

Covenantal Worship

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[0 : 00] You may be seated. Please open your Bibles to the book of Exodus chapter 34.

Exodus 34, we're going to read a large portion of this, 18 through 28.

I'm going to skip over the part about Moses' face in 29 through 35, and then we'll pick up the first few verses of chapter 35. And I imagine that is way too small.

I thought I had multiple slides there, so if you'll just click back to the title, it'll be fine. We'll read it in our Bibles. Exodus 34, beginning in verse 18.

You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you. At the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

[1 : 21] All that open the womb are mine. All your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep, the firstborn of a donkey, you shall redeem with the lamb. Or if you will not redeem it, you shall break its neck.

All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty-handed. Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest.

In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. You shall observe the feast of wheats, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders.

No one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year. You shall not offer the blood of any sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover remain until the morning.

[2 : 26] The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

And the Lord said to Moses, Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights.

He neither ate bread nor drank water, and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. And now we'll skip to chapter 35, first three verses.

Moses assembled all the congregation to the people of Israel, of the people of Israel, and said to them, These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. Six days' work shall be done, but on the seventh day, you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.

Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we again ask for your Spirit to work through the preaching of your Word.

[3 : 42] Lord, help us. These regulations, these rules can seem very far from us. Lord, help us to understand them rightly. We pray that as we do so, we would see Christ, and that you would be glorified.

Do this, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Now remember our context of what's been happening.

This is all happening after Israel's sin with the golden calf.

We saw Moses' mediation. He stepped in for the people. He spoke to God. We saw God's self-revelation. He went past Moses, showed him some of his glory, but he also revealed his name to Moses.

And now after Moses has mediated the relationship between God and his people, now God is reestablishing the covenant with Israel.

Last week we saw that he was going to give the Ten Commandments back to them to reestablish that covenant. And so what we see here are really aspects of God's covenant relationship with his

people.

[4 : 48] As we look at this text, how will God's people relate to God? We also see God's gracious forgiveness, that God is willing to receive his people back even though they broke the Ten Commandments even before Moses got down the mountain with them.

I was thinking in our worship leading, it was mentioned about Adam and Eve, and we don't know when they sinned. But if we have any indication from the people of Israel, it probably wasn't very long, was it?

So in chapter 34, we see a lot of repetition of things we've seen before earlier in the book of Exodus. Some of the laws, and really it seems random, what he picks and what he doesn't pick, what God includes here.

We've seen already he's addressed three of the first four commandments that they specifically broke. Now here we see him speaking of the Sabbath, but we also have this about festivals, which has been presented earlier.

And so what's going on here? Again, it seems kind of random that he's picking these things. There's even a mixture of moral law and the ceremonial law. So I think what's happening here is that God is directly responding to the sins of the golden calf.

[6 : 07] He repeated commands that were broken, we saw. There's new commands to keep them from worshiping like the Canaanites. And I think that's very important in our passage. I entitled the sermon Covenantal Worship because it's telling how should God's people worship in light of their covenant relationship with God.

And the main thing I think that's being addressed is you're not to do it like the Canaanites. They've already fallen back into worshiping like the Egyptians by building a golden calf and worshiping it. But now you're going into Canaan and we've seen again last week all the temptations to want to worship them, how they have to keep separate, how they can't marry them because of the gods they worship.

And so here are further ways that they're going to be guarded against worshiping the gods of the Canaanites or in ways like the Canaanites. And so it's really to help them worship God alone. I remember further back verse 14 of chapter 34. For you shall worship no other God for the Lord whose name is Jealous is a jealous God.

[7 : 16] And so God's expressed that he is a jealous God. And now he's saying here's what my worship is to look like. Exclusive to me. He has a strong protective love for his people.

He doesn't want them to fall into false worship. To worship the gods of the Canaanites. And so we also see further revelation of our covenant keeping God.

Our God that has worked to keep the covenant even when God's people have broken it. And so there's a few things I want us to see today in the passage. We're going to look at the idea of worship. We're going to look at sacrifice.

And we're going to look at the Sabbath. And so first the subject to worship. You might think of what we looked at last week. Verses 11 through 17 as commands of here's what not to do if you're going to worship God.

So the negative commands what to avoid. What not to do in worshiping God. We also see in our passage this idea of regular corporate worship.

[8 : 19] Now as they're going into the land of Canaan they're going to be pretty far spread out. And without modern means of transportation or Zoom.

They still want to gather together. And so God has them meeting and gathering together three times in the year they meet. We see it here in our passage. It's repeated in Deuteronomy 16.

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose. At the Feast of Unleavened Bread. At the Feast of Wheats.

And at the Feast of Booths. Which is also called the Feast of Tabernacles. They shall not appear before the Lord empty handed. Now that is a repetition of what we see in the passage.

