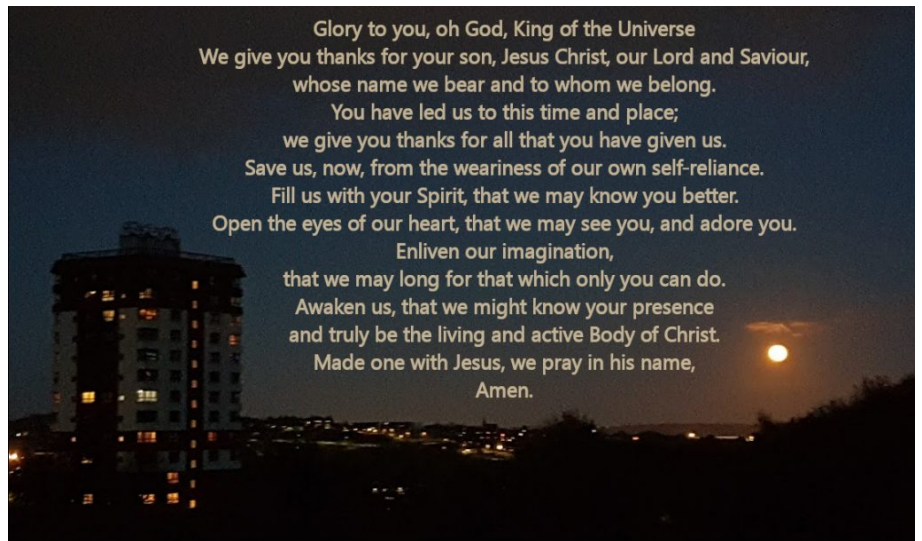


A Prayer For Our Church

Last week I was at a conference where the following words were used to describe our current circumstance:



Volatility
Uncertainty
Complexity
Ambiguity

I won't unpack those words here; they speak for themselves. They certainly describe something of what it's like to be working, living, and breathing within the context of a parish church (as well as more widely). The normal means and methods of planning and strategising are being lashed by this perfect storm.

And that's OK.

In fact, in so many ways, these are the exact circumstances in which the church of God should revel and excel. This is not because we are more stable, certain, simple, and clear than any other part of society, but because the gospel we cling to speaks of a God who is! He is a rock and a refuge. Lo, he is with us always, to the very end of the age. Including in the storms.

In the light of this, I have been struck, recently, by how St. Paul prayed for his churches in the midst of their own

volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous days. He didn't pray, first and foremost, for a change in their circumstances; he prayed for an opening of their eyes to see and *know* the one who is *with* them in all things.

¹⁶ *I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*
Ephesians 1:16-19a

This is my prayer for the church, also.

⁹ *...since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*
Colossians 1:9-12

We have so much. We have theological and teaching resources. We have freedom to worship, and people to proclaim the word of life. We have resources of time and money. We have the necessary institutional frameworks. We absolutely have the

opportunities to serve, care, and speak of the way of Christ. We might pray for more of these things, but we have them already.

Our plate is full, so to speak. What we *need* is a desire to eat and drink of that which has been given to us. This is eucharistic mystery: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood; has eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day” (John 6:54). We are happy to arrange the room, set the table, even welcome and serve the dinner guests; we have planning meetings and strategy documents and even some slick slideshows to prove it! We would do it all, but one thing we lack: to sit down and *eat and drink* of Jesus himself.

Oh that we would behold him. See him. Know him better. Yearn for him. Long for him. That we would be in *orbit* around him and have *confidence* that when he is known, and followed, as the Way, Truth, and Life, then – and *only then* – will the life-filled kingdom of God be on earth as it is in heaven.

So “open the eyes of our heart”, Lord! Just as Paul prayed long ago. Give us the Spirit by which we may see you and *know* you. *Enlighten* us with a revelation of how you are with us, and call us, and shape us, and change us, and move us. *Awaken* us, Lord, to the truth of who you are. *Enliven* us that we might overflow with the marks of the one to whom we belong. The rest of it will come from that. Without that, the rest of it is wearying and ultimately worthless; and I think we know that in our hungry spiritual bellies.

