

Our Worsip to God

As I was sitting in our worship services this past Sunday, I was struck with a number of different emotions. The worship reminded me of most of the services I have attended in the various churches of Christ over the past 64 years. I guess the services would be best described as "traditional," a word that seems to have a negative conotation in many of the churches today. The question I kept asking myself was "why" – why is traditionalism in the church a bad thing?

When I was a child growing up, my family worshipped at the Robinson church of Christ on Shamrock and Old Robinson Road. Eventually we moved to Herring Avenue and then to Lake Shore when the Herring Avenue congregation relocated. The services were traditional—nowhere close to the "contemporary" worship in most places today. We worshipped God reverently, singing meaningful old hymns and listening to Bible-based sermons.

Last Sunday's worship at Columbus Avenue was like that. And, as a person who has admitted to a "thinking problem," I thought that there are many in the Lord's church today who crave that kind of traditionalism, but can't find it in many places of worship. We've changed. We've "progressed." Traditional worship is "boring." It moves too slow. It hasn't kept up with the ever-increasing needs of its participants. To me, nothing could be further from the truth.

Take, for instance, our worship last Sunday. We taught each other in song. Brother Rasco led us in many "boring" songs where the tempo was slow. Like the one we started with – "Holy, Holy, Holy." It was written in 1826; how in the world could it be relevent today? It speaks of God being "merciful and mighty." Is He not STILL merciful and mighty? It speaks of God's glory blinded by sin. Is THAT not still true? It speaks of the unchanging God, unchanged from before and after the words were penned.

We sang "Anywhere with Jesus." The words speak of a loving Savior who leads us through the difficulties of this life and will lead us home to live with Him. How is that not relevent? It was when Jessie Brown Pounds wrote it in 1887, and the message we teach each other in song is STILL relevent. We sang "'Tis Midnight, and on Olive's Brow," a song that describes the pain and suffering of our Savior as he was preparing Himself for crucifixion. The song put me there, on the Mount of Olives, witnessing Jesus' anguish and woe. It prepared me for participation in the Lord's Supper, a remembrance of the death of Jesus, a death that would be an atoning sacrifice for my sin. We sang "Standing on the Promises," written in 1886, which was a perfect song to lead us into a sermon about the promises God has made us in His new covenant and that he is faithful to fulfill.

My lesson was entitled "New," not speaking of what we should make our worship services, but our new life in Christ, the new covenant we have with God, and the new heaven and earth that awaits us after we have lived our new life, devoted to

service to God.

What can wash away my sin? "Nothing But the Blood" of Jesus. That was true in 1876 when the song was written, and is also true today. His blood makes us whole, pardons us, and cleanses us as white as snow. We ended with one of my favorite prayer songs – "Purer in Heart." It was Fannie C. Davison's prayer in 1877, and it is mine today.

So, the services I described sound boring? They couldn't possibly give you that "feel good" experience? The four-part harmony by untrained singers singing acapella needs accompaniment and a faster tempo. You couldn't get anything out of it? Maybe you should put more into it—like a greater understanding of what is being taught throughout the entire worship experience. The contemporary "seven-eleven" songs can't educate the way the old standards can. The "all fluff and no substance" sermons being preached from many of our pulpits today can't have the effect on the heart that God desires like the true-to-the-Bible messages do.

Do we need to change our worship in order to be more relevant and be more acceptable to the masses? My answer is NO.

--Johnny Stephens