



# FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

“CREATED TO WORSHIP”

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 57:7, 9-11; Hebrews 10:19-25

*This sermon was preached by Dr. L. Holton Siegling, Jr. on Sunday, June 13, 2021  
at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina.*

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

Let us pray...

Almighty and everlasting God, may the words of my mouth and meditations of each of our hearts be pleasing, acceptable, even joyful in your sight, for you are our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

It is an age old question: “For what are we created?” In other words, more than anything else, what is it that we are created by God to do? For those worshipping online this morning, you should know that we had a portion of our congregational meeting just prior to worship. And part of the business that was conducted involved hearing a report from Dr. Chris Hawk in which he presented our church family’s 2021/2022 operating budget. As pastors, we have the benefit of witnessing the budget come together from the beginning; starting with the various committees and divisions and their prayerful reflections on what they perceive to be the work that God is calling them and us to do. Not surprisingly, and given the tangible expressions of time and energy and resources that our committees and volunteers place upon their respective ministry areas, I dare say someone were to visit one of our committee’s during the budgetary process, they might come away from that meeting with the impression that that particular committee’s work is the most important work that God calls us to do. But is there a most important work, a most important purpose? Is it, for example, the Christian Education and nurture of our church family? Is it the work of the Evangelism Committee, and their outreach as well as their new member initiatives? Is it Local or World Missions, and the impact that we have upon the needs of our community and world? Is it our staff, our missionaries down the hall, as we sometimes refer to them? Does it have to do with their vital work in helping us cast and implement a vision for Christ’s Church?

I’m thinking about Suzy Edwards and everything from her wonderful children’s messages which encourage and inspire the youngest in our church family, to a vision that she helped to cast for

an eventual grandparent camp; indeed, we have been and continue to be blessed with wonderfully talented church staff. And if it's not our personnel, per se, maybe it is our dedication to congregational care or fellowship, like the event we are going to have today over on Sullivan's Island. And if it is not these things, maybe it has to do with those efforts of ours which are associated with our physical property, which includes a roughly 207-year-old sanctuary with which God has blessed not only our faith community but also our community-at-large? Ah, to be certain, every committee, every division reflects a vitally important aspect of who we are as a church family. And so, naturally, there is an obvious measure of financial commitment attached to the various ministries of the church; and, because they are all important, we try to use our resources as equitably as possible, neither elevating nor shortchanging any of them. Rather, we try to collaborate as best we can so that, by God's grace, we can do all of the things we feel called by God to do. Still, the question remains, what is it that we are supposed to do more than anything else? Perhaps that is a question we have asked ourselves? And that's a different question than, "What is my purpose?" I mean, we can find meaning and purpose in a great many things. I'm talking about our ultimate purpose, our primary and chief end in life? What is it? Is it to eat and drink and be merry? Oh, many in the world today undoubtedly like the sound of that; and, from the outside looking in, that looks to be very much their purpose. Is it my truth, your truth? Is it good and noble causes? Is it a matter of being a faithful son, a dutiful mother, a good neighbor? In another and less politically correct era, the question was asked in this way: "What is man's chief end in life?" That question comes to us from one of the most formative Christian catechisms known as the Westminster Shorter Catechism. And right away, question #1: "What is man's chief end in life?" And the answer: "To glorify and enjoy God forever." Could it be that, more than anything else, we were created to worship? That we are called to praise God, and that, in praising and glorifying God, we are invited to delight in God, to enjoy God? Of all the formative events which shaped the identity of the people of God, Israel's Exodus from Egypt has to rank at or near the top of any list. And listen to what God said to His children about what they should do when they were finally free from bondage?

In Exodus 3:12 God declares: "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." And whether it is a place, like a mountain, or a city, like Jerusalem, or whether it is a spiritual state, that blessed state of worshipping God in spirit and in truth to which Jesus later directs us; indeed, the Bible tells us that "from the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord our God is to be praised!" Praised in worship, in work, in parenting, in school and yes, even in battle! When God's people, the 12 tribes of Israel, specifically, whenever they would break camp or whenever Israel went to war, it was not by chance that the tribe which always led the charge was the tribe whose very name was "praise", the tribe of Judah. Perhaps that should serve as a good reminder to all of us of the need to begin every day, if not every action within the day, with an eye toward the praise and glory of God. The Apostle Paul put it this way, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)!

