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Our Call: UP
Revelation 4:2-4, 9-11

When I was growing up, I lived mostly on a diet of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. For years, I ate nothing else for lunch or dinner, except for cottage cheese and crackers. And maybe pizza, if we could afford it. I know that sounds really strange, and it is strange. In fact, I'd developed a reputation in my extended family for only eating PB&J. So when I visited my cousins in my early 20s, they had gone out and bought peanut butter just for my visit. They were astonished when I ate whatever they put in front of me without complaint. There was certainly some concern on their part that I would end up malnourished from my strange childhood diet, so they were pretty happy to see that I'd adjusted my diet as I grew into adulthood.

By the way, please don't go out and buy me peanut butter and jelly. Now, I try to eat a balanced diet, because it's important to good health. Lord knows how I grew on PB&J, but it probably wasn't good for me. We need protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, and a number of other nutrients to have healthy bodies. You can't cheat this. You can't just have protein but no vitamins. And you can't have no protein but all vitamins. Did you know you can overdose on vitamins? Turns out there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. What we need is not just lots of one thing, but lots of different things all working together. All you need to do, really, is keep a healthy, balanced diet.

Don't worry, I'm not here to lecture you on how you eat this morning. But the way that our body functions provides a metaphor for our souls. Spiritually, we need a balanced diet too. To grow, to change to be more like Christ, we need a variety of different things to help us be balanced and healthy in our relationship with Christ.

Does anybody know the mission of our church? [*Working together to present everyone mature in Christ.*] We care very much about going deeper with God, we want to be all about becoming more and more like him and long before I got here you have all been wrestling with what that means. How do we work out our mission? How do we live that out as a church?

Recently we revamped our membership class in an effort to better answer these questions. In years past, if you went through our membership class you learned about the 5 G's. Can anybody remember them? (Glorify, grapple, gather, give, go.) I'm super proud of you if you can remember them, but the truth is they were

hard to remember. And they didn't quite reflect what the leadership of the church, your board of elders, had been working on more recently.

Three years ago, the elders of this church formulated what is called a "global ends policy" which is just a fancy way of saying: a document that helps us to be clear on how we achieve our mission, which is... So this is a document that answers, as best as we can right now, the question how do we become mature in Christ? But rather than call it the global ends policy, we're going to call it Our Call: UP, IN, and OUT. We want to be a community of worshippers, UP, a community of disciplers, IN, and a community of missionaries, OUT.

When we seek to become mature in Christ, we need a healthy, balanced diet. If we were really good about relationships and community, but we didn't know a thing about the Bible, there's something missing about our faith walk right? And if you knew everything there was to know about the Bible, but never bothered to even try to share it with your neighbors, you're not quite there yet spiritually, are you? So in our walk with Christ we want to have all of these elements, UP, IN, and OUT, so that we can better reflect who Jesus is, so that we can better live out our call.

As we go over these three calls in the next few weeks, I'd encourage you to think about your own faith life. Is your faith a balanced, healthy faith? Do you tend to lean into one area of your faith at the expense of others? How would you consider yourself as a worshiper? As a disciple or a disciple maker? As a missionary? What would it look like if you took up the challenge to engage your faith in these ways? How could you grow? This isn't a challenge to make you feel guilty, please hear that. This is a call to something exciting! The reality of a healthy diet is that you feel better, live longer, and can do more. It's not terribly different spiritually. Challenging yourself to grow UP, IN, and OUT means good and exciting things for you. The closer you are to Christ, the more abundant his life is in you.