To that end, I’ve written a prayer for the church communities to which I belong. It’s not particularly precise or poetic, but I wonder if you might join me in praying it with me each day as we head quickly towards advent, the season in which we wait for the Lord. We *will* wait for the Lord.

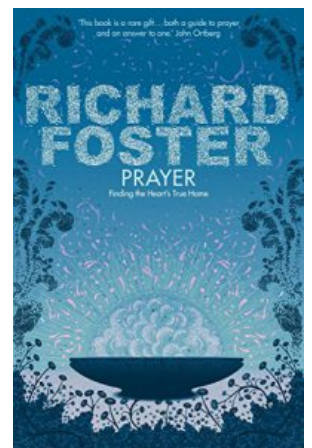
Glory to you, oh God, King of the Universe

We give you thanks for your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and

Saviour,
whose name we bear and to whom we belong.
You have led us to this time and place;
we give you thanks for all that you have given us.
Save us, now, from the weariness of our own self-reliance.
Fill us with your Spirit, that we may know you better.
Open the eyes of our heart, that we may see you, and adore
you.
Enliven our imagination, that we may long for that which only
you can do.
Awaken us, that we might know your presence
and truly be the living and active Body of Christ.
Made one with Jesus, we pray in his name,
Amen.

Review: Prayer – Finding the Heart's True Home

Richard Foster's *Prayer* is a classic of the early '90s but I'm glad that I have only just recently read it. I don't think I would have truly understood it, or been impacted by it, if I had come to it before I'd lived some life.



Foster is, of course, known for his teaching on spiritual disciplines with contemporary application. This book is in the same vein. It is a compendium of independent chapters, each considering the sorts of prayer that we see in the biblical

narrative and in Christian experience. A quick look at the table of contents reveals the gist: "Simple Prayer, Prayer of the Forsaken, The Prayer of Examen, The Prayer of Tears, The Prayer of Relinquishment..." and so on.

Foster takes us to the base foundation of spirituality, to the character of God himself. God is a God who speaks, and who listens, and who creates and restores the relationship between himself and his people. How we interact with him, i.e. how we *pray*, is the question that takes us into these depths. Like similar relational questions (e.g. "How do I speak and be closer to my husband, my wife, my child?") the answer is both simple ("Just speak!") and profoundly deep, even mysterious. Like all relational issues, it requires both deliberate action and humble response. Prayer is not something to "master, the way we master algebra or motor mechanics" (page 8), but "we come 'underneath', where we calmly and deliberately surrender control and become incompetent."

As I record my thoughts here I am not going to touch on every chapter, but on those parts that have challenged me, taken me deeper, or have reminded me of the gracious permission I have, as a child of God, to come to him in prayer.

Prayer of the Forsaken.

It is right that Foster touches on forsakenness early in the book. This sense, occasional or frequent, is part and parcel of the Christian experience; we feel as if we are praying to bronzed-over heavens, when everything would scream at us that God is absent. Foster has drawn on "old writers" to give me a new phrase, "*Deus Absconditus* – the God who is hidden" (page 17) for those times when God appears to have disappeared.

The prayer of the forsaken is the prayer of the pair on the *road to Emmaus* who stand with "downcast faces" because of their dashed hopes about the one who was "going to redeem Israel." They walk with Jesus, but he is hidden from them.

It is the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the whale. It is the prayer of David, and Jesus himself, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Times of forsakenness are a given in the Christian pilgrimage of life. And they are necessary. They take us to the bedrock of God's *sovereign* grace where we are stripped of any pretence that we might manipulate God in relationship or prayer.