Now clearly, we can ascribe glory to God in all times and in all places, but this is especially done in worship, for worship is where most uniquely, and in accordance with the commandments of God, we bow down, it is where we kneel before the Lord, our God, our Maker (cf. Psalm 95:6).

Worship is where we apply our minds to the reading and the proclamation of God's Word, and it is where Jesus Christ, the Living Word, is actually present with us, by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. Worship is where we humble ourselves and lift up the name of Jesus. It is where we find rest in God's grace and pray. It is where we sing God's praises, joyfully respond to God's blessings with our tithes and offerings. It is where we claim God's covenantal promises in the waters of Baptism and around the Lord's Table. Ah, to be certain, worship is where we are transformed, transformed into a greater likeness of the one whom we adore. Such is the true nature of worship, and nothing, nothing is more important than the glory and the praise that we ascribe to God and nothing is to be for us more delightful, more joyous, more enjoyable.

In the book of Hebrews, we are told: "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Now, the author of Hebrews can say that, first and foremost, because God had revealed to him what we also know, that worship is absolutely essential to who we are as the People of God, but some people weren't doing it. Some people were neglecting to meet together. Some people just weren't showing up for worship! That said, let me quickly add that Biblical context is very important here, because, when those words were first written, the gathered community was the only opportunity that people had to come together and worship on the Sabbath. There was no Livestream. There was no Facebook Live and so it is not a true parallel for us to suggest that someone worshipping remotely is not fulfilling their Christian responsibility. To be certain, the whole of one's heart and soul and mind and strength can be inclined toward God in worship wherever they are. What's more, and when the Pandemic was at its worst, there was good reason for some people to stay at home and worship remotely. But these were not the kinds of situations that were being addressed in our New Testament Lesson. From the sound of things, while the Scriptures were abundantly clear about the centrality of worship, and while Jesus himself modeled the importance of attending synagogue and of listening to the Word of God and teaching about it. For some people, for some people worship was simply not a priority in their life. And, here again, that is not to say that they couldn't read the Scriptures on their own or that they couldn't pray and sing and worship God individually and apart from the community of faith; it's just that such means of grace are especially be done on the Lord's Day, the Sabbath.

From our New Testament Lesson, we are to understand that some people were simply neglecting to worship on the Sabbath, and because worship was not a priority in their life. The priority in their life, their love for God was weaker. What's more, they were missing out on some of the other good that God has determined would emerge from our corporate worship; namely, the encouragement that we receive not only from God, but also from one another. And, believe me, it comes, even if we don't feel like we experience it right away. I was talking with a friend and church member recently, and we were discussing worship and their children, and about how they were looking forward to resuming children's church and nursery in the near future. I mentioned something to the effect that, in the meantime, I hoped that the services were accessible to their children, engaging, as it were. His response was a good reminder of how worship fits into our broader life of discipleship. He honestly said that he didn't know if his kids tracked everything or not, but that that was not for him the most important thing. He expressed that, more than anything else, he and his wife wanted to model for their children that worship was important. That worship was an integral part of who they are and what they did. So that, one day, and by

God's grace, it would be what their children would choose to do! Whether we are worshipping here or at home, worship is what we do. Indeed, it is what all of God's children, young and old, have been created to do. And, as we do it, we are most richly blessed, because part of God's intention around worship is that our faith would be strengthened and nourished, that we would be equipped in here, to persevere out there! In this way, we do not gather as a community of faith to listen to a meaningful children's message or a pastoral prayer or even a sermon. It's not so that we can sing without masks, though that really is nice to do. We are not here to clang our coins in the plates or pray so others can hear us. No! We are in this place so that God can hear us! To put it another way, we are, wherever we are worshipping right now. We are worshipping as a matter of spiritual devotion to God Almighty; a response to the Biblical mandate which says that we must be here, that there is nothing more important that we can do than to worship God. You may recall that we concluded the business of our congregational meeting which pertained to presenting the budget and approving the Pastor's Terms of Call, we affirmed that our meeting would continue through this morning's Charge and Benediction. The reason we do that is quite simple: of all the things that are important for us to do as the people of God, of all the faithful business that we conduct, nothing is more important than praising and glorifying and worshipping, the very Living God!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The following sermon has not been edited by the author; therefore, there may be discrepancies. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website.