

What Would Jesus Undo? Msg 2
 Empty Worship
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
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Our message series is called What Would Jesus Undo?
 Kind of a spin-off from that WWJD question, and in this series asking. . .

What Would Jesus Undo?

And when you hear that title you might wonder, **“Why Would Jesus Undo”** anything in any of us?

The short answer is that there are things that get in the way of our relationship with God
 Things that keep us from living out the potential that he has for each of us
 You and I were designed to have power and purpose and influence in the world around us
 But there are things, which if left unchecked, can keep us from living with passion and zeal and energy

There are some things that **we need to UNDO** if we want to fulfill the purposes that God has for us.

As you read through the gospels, you find several things that Jesus would want to UNDO

Stop this, get rid of this, surrender this

Last week we looked at the first thing that he would UNDO which is this SPIRITUAL STALENESS, this LUKEWARMNESS, this INDIFFERENCE that we have with our faith

And in just a moment I'll tell you which thing Jesus would like to UNDO that we're going to talk about this morning, but before we do that I'd like to go through an exercise of confession and confess to you one of the sins of my youth.

When I was a kid, in elementary school, I liked

(IMAGE) CHEWING GUM

If you offered me gum and it was free, I would typically say “Yes” regardless of what kind it was although my personal favorite was Juicy Fruit.

But because I was a mischievous little kid, one of the tricks that I liked to do was to

Pull a stick out of the little carton

Unwrap it.

Chew the gum, and then very carefully refold that empty foil wrapper and slide it back into the outside sleeve, except this time there was no gum inside.

Once I'd done that with each empty stick of gum inside the container, and then ask a friend if they'd like some gum.

I'm pretty sure I'm the only one here who has ever done this cuz none of the rest of you are as evil as me . . .

So, I'd ask my friends, **“Would you like some gum?”**

And most of my friends were like me.

They liked gum.

And they figured that **the only thing better than gum was**

Wait for it . . .

Free gum!

And so a lot of my friends, only the friends I hadn't made this offer to before, said **“Sure.”**

And of course they'd open it up and there would be nothing in the wrapper.

**Based on what they saw on the outside they expected there would be something on the inside, but there was nothing
 It was empty!**

As I was thinking back on that this week, I wondered whether it's possible that that is the way it is sometimes with our WORSHIP

The songs we sing

The acts of service we offer

What if what we're offering to God is nothing more than empty wrappers?

On the outside everything looks good.

But on the inside, it's another story because our hearts are distant from God.

That's what we're talking about today.

Empty worship

. . . hollow worship, or what Jesus calls worship in vain.

What would Jesus undo?

He would undo - - - Empty Worship.

I want to show you this in Matthew's gospel, Matthew chapter 15.

We'll start in verse 1 and what you're looking at is a portion of a conversation between Jesus and some Pharisees – some experts in religious law.

“Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, ‘Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.’ Matthew 15:1-2

The Pharisees and the religious leaders of that time were obsessed with cleanliness.

And when I say cleanliness I'm not talking about physical hygiene.

I'm not talking about physical cleanliness,

What these guys were obsessed with was ceremonial cleanliness.

Why?

Because every devout Jewish person believed that **there were two categories for everything**.

Everything is either clean or it's unclean.

Some animals were clean, some animals were unclean.

There are clean ways to prepare your food, there are unclean ways.

There are things to touch that are clean.

There are things to touch that are unclean.

If you touch a pig, you're unclean.

If you touch a dead body, you're unclean.

And the problem was when you were unclean is that uncleanness was contagious.

It was transferable, kinda like cooties in grade school.

If you got cooties, you give cooties.

If you were unclean, you could transfer it.

If a pig licked your coffee cup, and you drink from it, and then you kiss your wife, and she cooks your dinner, and cooks your friends dinner, all of you are unclean.

And if you're unclean, you're not fit for worship.

What did you have to do?

When you were unclean, you had to go through an elaborate ceremony to cleanse yourself spiritually so you were eligible to worship God.

And what you had to do was take a certain amount of water – was known as a quarter of a log.

Which was enough to fit in an eggshell and a half.

And with this tiny amount of water you had to go through this elaborate ceremonial cleansing ritual in which someone else would pour the clean water over your unclean hands.