That is the next thing that should be said about our sense of the absence of God, namely that we are entering into a living relationship that begins and develops in mutual freedom. God grants us perfect freedom because he desires creatures who freely choose to be in relationship with him. Through the Prayer of the Forsaken we are learning to give God the same freedom. Relationships of this kind can never be manipulated or forced. (Page 20)

Such seasons are seasons of refining that burn hot. We question ourselves, and "nagging questions assail us with a force they never had before" (Page 23)... "'Is there any real meaning in the universe?' 'Does God really love me?'"

Through all of this, paradoxically, God is purifying our faith by threatening to destroy it. We are led to a profound and holy distrust of all superficial drives and human strivings. We know more deeply than ever before our capacity for infinite self-deception. Slowly we are being taken off vain securities and false allegiances. Our trust in all exterior and interior results is being shattered so that we can learn faith in God alone. Through our barrenness of soul God is producing detachment, humility, patience, perseverance. (Page 23)

In the last year we have experienced a sense of this forsakenness. One instructive experience stands out for me: At a summer festival in 2017, ironically surrounded by the joy

and bustle of the worshipping people of God, we found ourselves in this dark place – a deep sense of being lonely, abandoned, forsaken. As I breathed and paced myself to get to the next workshop a leader approached me and gave me a word that had been impressed upon him as he saw me randomly within the crowd. What was that word of the Lord in the midst of emptiness, frailty, darkness, and lost hope? “God is saying, he is giving you the courage of a lion.” It broke me, I wept, and it was bitter. It was bitter, but right.

True courage rests not on ourselves, but on faith. The prayer of the forsaken takes us deeper yet; faith rests on trust.

When you are unable to put your spiritual life into drive, do not put it into reverse; put it into neutral... Trust is confidence in the character of God... I do not understand what God is doing or even where God is, but I know that he is out do me good.” This is trust. (Page 25)

We cry out to the infinite mercy of God. We learn that “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” finds its answer in “Into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

The Prayer of Relinquishment.

There is faithfulness in the simple prayer of petition, in which our needs are laid out before our Lord and provider. But I have noticed that this form of petition can actually play an opposite role; we often use it as a defense *against* the leading of the Spirit. We lay out our needs before God and say “Lord, bless us” with a heart that actually says “I am going this way. I am doing these things. Now do your part, God, and make them work.” We build self-reliant castles, and hold our petitionary facade as evidence of faithfulness.

I have noted this tendency in my own journey with Jesus, sometimes with a desperate internal monologue: “Look at these things, fix them, sort them, don’t let me fall! I’ve turned up

to work, where are you?" In an era of church which is fundamentally performance-driven, and amongst my generation of church leaders who are so readily anxiety-driven, I have heard this insecure form of "prayer" echoed time and time again.

The prayer of relinquishment calls us away from this dysfunction. It is the spiritual equivalent of a trust exercise, or, as Foster describes, "a person falling into the arms of Jesus, with a thirst-quenching sense of 'ahhh!'" (page 50). Yet while this "soul-satisfying rest" is the end result of the Prayer of Relinquishment, it is not the journey.

The journey is *Gethsemane*. It is "yet not my will but yours be done", prayed not as a catch-all default at the end of a prayer, but as a positive deliberate choice to submit our plans, our desires, our lives to the will of God. "All of my ambitions, hopes and plans," sings Robin Mark, "I surrender these into your hands."

We pray. We struggle. We weep. We go back and forth, back and forth, weighing option after option. We pray again, struggle again, weep again. (Page 53)

Indeed, "relinquishment brings to us a priceless treasure: *the crucifixion of the will*." (Page 55) Personally speaking, given my first name, I can almost take this literally! And it is a treasure. In many ways, the battle of the cross was won at Gethsemane; from this point in the garden, Jesus endures for the sake of the joy set before him.

