

About the

Simplicity of Worship

By Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

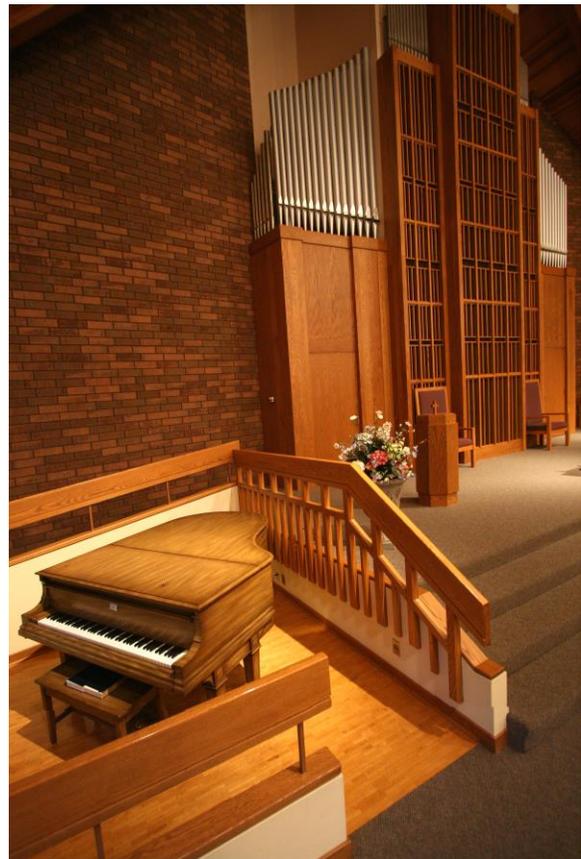
How often we have found that those visiting us are puzzled over the simplicity of our worship service! Let's face it, on the one hand, there are no elaborate rituals or lengthy ceremonies found in our worship services. Neither are there any motivational speakers, singing groups, or dramatic presentations included in our worship. We do not even have a church choir that sings for us during the worship service. The service consists of reading of God's Word, singing, prayer, collections, and preaching. That's it.

Please do not misunderstand. Just because these things are absent from our worship services does not mean we do not enjoy some of them. We love to hear choirs or special music groups sing. We even sponsor these at times. We enjoy lectures and seminars given on various subjects. These too we will sponsor. But we do not include them in the worship of the church. As with all aspects of our worship, there are reasons for this.

The primacy of preaching

The first reason is our emphasis on the preaching. You may want to take with you another of these brochures entitled *The Length of Sermons.* This brochure also explains our position regarding preaching. We believe that, according to Scripture, the sermon is what must receive time and attention during the worship service. Preaching is the chief task of the church (II Timothy 4:1, 2; I Corinthians 9:16; Romans 10:13-17). The preaching is primary in our worship services because God uses it to save

people as well as to maintain the faith of those who are saved (I Corinthians 1:18-24). By means of the preaching, God's people acquire knowledge in the Scriptures. Through the preaching God's Word, people acquire understanding and wisdom. They learn how to use their knowledge to live a holy life in this world.



All of our worship therefore centers in the preaching. When God's Word is read, it forms the basis of that which is preached. When we sing, it is in response to the reading and preaching of God's Word. When we pray, it is to ask God's blessing on

us as we hear His Word and apply that Word to our lives. God speaks to His people through the preaching, and we speak to Him through singing and prayer. By means of this type of worship, God dwells in fellowship with us, and we with God.

The regulative principle of worship

A second reason for keeping our worship services simple is what has become known as the “regulative principle of worship.” Many churches maintain that anything may be included in worship as long as the Bible does not condemn it. But this opens up the worship for anything that man may desire. All we need to do is observe the services in some churches to see how far the imagination of man can take him!

The regulative principle of worship simply means that the Bible must dictate to us what ought to be included in our worship services. It regulates our worship. The Bible clearly commands the church to preach the gospel. In order to preach the gospel, the Bible must be read. Congregational singing is sanctioned by God’s Word in Ephesians 5:20. Prayers are to be made (I Thessalonians 5:17, 18). Collections for kingdom causes are to be taken (I Corinthians 16:1, 2). God tells us to worship Him by these means, and for that reason, we

include them in our worship. Many of the elements in contemporary worship today are not sanctioned by God Himself in His Word. Neither are the elaborate rituals and ceremonies that have slowly emerged in other churches over the centuries. Therefore, we do not include them in our worship.

The focus on God

One last reason we keep our worship services simple is to maintain a focus on God’s glory. We realize that all worship makes this claim. But with the elements suggested today in contemporary worship comes a shift of attention. Man receives the attention. Perhaps this is not intentional, but it happens. The singer, the speaker, or the actor become the focus. The preaching focuses our attention on God and what He has done for us. Through Biblical preaching, God’s name is glorified. Through congregational singing and prayer, God’s name is glorified. The focus is on God. May we in our worship and in our lives seek the glory of God’s name.

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