the Lord Almighty? What about songs that paint a disturbing picture of mental illness or celebrate defiance and rebellion? How do these things fit into worship?

Well brothers and sisters, it's helpful to understand that when we use the scriptures as a pair of glasses through which to view the creation – they are like bifocal or trifocal glasses.

Trifocal glasses are able to bring different situations into a clearer focus - depending on whether the object is far away or close or immediately in front of you.

And while there are many parts of the scripture that affirm the original goodness of God's creation and how it reveals Him to us - there are other parts of the scripture which explain to us how sin and evil entered into God's creation what the effects of that are and what God is doing in response to our rebellion.

And a large part of handling the Word of Truth, the scriptures correctly, as the Apostle Paul speaks of in 2 Tim 2:15, is

knowing which parts of the bifocal or trifocal lens of scripture will bring what we are looking at in the world around us into clear focus, that's why we read Romans 8:18-25 this morning.

So brothers and sisters - when we look around and see things like terrorism, addiction, and sexual perversions, and all sorts of brokenness and hurt and suffering and evils... if we view them through the lens of scriptural revelation we will not succumb to the temptation to hide them or turn away from them. Bible glasses are not rose-colored trifocals that make everything seem better like other perspectives attempt to do.

Romans 8:18 acknowledges that there are "present sufferings" in God's creation and the rest of this passage tells us that their alien presence in God's good creation reveals the need for God's redemptive work – and so we include concrete examples of such things in the TALK Show.

It is part of how we **respond** to God's initiative to show Grace and Mercy and offer forgiveness for Sin – especially our own sins. As 1 John 1:8 says *"If we claim to be without sin, we*



*deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*

So these things are an appropriate part of worship as they help us to respond to God’s grace and mercy and forgiveness in our own lives and as they show us specific ways in which Christ’s death and resurrection need to be applied to others areas of life – like mental health and politics or biology...

If ALL of life is worship – then ALL of Life must be redeemed and sanctified through the application of the Christ’s redemptive work. In other words Christians must not shy away from the brokenness and evil in this world but we must engage it - as we learned in our study of Ephesians the light must expose the darkness so that the darkness becomes light.

And in order to engage the brokenness and evil in the world we need to functionally understand how Sin and the Curse warps and twists and frustrates the Creation and understand how those areas are in bondage to decay...

Then we can see how the various parts of the Creation are not being directed back to God and Christ in worship – which was its original and intended purpose... as Colossians 1:16 says *“ALL things were made by Him and for Him”*

In this regard the TALK Show also gives you practice at Redeeming ALL areas of life – it helps us to learn how to apply a biblical worldview to interact with creational revelation to discern what we need to reject, what we can receive, and what we are called to redeem and reform in ALL areas of life.

For example – when scientists present us with knowledge and insight regarding biology, but are coming from an evolutionary bias; we have had some practice at looking at how that bias skews their knowledge and how it might be different working from the assumption that God is creator.

And when certain parts of the creation seem to be so twisted and broken that they cause nothing but pain and strife and we are tempted to write them off... it has been demonstrated for

us how nothing is beyond redemption! Not even politics and pop culture!

Brothers and sisters the TALK Show is a statement of faith which proclaims the biblical truth that nothing and no one is beyond Christ's redemption or the Holy Spirit's transforming power which undoes the effects of sin and changes something from rebellion into worship.

And finally – when we are tempted to grow weary, and give up because in spite of all our enthusiasm, our hard work and dedication to apply the redemptive work of Jesus to ALL areas of life – the world just seems to be going from bad to worse instead of getting better...

The TALK Show has pointed out signs of hope by identifying where we see healing, restoration, freedom, and how God is at work in ALL of His creation in this way – and reminds us that these are specific promises in the Creation - that one day a New Creation will be established.

So The Word, through which ALL things were made, and for whom ALL things were made, has come in the flesh to redeem ALL things and will return in glory to claim his inheritance as Firstborn over ALL the creation and renew ALL things!

And then - as Paul says in Rom 8:21 *“the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God!”*

Brothers and sisters in Christ – ALL of life is worship, you've just completed your simulation training for it – so go out and enjoy the freedom and the glory of worshiping God in every area of your life!

Amen