There is death to the self-life. But there is also a releasing with hope... It means freedom from the self-sins: self-sufficiency, self-pity, self-absorption, self-abuse, self-aggrandizement, self-castigation, self-deception, self-exaltation, self-depreciation, self-indulgence, self-hatred and a host of others just like them. (Page 56)

The Prayer of Suffering

When the journey with Jesus takes us to fields of forsakenness, or roads of relinquishment, our prayer can bear substantial internal fruit; we grow spiritually and the path leads to maturity. But prayer is not all about introspection. As his book concludes, Foster's focus becomes increasingly external, even missional. He turns to intercession, to what he calls "radical" prayer, and to a vision for church as missional community (Page 268) that the rest of us are only just starting to realise.

The prayer of *suffering* embraces the missional concept of *incarnation*. This is not to undermine, as some have taken it, the salvation-bringing incarnation of Jesus. Rather, it takes the character of God in Christ as a *model* for how we obey the Great Commission and are *sent as Christ was sent*.

Christ serves us not from above and beyond our condition, but from *within* it. And so Paul can *speak* of a participation in the afflictions of Christ as part and parcel of his participation in his mission. And Peter can extend that participation in both *suffering and glory* to his readers, and so to us. In this sense we talk about suffering as *redemptive*, the same sense in which confession, preaching, evangelism, and other forms of witness are redemptive. The prayer of suffering expresses it.

In redemptive suffering we stand with people in their sin and in their sorrow. There can be no sterile, arms-length purity. Their suffering is a messy business and we must be prepared to step smack into the middle of the mess. We are 'crucified' not just for others but with others. (Page 234)

This is a conscious shouldering of the sins and sorrows of others in order that they may be healed and given new life. George MacDonald notes, 'The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their

suffering might be like his.” (Page 238)

As Foster points out, (page 233), the concept of suffering is almost anathema to the consumerist culture of comfort that coerces conformity in the contemporary church. But this, itself, can create the redemptive suffering. Uncomfortable prophets and travailing intercessors are politely pushed aside or even directly silenced; their suffering and sorrow embodies the plight of the church and they cry out in the anguish of the church's self-abuse. And so Jesus yearns for his Jerusalem and Moses refuses to give up the Golden-Calf-enslaved people of God:

‘I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin’ (Exod. 32:30b). And this is exactly what he does, boldly standing between God and the people, arguing with God to withhold his hand of judgment. Listen to the next words Moses speaks: ‘But now, if you will only forgive their sin – but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written’ (Exod. 32:32). What a prayer! What a reckless, mediatorial, suffering prayer! It is exactly the kind of prayer in which we are privileged to participate. (Page 257)

What I have learned from Foster here is that this form of suffering is not only *permitted*, but *valued* in the dynamic of Jesus with his followers. In recent years I have come across many of the faithful who have been all but submerged in the bloody mess that flows from the machinations of our religious organisations. I have come across the abused with their wounds flowing. I have witnessed the weary weeping of senior leaders overcome by the inertia of apathy. I have seen the delicate shells of those discounted, despised, condescended to and cut off by orphan-hearted panderers. I can count myself amongst both the wounding and the wounded.

The prayer of suffering turns this pain towards redemption. *Daniel* prays in the pain of exile, confessing the sins of

those others that sent him there. Jesus, impaled by the nails of desperate human rebellion, *prays* for their forgiveness and Stephen *later* echoes him as the stones descend and Saul looks on. Their prayers availeth much, redeemeth much. They are prayers of suffering.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says that when we pray for our enemies, 'we are taking their distress and poverty, their guilt and perdition upon ourselves, and pleading to God for them. We are doing vicariously for them what they cannot do for themselves.' (Page 240)

There is intimacy in this prayer, and it brings intimacy to our mission with Jesus. Only in intimacy can we pummel the chest of our heavenly Father, offering prayers of "holy violence to God" (Page 241). Only in intimacy can the accusatory cry of the *martyrs*, "How long, oh Lord?" find its answer in the divine heart.