First, our call UP, to be a community of worshipers. What is worship? Turn to Revelation 4:2-4, 9-11. This is a vision that John has of heaven and the throne of God and as I read it I want you to not get tangled by trying to figure out the imagery, but just let it engage your imagination. *[Read]*

Let me tell you why I have always loved the Pacific Northwest. There are two things that I have loved about this part of the country: trees and mountains. They're just gorgeous. I love to be driving around, and on a clear day when I look up, I see Mt. Rainier. And there's something about the trees around here. When I walk through the woods, I can't help but stare up into the trees. Especially when I'm in a Redwood forest further down the coast, there's an incredible sense of majesty and grandeur to those trees. And of course, when I think about the grandeur of a mountain or a tree, my mind and heart is drawn to the one who made those things. So every time I go outside and see trees and mountains, I'm

drawn into an act of worship, I'm reminded of God. But what direction am I drawn to? UP!

In the passage from Revelation we just read there is an incredible description of worship in heaven centering around this throne. There's beautiful light like jasper and ruby, and rainbows everywhere, a sea of glass, weird animals flying around and singing, and these 24 elders falling down, and if you just got caught up in the details you'd miss what was really going on: worship. This is a giant, celestial worship service, and it's all directed where? UP. Towards the throne of God. You know that feeling of grandeur and majesty that you feel when you stare at Mt. Rainier? John's vision is an attempt to magnify that feeling times 1,000, but it takes some imagination to really get there. But this is the business of heaven, what we and everything else, was created for. And it all centers around the throne of God. UP.

This vision in Revelation helps us to understand what worship is: an alignment of our whole self, heart mind and body, towards God. Everything in this scene from Revelation had to do about God. All of the activity, all of the beauty, all of the words, were about him. This is what worship is about, keeping the main thing the main thing.

And if that strikes you as narcissistic on God's part, you might not realize one very important thing about worship. We are all worshippers. We all worship something, we're wired that way. The human race has been worshipping things since we showed up on earth. Where did our ancestors look when they worshiped? UP! They looked to the sun and the moon and worshiped them in their ignorance, building huge structures like Stonehenge and the pyramids. We haven't changed much since then, except now we worship men and build huge structures called stadiums. Either way, we turn to something that we consider above us—whether that's the sun or Russell Wilson—and we focus our adoration on it. All of us do that to some degree or another, even if we don't consider ourselves religious. So in the end, the question is not are you a worshiper, it's what do you worship? What's on your throne? And if that's the case, why would you worship anything less than the only one who deserves that worship, the creator of all of this?

And that is our calling, where we find true fulfillment, in making God the center of our adoration, putting his throne in the middle of our lives. What does that look like? Well, obviously it begins with this worship service. If we, as a church, do not make every effort to have this worship service be centrally focused on Jesus, then we have failed miserably at worship. So your pastors, your staff, and the volunteers who help make this service happen, think and pray and work very hard to make this all about God. This is why you may have noticed that announcements have been dialed waaay back and renamed "Community life." Nobody likes announcements, right? Is there someone out there who is just on the edge of their seats, waiting for the announcements to come? "Ohhh, here's my favorite part!!!" And they seem jarring, like we're putting the brakes on actual worship.

But they're kind of a necessary evil, we still need to talk about these things somewhere. So more and more we've been asking, how are they a part of worship? Part of how we've done that is by thinking about announcements as talking about the life of our community, what God is doing in our midst. Part of that has meant changing up where we share the community life, according to the flow of worship that Sunday. In any case, we don't want to just do announcements just for the sake of announcements, we want to think about how even announcements can be an act of worship.

But that mindset really should be bleeding into all areas of our lives. Worship isn't just about what we do here on Sunday mornings. If we really live as a community of worshippers it will affect every part of our lives. What would that look like? How would it change what we do?