And when the clean water touched your unclean hands, then the water became unclean, so you had to have your hands like this, so the unclean water would drop to the ground, and not make any other part of your body unclean.

A devout Jew would not only do this before their meals, but they would literally do this ritual between courses of a meal.

In other words, you would cleanse yourself before you eat your double-double

And then you do it again before you eat your fries

And then again before your chocolate shake.

And the Pharisees were asking **Jesus, why don't Your followers do this?**

This is our tradition

This is our law

And shame on you, and your followers for not doing this.

And Jesus tells them “You guys are so wrapped up in the externals that you're missing the fact that internally, you are miles away from being right with God.

Look at what Jesus says in verse 7 . . .

“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

And what does Jesus say about their worship?

He says . . .

Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.”

Matthew 15:7-9

Jesus says, they worship Me in vain.

Their worship isn't pleasing to Me.

On the outside, it looks like worship . . . but because the inside isn't right it's just an empty wrapper.

It's worship that doesn't touch My heart.

It's worship that is in vain.

What would Jesus undo?

He would undo worship that is a show on the outside, a hypocritical expression, a pretend faith

The important thing to realize about worship is that when God looks at the worship that we offer to him, he is looking at different things than we do.

And that's understandable

Because the Bible tells us that ***man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.***

When I mention the word worship to you, depending on your background - - -

Where you grew up

How you were raised

The churches you attended

When I mention the word "Worship" different images may come to your mind - - and not necessarily every one of them good.

Bad Church Video

Again, depending on where you're coming from and your past church experiences, different images may come to your mind when you hear the word "Worship"

But what we need to remember is that from God's viewpoint. . .

Worship isn't outward style, it's the inward Condition of my Heart

So I want to talk for a few moments about worship.

When we talk about worship, what most people immediately do is they think about music.

They think about the **STYLE** of the music.

"I like this style of worship, I don't like that style of worship."

Or they may think about the **ENVIRONMENT**.

In other words, perhaps they think, ***"Well, worship should be done in a very reverent and a very holy environment"*** where someone else would be, ***"Oh no no, it needs to be rowdy, it needs to be fun. We serve a joyful God and we should express to Him with great passion."***

Which one is right?

How many of you have ever been to a place where the worship expression was a very different style than what you saw today?

If you never have, that's one good reason to participate in one of our short-term mission trips.

And we have two next summer

One going to Kenya

Another going to Guatemala

If you travel to those countries you may see worship that looks very different than what you saw here this morning.

Depending on where you grew up, for some of you, worship wasn't worship unless there was a pipe organ and a choir wearing robes, and songs weren't on a screen but in a Hymnal.

Some of you come from backgrounds where your worship was very traditional

Others where it was very expressive.

So which one is right before God?

The answer is both are right before God.

Or neither are right before God

Because . . .

Worship isn't outward style, it's the inward Condition of my Heart

If the heart isn't right then the worship won't be right

No form or style or expression of worship is right if the heart is not right.

And any form or expression of worship can honor God when our heart is connected to who He is.

Read through the Bible and you will see many . . .

Expressions Of Worship

When our heart's right before Him, sometimes we bow in reverence.

We bow before Him.

Sometimes we Bow In Reverence

The psalmist said . . .

“Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker,” Psalm 95:6

Every now and then, you get just overwhelmed with who He is and what He's done.

You just fall to your knees.

You can't even stand in His presence like Peter who fell to his knees before Jesus (Luke 5:8)

Like the wise men who knelt down, bringing gifts and worshiping the Son of God.

You can't even stand, and so you just fall down and you kneel, in an act of submission and worship because of who God is.

Sometimes we kneel in adoration and the good news is, you can choose to do that now or you will do it later, because Paul told the Philippian church that “One day, every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that Jesus is the Christ and the Lord of all.”

In view of who God is and what He's done, sometimes we bow in reverence.

2. Sometimes we Lift Our Hands in adoration

This isn't a weird thing.

It's not a charismatic thing.

This is a Bible thing.

Paul said in the New Testament, ***“In every place of worship, I want people to pray with holy hands lifted up to God,” (1 Tim 2:8)***

David said this in the wilderness. He said,

“I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer.” Psalm 63:4

Sometimes you're overwhelmed and you just praise Him.