This is not anger. It is not whining. It is, as Martin Luther puts it, 'a continuous violent action of the spirit as it is lifted up to God'. We are engaging in serious business. Our prayers are important, having effect with God. We want God to know the earnestness of our heart. We beat on the doors of heaven because we want to be heard on high. We agonize. We cry out. We shout. We pray with sobs and tears. Our prayers become the groanings of a struggling faith. (Pages 241-242)

Foster has reminded us here that suffering can be redemptive and should be released, not suppressed, in prayer. It is not wrong to demand a divine audience. It is not wrong to be more persistent than the *widow*. It is entirely right to bring our cause before our righteous, just, and loving Father. Maybe our cause is unjust; he can meet us in our prayer and change our heart. But maybe it is true, and we have been unknowingly sharing the heart of God, who mourns with those who mourn, and is stirred to redemptive action.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Distilling worship

I ended a recent post with these words: “[It is best] to begin with *worship* and actively work from there, by his grace alone, all the way to the end.” Which is all well, and good, but what is *worship*? Where *do* I begin?



, or



?

What I’m going to do here is a bit of an exercise in biblical distillation. Using the ESV bible, and with the help of a Bible Dictionary or two, and google, let’s shake around the word “worship” in Scripture and see what concepts condense before us. This is not precise, but it useful.

The word “worship” itself is so ethereal and intangible. Broad definitions like the ubiquitous “giving worth to – *worthship*” are not particularly helpful. So the first step is to see what **practices** are attached to or associated with

worship.

In the earliest place where “worship” is mentioned in the (ESV) Bible, Genesis 22, Abraham intends to worship by killing something and burning it. In the last book of the Bible worship is expressed by falling down at someone’s feet (albeit, before an angel- Rev 22:8) before the last mention (Rev 22:9) which is simply a command – “Worship God.” What else is involved or associated with worship?

In between this first and last account a quick word search across the ESV gives us a list of practices where worship is associated with:

1. **Posture** [1-hide]

- bowing of head. [hide]Gen 24:26, 48; Exod 4:31, 12:21, 34:8; 2 Kgs 5:18; 2 Chr 7:3, 29:29-30; Neh 8:6; Ps 95:6; Heb 11:21[/hide]
- standing (rising up). [hide]Exod 33:10[/hide]
- falling down / prostration. [hide]Jos 5:14, 2 Chr 20:18; Job 1:20; Is 44:15, 17, 46:6; Dan 3:5-7, 10-11, 14; Mt 2:11, 4:9, 28:9; Acts 10:25; 1 Cor 14:25; Rev 4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 11:16, 19:10, 22:8[/hide]
- kneeling [hide]Ps 95:6.[/hide]
- direction of face. [hide]Ezek 8:16[/hide][[/1-hide]

2. Some form of **proclamation** that... [1-hide]

- “blesses” God [hide]Gen 24:48[/hide]
- “ascribes glory” to God [hide]1 Chr 16:29, Phil 3:3[/hide]
- “gives thanks” to God [hide]2 Chr 7:3[/hide]
- “glorifies” or “declares God’s name” [hide]Ps 86:9, Ps 102:22[/hide]
- declares God’s characteristics [hide]2 Chr 7:3; Rev 4:10, 13:4[/hide]
- “exalts” [hide]Ps 99:5, 9[/hide]
- is prayer and petition [hide]Is 44:17; Lk 2:37[/hide]
- acknowledges God’s status [hide]Mt 14:33; Jn 9:38[/hide]

– “praises” God [hide]Rev 19:4[/hide][[/1-hide]

3. **Sacrifice** [1-hide]

– of an animal. [hide]Exod 32:8; 1 Sam 1:3; 2 Chr 29:28, 29, 32:12; Ezra 4:2; Is 19:21; Acts 7:42[/hide]

– of a gift, firstfruit or other general offering. [hide]Dt 26:10; 1 Chr 16:29; 2 Chr 25:14; Is 19:21; Jer 1:6; Ezek 46:2; Mt 2:11[/hide]

