

THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

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The Christian religion is a system of faith and doctrine. It is a rule of life and practice. But it is also a *worship*. It has its appointed day, and its sacred places, for public adoration and homage to Almighty God.

I. Now there are a few practical mistakes made by multitudes of people when they enter the sanctuary. The first mistake is that of coming to church, not to meet God, but to meet their pastor, some favorite preacher. The foremost inquiry of their minds is not, "is God in this place?" but, is my favorite preacher in the pulpit? They come solely to see him, to hear him, to enjoy him, perhaps, too, to be instructed and enriched by his utterances. Therefore, the preliminary service of prayer, and reading the Word, and singing to God's praise is a mere "first course," to sharpen the appetites for the literary banquet of the sermon. It would suit such persons equally well, if all acts of pure *devotion* were dispensed with, and, as in a lyceum lecture-hall, the discourse came at once, and came alone. Far be it from us to disparage the power of a faithful pulpit in expounding the revealed truth of God, and in guiding souls to holiness and to heaven. But no possible instruction from the pulpit—were Paul or Apollos the preacher—can make up for the lack of worship, and the man who never lifts his thoughts higher than the pulpit and its utterances may indeed engage in worship, but it is the worship of his minister, and not of his divine Creator.

II. A second mistake, and a far worse one, is made by those who go to church for mere self-indulgence and entertainment. They go to be gratified. They enjoy the musical performance, if it is of unquestionable artistic excellence; Jenny Lind or Karl Fornes would be better still. They will enjoy the discourse, too, if it is brilliant, or pathetic, or gracefully pronounced. They while away a leisure hour of their dull Sabbath in good company, and they "are appearances." When the idle hour is over, they can tell you what improvements might have been made in the organist's gestures, or in the execution of the "voluntary" on the organ, or in the

dress of their neighbors in the adjoining pews. But what of Him who has said; "My house shall be called a house of prayer?" What thought have they had of an infinite owner of that house and of that service; what thought of their own immortal souls? Sure enough, they were so busy in worshipping themselves that they quite forgot to worship Him whom all heaven delights to adore.

III. There is a third mistake, or sin we had better name it. It is the sin of him who brings all the work of the week and all his plans for business into the house of God. How much better is such an one than those sacrilegious hucksters and brokers who once set up their bird-stalls and exchange-tables in Jerusalem's sacred temple? For this man brings his counting-room or his shop to church in his heart. He makes bargains or computes the rise in gold during the prayer, sells stocks or buys produce all through the sermon, and goes home with new plans for the Monday's toil and traffic. "You are the first minister," said a friend once to his pastor, "who ever has preached me out of my flour-store." We honored the frankness of his confession; but are there not hundreds of human *bodies* in our churches on every Sabbath, whose *souls* are in flour-stores or brokers' offices, or warehouses, or in barns and harvest-fields? Whom do these worship, God or Mammon? Jesus Christ tells them that they cannot worship both at the same time.

IV. There is a fourth mistake—and a terrible one for an undying soul. It is the mistake of those who never "darken the door" of the sanctuary; who fear no God and remember no eternity; who make the desecrated Sabbath a day of mirth and indolence, or open ungodliness. Alas for such moral suicides, such murderers of their own souls! If one man goes to the sanctuary to worship the pulpit, and another goes to worship his own pleasure, and another goes to worship Mammon, whom do these stay away from the temple to worship, but the devil?

None of these classes are making their Sabbaths the preparation-seasons for the sublime and ceaseless worship of the celestial temple. In that sanctuary of holy and happy spirits there shall be no triflers,