What do lifted hands symbolize in our world, in our culture?

Two things.

Lifted hands, whenever you're in a difficult place, you lift hands to surrender.

I give up. Sometimes we lift hands in surrender to God.

Not my will but Your will be done.

We lift our hands in surrender but when also do we also lift our hands in our culture? We lift it in a moment of victory.

Our team won. We won, we celebrate the victory.

The amazing thing is, when you come before our God and you lift up holy hands, you get the same result at the same moment.

At the moment you lift them in surrender, you experience the victory that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We lift up holy hands to our God.

How do we worship Him?

- **Sometimes we just kneel before Him in reverence.**
- **Sometimes we lift our hands in adoration.**

3. Sometimes we Rejoice in celebration

Sometimes it just hits our whole body and we can't stop.

Scripture says,

“Praise his name with dancing, accompanied by tambourine and harp.” Psalm 149:3

Sometimes we just gotta dance in celebration.

Sometimes it just hits our whole body and we can't stop.

Every now and then, you are overwhelmed with the goodness of God and you can't contain it.

David said that God turned my weeping into dancing.

He turned my mourning into a moment of celebration.

You've been forgiven of so much

You're so overwhelmed by the grace of Jesus that you can't keep it inside

Sometimes you just have to let go and you celebrate Him in dancing.

- **Sometimes we bow in reverence.**
- **Sometimes we lift our hands in adoration.**

- Sometimes we dance in celebration.

4. Sometimes our worship is a Sacrifice

The writer of Hebrews said. . .

“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name.” Hebrews 13:15

We worship Him when we feel Him and we worship Him when we don't.

We worship Him when we feel and see the blessings all around, and we worship Him when we're hurting.

We choose even when we don't feel anything to worship Him with a sacrifice of praise. We sacrifice, we choose to worship Him,

Why?

Because our . . .

Worship isn't based on our Circumstance, but on God's Character

Our circumstances change, but God's Character doesn't.

And there may be some of you here this _____ who in the middle of your pain, in the middle of your heartache, you choose to worship Him with a sacrifice of praise.

My favorite example of sacrificial worship is . . . Job

A CASE STUDY IN WORSHIP

Job 1:1-22

“There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless - a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil. He had seven sons and three daughters.” Job 1:1-2

Job was a RIGHTEOUS man

And he was also a RICH man

How rich??

Verse 3 tells us. . .

“He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area. Job's sons would take turns preparing feasts in their homes, and they would also invite their three sisters to celebrate with them.” Job 1:3-4

“When these celebrations ended - sometimes after several days - Job would. . .

Do something interesting

It says that

Job would purify his children. He would get up early in the morning and offer a burnt offering for each of them. For Job said to himself, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts.’

Notice, Job was praying to God on behalf of his children.

Presenting an offering for them.

Not because he knew they had sinned, but just in case. . .

The words there. . .

‘Perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts.’

Not even thinking that this was something they did out loud, but just inside their hearts.

And then notice those next words. . .

This was Job's regular practice.” Job 1:5

Don't miss that. . .

This was Job's regular practice.”

For Job WORSHIP wasn't just something that he engaged in every now and then . . . or when there wasn't a game on.

For Job, **Worship was his regular practice.**

It was his HABIT

Read on. . .

While all of this was going on here on earth, unbeknownst to Job, another story was playing out in heaven. . .

“One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. ‘Where have you come from?’ the Lord asked Satan.

Satan answered the Lord, 'I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that's going on.'
Job 1:6-7

"Then the Lord asked Satan, 'Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless - a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.' Satan replied to the Lord, 'Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God.'"

Job 1:8-9

"You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" Job 1:10-11

'All right, you may test him,' the Lord said to Satan. 'Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically.' So Satan left the Lord's presence." Job 1:12

What happens next is one of the things for which Job is often remembered.

More tragedy came upon him in one day than most people experience in a lifetime.