– of worship itself as “offering” [hide]2 Sam 15:8[/hide]

– of ourselves as “living sacrifice” – [hide]Rom 12:1[/hide][[/1-hide]

4. **Service** (often negatively, serving other gods). [1-hide][hide]Dt 8:19, 11:16, 17:3, 29:26, 30:17; 1 Kgs 9:6, 9, 16:31, 22:53; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3, 21; 2 Chr 7:19, 22; 2 Chr 33:3; Jer 8:2, 13:10, 16:11, 22:9, 25:6; Dan 3:12, 14, 18, 28; 4:10; Lk 4:8, Rom 1:25[/hide]

– vow-making [hide]Is 19:21[/hide]

– obedience [hide]1 Kgs 11:33[/hide][[/1-hide]

5. Temple or **location**. [1-hide][hide]1 Sam 1:3; 2 Sam 15:32; 2 Kgs 18:22, 19:37; 2 Chr 32:12; Ps 99:9; Ps 132:7; Is 27:13, 36:7; Jer 26:2; Ezek46:2; Zech 14:16-17; Jn 4:20; Acts 7:7, 8:27, 24:11; Heb 9:1; Rev 11:1[/hide]

-location superseded – [hide]Jn 4:21[/hide][[/1-hide]

6. Some form of **transcendance** [1-hide]

– in the “splendour of holiness” [hide]1 Chr 16:29; Ps 29:2, 96:9[/hide]

– in the “glory of the Lord” [hide]2 Chr 7:3[/hide]

-“before” God / in his presence. [hide]Ps 22:27; Is 66:23[/hide]

– with “reverence and awe” [hide]Heb 12:28[/hide][[/1-hide]

7. **Singing & music** [hide]2 Chr 29:28; Ps 66:4; 86:9[/hide]

8. **Seasons & times** [1-hide]

– Passover [hide]Ezra 6:21[/hide]

– Feast of Booths [hide]Zech 14:16[/hide]

– Feasts in general [hide]Ezek 46:9; Jn 12:20[/hide][[/1-

hide]

9. **Fasting** [hide]Lk 2:37; Acts 13:2[/hide]
10. **Self-reflection** [1-hide]
 - confession. [hide]Neh 9:3[/hide]
 - seeking. [hide]Jer 8:2[/hide][[/1-hide]
11. **God-given** identity or ability [1-hide]
 - “in spirit and in truth” [hide]Jn 4:23-24[/hide]
 - Israel’s identity [hide]Rom 9:4[/hide][[/1-hide]
12. **Prohibition** of certain acts [1-hide]
 - unatoned sin or uncleanness [hide]1 Sam 15:25, Ezra 6:21; Jn 9:31[/hide]
 - idols. [hide]Dt 12:4; Ps 97:7; Ps 106:19; Is 2:20; Is 44:15; Ezek 20:32; Acts 7:43; Rev 9:20[/hide]
 - human sacrifice. [hide]Dt 12:31[/hide][[/1-hide]
13. A **general reference** to “worship” [hide]Exod 24:1, 34:14; Jos 22:25; Jdg 7:15; 1 Sam 1:19, 28; 2 Sam 12:20, Ps 22:29, Is 19:23, Mt 2:2, 8, 15:9, 28:17; Mk 7:7; Lk 4:7, 24:52; Jn 4:22; Acts 17:23, 18:13, 19:27, 24:14, 26:7, 27:23; Col 2:18; 2 Thess 2:4; Heb 1:6, 9:21; Rev 13:8, 12, 15, 14:7, 9, 15:4, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4, 22:3, 22:9[/hide]

That’s quite a diversity, but it gives us access to the next step – a **lexical** distillation. What are the underlying words for worship that attach to these practices? For instance, the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* doesn’t have “Worship” as a standalone entry but subsumes it into “Prayer, Ask, Kneel, Beg, Worship, Knock” and “Serve, Deacon, Worship” – which are aspects clearly evident in the word search above.

