

Rector's sermon 1: July 2026

Worship

Good morning!

Whether you're watching this video in Atherington, High Bickington, Roborough, St Giles, Beaford, Tawstock or Yarnscombe its great to be with you by the wonders of modern technology.

Today we are trying something new.

Each month I plan to produce a 'rector's' sermon to be preached in each of the mission community churches, normally on a fourth Sunday.

I don't always get to our different churches as often as I would like, but this is a way I can share some of what's on my heart with you and hopefully help us to grow, together, as a mission community...

...yes I know we're a pretty disparate bunch and each church has its own particular life and mission, but God, in his providence, has joined us together in a mission community and we trust that he's done so for a reason.

So, this morning I wanted to talk to you about worship.

Why?

Because of our mission community mission statement, or as we often call it, 'the sign on the front of our mission community bus':

We are called by God to build a Christian community in each village, which will worship, pray, grow and reach out with the Gospel.

So, today I want to look at worship, and on subsequent weeks, we'll tackle prayer, growth and reaching out.

Worship.

So, first off, what do we mean by worship?

Its always good to be clear what you're talking about!

I guess when many of us think of worship we think of singing; hymns or songs, often when we are gathered together with other Christians. And that is a part of worship ... we'll come back to that in a minute... But Christian worship is so much more... so much richer...its BIG.

Our modern word 'worship' derives from an old English word meaning to give respect, to honour... literally to 'give worth to'.

As we delve into the Bible we discover that this is what the whole creation is doing each moment of each day – by being and doing what God designed it to do.

As Psalm 24.1 says: *“the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”*.
Psalm 66.4 that *“All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee”*.

And what's true on earth is also true in heaven:
Think of the picture painted for us in the book of Revelation; where God sits enthroned in glory and all the heavenly creatures fall down in worship, crying 'Holy, holy. Holy'.

So, where do we fit into this?
We offer our whole lives to God, to glorify him.
Romans 12.1: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God— this is your true and proper worship”*.

God deserves all of us, all the time, completely.
And whether we are in singing in church, taking the kids to school, mopping the floor, ploughing a field or designing a website; whether we are reading a book or going for a walk, or meeting friends for a beer; all can and should be done for the glory of God.
Worship is an attitude of life and a million decisions made and actions taken each day...

So, when we commit as a mission community, to building churches which worship, we are committing to building a community of believers who will live to God's glory in their daily lives, in the context of the village in which we live.

How we do that is a big topic, and perhaps we'll come back to that another day...

But for now I want to focus in one aspect of our worship of God: what we do when we gather together in church.

When we worship by telling God how wonderful he is, singing his praise, saying thank you and expressing our love for him.

Of course, we can and should do this at home or out for a walk, or in the aisles of the supermarket.

But to meet together to do so is an important part of being a worshipper of God

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people gather to worship.

The early church met together in homes and in the Temple to worship (Acts 2.46)

The writer of the Hebrews warns against giving up doing so (Hebrews 10.25)

And there are good reasons for meeting together to worship:

Here's just a few:

- Its good for us; bringing joy to our hearts (Psalm 16.11)
- God delights in our collective worship (Zephaniah 3.17)
- It brings us closer to God (Hebrews 10.12)
- God draws near to us (James 4.8)
- God works in our lives (1 Peter 2.5)
- It helps push back the forces of evil (2 Chronicles 20.21-22)
- And it's a witness to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14.23)

In short, worshipping together makes stuff happen.. spiritual stuff... important stuff... and it pleases God, blesses us, changes the spiritual temperature of a place...

Collective worship should never be just singing a few hymns.
It should be a time of drawing close to God and experiencing his presence and of being transformed.

That's why those of us who take on the responsibility of planning and leading worship need to do so carefully and prayerfully, and in a way that makes space for people to encounter God.

For us, as Anglicans, collective worship has an added dimension.

The idea of the Church of England is that Christian monarch's have the responsibility of providing a church for their people.

So, the king of England, as the Supreme governor of the Church of England, appoints bishops, who in turn appoint clergy to pastor churches across the whole of the nation for everyone who lives in the nation.

As Anglican churches, we exist not just for our own benefit, but for the benefit of all the people who live in our particular parish.

This is why we aim to meet every week, same time, same place.

People need to know that God's people are there worshipping and praying on their behalf.

And they need to know where and when they can join in with the worship of their church.

So, for the last few minutes of this sermon, I want to look at 3 'b's':

Barriers to worship

Buildings

and Bank accounts.

Strap yourselves in.... because we are going to move fast...

Firstly, Barriers:

Sometimes worshipping God feels so natural, and comes really easily, even spontaneously. Other times its really hard.

Why is worship sometimes so difficult and what can we do about it?

Just a few ideas:

Sometimes worship is hard because of our sin. We need to come to the lord in repentance and receive forgiveness; to clear the blockage away. If you're struggling with this, talk to me.

Sometimes worship is hard because we are dry. Then I suggest spending time focusing on the Lord and allowing him to refresh you... through the psalms or other Scripture passages, or a walk in God's creation.

Worship might be hard because of difficult circumstances, or even because it feels like God has withdrawn from us; the dark night of the soul. In these circumstances I'd suggest faking it till you make it... whether you 'feel it' or not, just keep going because it's the right thing to do, and in the end you'll make it through the dark tunnel into the light at the other end.

Sometimes we are just too busy. We must make time. If we are not keeping a sabbath, taking one day off from our usual work, to rest, to be with the lord, then we need to reassess our use of time.

Second B:

Buildings.

Of course, the church is a community of Christians, not a building.

Of course we can worship anywhere; Jesus is the locus of our worship, and we can worship him in Spirit and in Truth anytime, anywhere.

So, can we just dispense with our buildings and save ourselves some money?

Well, I suppose we could... but I'd be reluctant...

Our church buildings make our presence in each parish really obvious and they make us easy to find for those who are looking.

Missionally they are helpful... for baptisms, weddings, funerals, school visits, even just for people popping in when they need a quiet place to think or pray or get out of the rain.

If we didn't have buildings we'd need to rent somewhere else, and using someone else's space is not always easy.

Perhaps we need to reframe how we look at our buildings, and instead love and cherish them, and use them to their full effect... looking after our buildings well, and creatively making them into beautiful spaces can be an act of worship in and of itself, and help others worship too.

And the third B:

Bank account.

Many of our churches have stopped passing round the collecting plate at services. There are good reasons for this;

People no longer carry cash

And if people give by direct debit then their church gets their offering whether they are in church or not... it helps PCCs to budget well.

Passing round a plate can be embarrassing for those who give by standing order and can give the impression to visitors that we are only interested in their money.

But the downside of not having a weekly offering is that we can forget that it's possible, indeed necessary, to worship with our money as much as with other aspects of our life.

The prophet Malachi warns that failure to tithe results in God not answering prayers (Malachi 3.8-11). King David refuses to make an offering to God that has not cost him personally (2 Samuel 24.24).

We need to be taking seriously our giving to God as an expression of our worship.

Well,

I've tried to cover a lot of ground in this our first "rector's sermon". If you want to go back and read it I've popped a copy on the resources page of our website.

But let me end by asking: what one thing might the Lord be saying to you today about worship...

And what might you want to take on board as a church, as you build a Christian community in your village which will worship, pray, grow and reach out with the Gospel...

Let us pray:

Almighty God,

Help us in our thoughts, words and actions to worship you in Spirit and truth,

in this life where we see dimly,

until that day when we see you face to face,

And all will become clear.

In Jesus name,

Amen