"One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting at the oldest brother's house, a messenger arrived at Job's home with this news: 'Your oxen were plowing, with the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided us. They stole all the animals and killed all the farmhands. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.'" Job 1:13-15

"While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: 'The fire of God has fallen from heaven and burned up your sheep and all the shepherds. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.'" Job 1:16

"While he was still speaking, a third messenger arrived with this news: 'Three bands of Chaldean raiders have stolen your camels and killed your servants. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.'" Job 1:17

Job 1:17

"While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: 'Your sons and daughters were feasting in their oldest brother's home. Suddenly, a powerful wind swept in from the wilderness and hit the house on all sides. The house collapsed, and all your children are dead. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.'" Job 1:18-19

What was Job's response to this parade of devastating news.

His response was two-fold.

The first part Natural

The second part SUPER-NATURAL.

"Job stood up and tore his robe in grief.

And then notice what happened next . . .

Then Job shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship.

He said, 'I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!' In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God." Job 1:20-21

What do we know about Job prior to this worst day in his life?

We know he was RICH man

We know he was a RIGHTEOUS man

We know he was a man who practiced the HABIT of worship.

Because of that, in the moment of testing. . .

In the moment when he encountered a TEST that he thought would never happen, **he went to**

his default response.

He worshiped.

Later on the story, he shared part of the reason why.

It was a habit that he had formed. . .

The habit of trusting God and praising Him. . .

Whether he found himself in **"the land that was plentiful"**

Of whether he found himself in **"the desert place"**

Whether **the sun was shining down on him**

And **the world was all that it should be**

Or **whether he was on the road marked with suffering.**

Job could say **"Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him."**

How could he do that?

He could do it because he had learned the **Habit of worship**.

Worshiping God in the good times

Worshiping God in the bad

Because though those times and seasons and circumstances and situations are subject to change . . .

God isn't

He is unchanging

And He is worthy to receive WORSHIP, and GLORY and HONOR and praise.

- **Sometimes we bow in reverence.**
- **Sometimes we lift our hands in adoration.**
- **Sometimes we dance in celebration.**
- **Sometimes our worship is a sacrifice**

5. Every time we Surrender Our Lives (to the Lord) it is an act of worship

The way that we live becomes an act of worship.

Paul said it this way, Romans 12.

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.” Romans 12:1

He says, this is your true and proper worship.

In view of who God is, in view of what He's done for you, your only reasonable response is to offer yourselves a living sacrifice.

Every day, to worship Him.

To worship Him in the way that you live, in a job that you love.

To worship Him in the way that you live, in a job that you don't love.

To worship Him when I'm healthy,

To worship Him when I'm battling cancer.

To worship Him when I have plenty.

To worship Him when I'm in want.

Worship isn't just the music out of my mouth.

Worship is the way that I live every single day.

If we're honest, most of our questions about worship deal with the outside.

They deal with style and environment.

Should worship be traditional . . . and if so, whose tradition?

Should it be loud or soft?

Should it be expressive or subdued?

Questions about the outside aren't anything new.

2,000 years ago Jesus was in a conversation with a woman at a well.

And she asked him a question about worship.

Her question, had to do with the WHERE.

She said, ***“Your people (the Jews) say that here in this city, in Jerusalem, at the Temple, is the place to worship.”***

“My people (the Samaritans) say that it's on that mountain.”

Who is right, is it here or is it there?”

Jesus answered her and said . . .

You're asking the wrong question.

It's not about where

Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem.” John 4:21

And then in verse 23 he said . . .

“A time is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers.” John 4:23

Our memory verse for this week is John 4:24

Memory Verse

“For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24

The Bottom Line

Worship isn't just **Something We**

Do, a worshiper is **Who We Are**

As you think about that I'd challenge you to think about one more thing.

And it goes back to that verse I just shared with you from John 4 where it says that . . .

"A time is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers." John 4:23

As I read through the gospels I see **only two groups of people that the Bible says that God is seeking.**

First it tells us that God, sent His son Jesus Christ in order to **"seek and to save those who were lost."**

And then once those whom Jesus was seeking have been found, he tells us that his

. . . Father seeks such people to be his worshipers." John 4:23

As you're here this evening you are in one of those two groups.

If you haven't entered into a relationship with J.C. you need to know that He is seeking you.

If you have entered into that relationship, then you're part of that second group.

The group that the Father seeks to be his worshipers.

Either way, I pray that all of us would be among the found – Let's pray