It gives us access to some ancient Greek words. We have worship as...

- **gonypeteō** – means to “kneel down before.” The word alludes to the submission of subjects or vassals to their High King. It expresses a sense of awe in the recognition of might and sovereignty. It’s about paying

homage, giving *undivided* loyalty. It also has the sense of throwing oneself on the mercy of the court – it is an acknowledgement of grace and so can reflect repentance, reliance and absolute trust or faith. It can be both deliberate, or impassioned – falling to one's needs in a sense of desperation.

- **proskyneō** – means, literally, “to kiss” but has a broader meaning now. Like *gonypeteo* it also reflects posture – kneeling or prostration, and attitude – reverence and humility. It often translates the widely found OT Hebrew *šāḥāh* which means much the same but perhaps even more amplified – “cowering” perhaps, certainly “bowing to the will” of the one so adored.

It's used a lot in Revelation where it is strongly associated with the voice of God's people singing adoration. So much so that the singing of these songs, which are “constantly finding new title of dignity with which to praise God, and ascribing to him the most exalted merits and attributes... [such that]... human petitions and thanksgivings merely fade away into silence” ((“Proskyneō” in *New International Dictionary of Theology*, Vol. 2)) is *proskyneō*, worship, in it's own right.

- **latreuō** – picks up the sense of worshiping God through service. It has simple connotations of employed labour.

It often translates the widely found OT Hebrew *‘ābad* which can mean “work” in general, of the good sort as found in Eden. It is about liturgical service, in temple or tabernacle, but is not about the specific tasks of priests but the underlying obedience to God by all the people because of his grace. It extends so far as to refer to the inner worship of the heart by faith.

This is especially so in the light of the gospel where the work (*latreia*) of salvation done by Christ fulfills the strictly religious obligations that foreshadowed the atonement in Christ.

Our distillate of worship is this. Worship is...

Submission, Surrendered Adoration, and Service

And so to begin with worship is to begin with these things.
These are things we can *do*.

Submission is a choice. It is the attitude of “Let not my will, but yours be done” not in some fatalistic sense, but in the determination to override the inclinations of our own selfishness. In this way submission is freedom from the tyranny of other’s expectations – free to serve as a God-given gift rather than obligation. It is a choice to *follow* and to learn God’s ways. It involves learning, reading, devotion, study. It involves obedience to the Word of God. So the inward devotion is directed towards outward action. This necessitates prayer and petition, sacrifice and discipline. All this is worship that begins with submission.

Surrendered Adoration is also a choice. It’s an allowing of God to have his way in with and through us. It’s a response to God’s movement with voice and words – acknowledgement and declaration. Here we lift voices in praise, both privately and corporately. We set aside times and places to devote attention to hear him and proclaim him. We sing, we dance, we delight, we catch, and express, a glimpse of what heaven will be like. All this is worship.

Service is a choice. It’s a choice to expend energy, sacrificing time, effort and inclination for the sake of God and his people. Service is God-ordained work and can be of the most “secular” kind. All people can worship God in their work, glorifying God in their human industry. Service sets the aims of God in front and seeks to further them. It is often outward focussed and so notices the things God notices –

many of the gifts of the Spirit are for the furthering of this form of worship.

If we distil this yet further we get the basic condensate of worship – **Jesus himself.**

Jesus worships.

It is in the essence of who he is and what he does. Indeed “the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.” ((Jn 5:19)) One could argue that mutual worship is at the heart of the trinitarian relationship, it’s certainly there in the economic trinity as the incarnate Son of God relates to his Father. And it is Paul who tells us that it is by the same Spirit of Christ by which we, too, can have a life that cries out “Abba, Father.” ((Romans 8:15))

In the end, God helps us worship. As he must – or else our wandering eyes and selfish inclinations cause us to worship easier things, or turn our adoration into striven religion.

Lord Christ, help us worship you, in spirit and in truth. And so manifest your glory in our lives.

Amen.