

THE WHOLE ENCHILADA –  
HEART WORSHIP: LOVING GOD WITH YOUR CHOICES”  
Pastor Jonathan Swenson, St. Mark Lutheran Church, 04 May 2008  
(Adapted from materials from The Experiential Worshiper, by Bob Rognilien)

Well, today we are in week #2 of “The Whole Enchilada.” That title comes from the idea that Jesus’ recipe for *complete worship* included four essential ingredients for experiencing full and complete and life-changing worship. The four key ingredients, if you will, are HEART, SOUL, MIND, and STRENGTH.

Last week Pastor Perry gave us the overview of this recipe... HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH... and today we are focusing in on the first of these key ingredients to full and complete worship, namely the HEART. What does it mean to be a “Heart Worshiper?” If you are following along in this little book, this is the topic addressed in chapter 5. We hope you are reading this book and using it in your small groups. It has some great stuff to say about bringing our whole selves to God when we worship Him. So, let me ask you this... especially those of you who haven’t already read through chapter 5 in the book... what do you think of when you hear the term, HEART worship? If you are like most people, you probably think that this message is going to be all about our emotions... the lovey-dovey stuff -- the ooey-gooey expressions of our faith.

And it would be understandable if you had that preconceived notion of what HEART worship is all about, because in OUR culture, in 2008, anything having to do with expressions of our HEARTS does tend to be focused on our emotions, doesn’t it? If you want evidence of this, just visit any card shop around Valentine’s Day. You would be hard-pressed to find a single Valentine’s Day card that doesn’t have a heart on it somewhere. We all understand that, in our culture, the HEART is associated with emotions.

But you know what? According to the Bible, the HEART is NOT the center of emotion and feelings.

Those expressions of our faith certainly have a place in worship, no doubt... and in a couple of weeks, we’ll discuss that part of our worship life when we look at what it means to worship God with all our SOUL. But again, today, we look at the HEART. And here’s what you need to know about the Biblical understanding of the HEART: The authors of the Bible understood the heart *not* to be about EMOTION AND FEELINGS, but *rather*, the heart was thought to be the place *where key DECISIONS IN LIFE were made*. In other words, the cultural understanding of those who wrote the words of scripture was that the heart is the part of us that makes *CHOICES*. CHOICES for GOOD, or CHOICES for evil.

So, when it comes to WORSHIP, "HEART WORSHIP" isn't so much about emotional expression as it is about Loving God with our CHOICES". Or, to use a fancier word, this is about our volition, our WILL, or again, our decision-making, our choices.

Now, if you think about that for a minute, this changes everything. This reframes the starting point of our approach to worship entirely – when we realize that our worship begins, not out of habit, and not out of an intellectual pursuit to find God, and even out of a desire to connect with God emotionally... but rather, TRUE worship begins with a choice – a choice to bring one's self fully to God, in thankful response to God to what God has done for us, through Christ on the Cross.

We all know that life is *full* of tough choices. Do I continue on with my current company, or do I start looking for work elsewhere? Do I have the peace of pie after dinner or do I refrain? Do I go to this college or go directly into the work force? Do I date or even MARRY this guy or girl, or do I cut it off? When I move to Iowa after living in MN my whole life, do I still cheer for the Gophers, or do I now cheer for the Hawkeyes or the Cyclones? Do I really care? ... Life is full of tough choices. *And these choices MATTER, because over time, they end up defining who we are, and what our character is all about.* Choices have consequences. And one of the most important choices you will ever make is whether or not you will acknowledge God and WORSHIP Him.

Now, all of you made an important choice this morning. You CHOSE to come to worship. (Okay, maybe a few of you were forced to come here by a spouse or a parent, but overall, most of you are here by CHOICE. You decided to be here instead of 100 other places you could be. And the Bible says to REALIZE that it was within your HEART where this decision is made.

But we all know that just because we WANT to do something, and even if we CHOOSE to do it, that doesn't always mean we are able to carry out that good thought or idea. We have a struggle of our will going on. So, perhaps it is more truthful to say that though everyone of you is here this morning, it may not be true to say that it is by choice... True, experiential worship doesn't mean just "coming to church" out of habit. "Coming to church" and WORSHIPING GOD are two very different things. I can "go to church" every Sunday, but that does NOT mean that I am worshipping every Sunday.

And why is that? Well, because our *human will* is a tricky thing...as we read about in the famous passage from **Romans, chapter 7**, "*I have the desire to do what is good... to make the right choice, but... the good that I want to DO, the right choice that I WANT to make, I don't do! And the thing I don't want to do, the choice I DON'T want to make, that is exactly what I do!*"

It's been said that the will is like a CEO. Just because the CEO says something should be done a certain way, does that mean the department heads are going to carry it out exactly that way? And though our WILL may very well intend to make the right choice about connecting with God in worship with our full selves, our sinful junk always comes along for the ride.

And so, ULTIMATELY, the Bible says, the only way we end up in authentic worship is by the Holy Spirit calling us and leading us there. Martin Luther said in the third article to the small catechism, that "I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus...or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel." In fact, Martin Luther wrote an entire book called *The Bondage of the Will* describing the ongoing battle within our will when it comes to making difficult choices....

But at the end of the day, with the power of the Holy Spirit working within us, each one of us is CALLED by the Holy Spirit, to MAKE A CHOICE... to live a life of full and meaningful worship... and that means worship in its broadest sense... the things we are learning about in this series... GIVING OUR WHOLE SELVES TO GOD, HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH... and not just on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week...

You see, worship is really a DAILY choice. Daily, not just on Sunday, but DAILY we are called by the Holy Spirit to make a decision about whom we will serve and how we will conduct our lives. It's not always easy, but it's the only way of living that brings true joy and meaning. Jesus' call is to take up the cross daily. With God's Spirit dwelling in us, we are new creatures invited to choose to worship fully... to offer back to God, ALL that we are... our minds, our emotions, our bodies, and yes, our CHOICES, our *HEART!*

This morning, we have a very real example of how this all plays out in the life of a believer. I've invited Jessy Vera, our 11am worship leader to share a portion of his faith story with us... and I think you'll hear within Jessy's story one example of how this tension between our HUMAN WILL and the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT plays itself out. *Jessy, come on up!*

JESSY VERA - FAITH SHARING (Not printed. We strongly encourage you to listen to Jessy's faith sharing on our website podcast... at [www.faith-life.org](http://www.faith-life.org))

God has plans for each one of us that are unique to each one of us. You may not feel a hand or open to just the right page in scripture, as Jessy did. But God's plan and purpose for you is just as specific. God will initiate, but it is our job to listen and to respond. God is here today and he's out to free us from bondage to a false reality. A world that says we don't need God in our life. Instead of that lie, God is

calling us to experience the truth... and the freedom of offering ourselves to him in love and worship. So, the question for you this morning is... what will you do with that invitation?