

The Worship War

Sermon Series: Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 2:8-20

→ “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’ (vv. 13-14).



Big Idea

Musical worship has both a vertical and a horizontal aspect to it. When we are singing to the Lord, we come to find that we are also singing to one another.

(1) The Vertical Aspect

The first thing we must say is that there is a clear vertical aspect to the angels’ worship. By vertical, I simply mean that there is this interchange going on between them and God. They are looking up, as it were. Hence, again, we read of them: “praising God and saying Glory to God...” (vv. 13b-14a). God is the primary subject and audience of their song. They’re singing about Him and to Him.

As we consider the church’s musical worship in this regard, it should impress us that from the very beginning God’s people have been a singing people. It is grace that sets Christianity apart from all other religions! And this grace of forgiveness that comes to undeserving sinners from the cross of Christ evidences itself in the songs of the saints. No one sings like the Christian. Because no one is as grateful as the Christian. Because no one receives free, undeserved, grace like the Christian.

(2) The Horizontal Aspect

While, in isolation, the vertical aspect of the angels’ worship seems clear, when we consider their song in light of its context in the narrative, another audience (and another aspect) comes into view. There is not merely a vertical aspect to our musical worship, there is also a horizontal aspect. In all our singing to God, we come to find that we are also singing to one another!

First and fundamentally, this means I need to hear you sing to the Lord and you need to hear me sing to the Lord. Second, this means that the *concert culture* that often defines evangelical worship, however well intentioned, is misguided. Third, this means that the *closet culture* that often defines evangelical worship, however well intentioned, is also misguided. Fourth and finally, this means that worship is war. The reason why it’s so important that we hear one another singing horizontally is that we’re not always there in our hearts singing vertically. The two aspects work together. As I hear you singing to Him, suddenly I find my wandering heart elevated towards the same.

(3) The Worship War and Palm Sunday

It wouldn’t require a worship war to sing the praises of a mere conquering king. But O how it requires such war if we are to sing the praises of a crucified and conquering king.



Critical Action

Your voice added to the angelic choir helps us fight for faith and worship the King of the cross. Don’t hold back!

Reflection Questions

- Read either Exodus 15:1-21 or 1 Chron 16 and make note of both the vertical and horizontal aspects of the worship described there.
- Which aspect tends to be your focus? How have you seen them both work together to help you fight the fight of faith?
- How does the horizontal aspect of corporate worship refine your understanding of it? How might you participate differently in light of this?