Many of you know Dave Eubank, the missionary we support who works in Burma. He visits occasionally, and when he was last here this past summer, I think I got a glimpse of what a life of worship could look like in a conversation I was having with him. We were chatting, and he was asking me how I was doing. And like you do, I was sharing with him the good and the bad. But not even really the bad, I think I mentioned that I was feeling tired or something to that effect. I really didn't think much of it, I was feeling tired, what can you do about it except maybe get some more sleep the next night? But Dave, without a moment of hesitation, just began praying about that. It wasn't sanctimonious, it wasn't belabored, he simply said, "Well Jesus, we take Larry's tiredness to you and pray that you will give him energy" or something to that effect. And it really caught me off guard! I was blown away because it was so simple, and I hadn't even thought to ask God for something so simple. And as our conversation progressed, he did that one or two more times, just a simple prayer about whatever concern was raised, no matter how small. It struck me that Dave was someone who lived a life of worship. God was so central to his life, that it was only natural to involve him in our conversation. And if you know Dave Eubank, you know how true this is. You know quickly that his love and adoration of God, his worship of God, flows out into his whole life. For me, personally, Dave is an inspiration as to what a life of worship could look like. May it be so for all of us, that we could find it so natural to believe and live like God is central to our lives.

What do we miss out on if we don't live UP? If you were here for our Christmas Eve service, then you saw Pastor Mark describe for us how the Magi worshiped the baby Jesus. On their faces! Pastor Mark got down on his stomach and put his face on the ground, and it was a little uncomfortable to watch wasn't it? I will spare you from having to be uncomfortable, so just remember him doing it. In many of the places you see worship described in the Old and New Testaments, it also describes bowing down or falling down, because the word in both Hebrew and Greek has this sense of posturing ourselves low, low, low on the ground. And really this makes sense to the intrinsic nature of what worship is. You cannot worship something you are above, that you are higher than. There must be some

acknowledgement that you are lower than, in order to acknowledge that something else is higher than, greater than you. When I go outside, I can't see the trees and the mountains unless I look up and acknowledge how small I am in comparison. Otherwise, I'm just looking at dirt and roots.

Intrinsic to the nature of worship is humility. Without worship, we are not put in our place, and we do not see God as he is. And without the centrality of God that we realize when we are humbled in worship, everything else gets out of whack. We need the humility and the focus that worship provides to really align ourselves to the reality of our condition; that we are not as big of a deal as we think we are, everything is really about God, and that we need him.

And of course, humility is not something we are naturally drawn to. I wonder if this is the reason why we are so drawn to worship lesser things. Because many of the lesser things we can control. They don't require us to be as humble as it would to worship God. The trick to worshiping an idol like sports, or a celebrity, or a wooden carving, or the sun, is that at some level our idols are still about us. We pick and choose our idols to be about what makes us feel best. And more and more, our idol, the thing we worship, really ends up being ourselves. Isn't that the human condition? That we would see ourselves on the throne instead of God? Isn't that, in the end, what leads us to so much suffering, so much misery here on planet earth? We need, so badly, to know that God is on the throne, to submit our lives to him. Without worship, the whole world is out of whack.

What would it mean to the world if we lived our lives captivated by the vision of Revelation of God on the throne? What would it mean to Gig Harbor? How could our love and adoration of God spill out of this building and into the lives of our neighbors? What does a worshiping mom look like? Maybe with Jesus on the throne, it means more of an outflow of love and patience for your children. What does a worshiping businessman look like? Maybe it means every business meeting is bathed in prayer, every business decision is made with God in mind. What a difference worship could make in our lives... and in many others.

I hope that you are inspired to live a life of worship. Of course, it's not the only thing that makes for a fulfilling spiritual life as we'll talk about in the next two weeks, but it is a great beginning because it helps make Jesus the central matter.

I want you to be inspired, but I also want you to leave with some resources. In your bulletins you will find a pamphlet showing you how you can get involved in different things here at Chapel Hill that reflect these areas of Christian maturity. Take this home with you and pray about what God may be leading you to do. Remember my challenge from earlier, what might God be calling you to... more of a life UP? IN? OUT? Think and pray about that with this pamphlet.

You may also be interested in the document I mentioned earlier, the Global Ends Policy. It's on our website if you search for "vision" it will be the first result, and

you can grab a copy of it at the Connect Center in the back. I'd encourage you to do so. There's far more than we can preach about in there and it will help you think through and challenge yourself in ways you can grow and be closer to Christ.

And that is what we are about here at Chapel Hill. We desire to work together to become more like Christ.