We saw in our passage about the firstborn. Verse 20. And none shall appear before me empty handed. We see here that it will go up three times a year. And we see these same festivals being mentioned here.

[9 : 18] So there's something about the corporate gathering of God's people together in worship of him. That's essential to covenantal relationship with God. It commemorates really their identity forming events.

These festivals that we're going to look at. Each one kind of speaks to something that has shaped them and set them apart from the other nations. What makes them different from the Canaanites? Well we celebrate these feasts because of what God has done for us. The first one is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We see that in verse 18. You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread as I commanded you. And back in Exodus 12 we'd already seen this command. In Exodus 12 verse 17 through 20. And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For on this very day I brought your host out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations. It's a statute forever.

[10:22] In the first month from the 14th day of the month at evening. You shall eat unleavened bread until the 21st day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses.

If anyone eats what is leavened that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel. Whether he is a sojourner or native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened in all your dwelling places. You shall eat unleavened bread. And so this festival is commemorating a special identity forming event for Israel isn't it? When they left Egypt.

When they were brought out. They left and what did they carry with them? Unleavened bread. That's what they ate for that first week as they went away. And remember this started with the Passover. And of course that's also included in this festival when they would go up to Israel. They'd celebrate the Passover. And then for seven days there would be no leaven in the house. And so it's a reminder of their deliverance from Egypt. But in many places in scripture 11 is also equated with sin.

[11:24] And so there's also this idea of a separation from sin. A separation from the world. And again as we think about their worship. You're setting yourself apart from the Canaanites and the world around you and the sin.

You're set apart for me. While also remembering it's God who delivered them. And how he delivered them by the blood of the Passover lamb. And then we have the feast of wheats. Which is sometimes called the feast of first fruits. That's in chapter 34. 22 through 24. You shall observe the feast of wheats. The first fruits of wheat harvest.

And the feast of ingathering at the year's end. And three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord your God. The God of Israel. And so they're to celebrate this feast. Now this feast was also mentioned earlier. I won't go back and read the whole passage. But chapter 23 verses 14 through 17. And so the feast of wheats or first fruit.

[12:24] I know when I say wheats. It sounds like wheat. So maybe that will stick in your mind. Or maybe it's just my pronunciation. But the feast of first fruits. It's a little easier for me to get out.

So it's mentioned in chapter 23. And it happened at the beginning of the harvest. And it's celebrating God's abundant provision. And so as they celebrate this.

It's also a reminder of how God has provided for them. In the wilderness. Through the manna and other means. God supplied for them. God has met their needs. And so a way of commemorating that is giving God the best of what they have.

And we'll look at that in a little bit. But the first fruits. That which first comes in. Goes to God. I know sometimes in our garden. We like to grow tomatoes among other things.

And especially these cherry tomatoes. That I've gotten different varieties over the years. And some of them are really, really super sweet. And so I know at our house.

[13:23] When we're watching the garden. And we see the little green cherry tomatoes. And we're waiting. And we're waiting. And there's always the person who gets that first sweet cherry tomato.

There's something about the end of the winter. And getting into the point where. Oh, we have the fresh fruit of the vine again. And so before the people could even celebrate.

And take in that which they've grown. They gave it over to God. The first part. The best part. He got the first taste. But again, remembering God's abundant provision.

And then the third one was the feast of ingathering. Or booths. Or tabernacles. It's called various names. But it's after the harvest is over.

And they could finally rest from the harvest. So almost like we would think of a harvest festival. But it's not simply focused on the harvest. It's a remembrance to God.

[14 : 23] It reminds them of the idea. So for a week they would stay in a tent. Or tabernacle. A booth. And it's to remind them of this wilderness wandering again.

How God gave them rest from their enemies. That they camped in tents. And so they would remember the wilderness wanderings. A reminder of God's provision and care for them in that wandering.

So in some ways similar to the first feast. But specifically the idea of being in a tent again. So I don't want to minimize it. But it's almost like a camping trip for a week every year.

And some of your families are like, okay, that sounds good. And some of you are not so good. But they would stay in a tent just for a week to remind them this is what it was like. God was caring for them this whole time.

And people lived like this for 40 years. But all of this is a reminder that God is a God who graciously cares for his people.

[15 : 23] He looks out for them. He cares for them. He watches over them. And he desires their worship. Their response to what God has done is to be that of worship of this great God. And then we have the Sabbath.

It's mentioned in verse 21. But we then see it repeated in 35, 1 through 3. That's why I've included it the way I did. Because verses 1 through 3 really go back to what's being presented in verse 21.

Let's read those four verses together. Verse 21. In six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest.

Holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. you shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the sabbath day now the sabbath we remember from when we looked at it in the ten commandments it's a creation ordinance it's following the rest that god took after the creation and we in god's providence just read of that this morning in our morning reading genesis 1 the six days of creation and then god takes his rest and so the sabbath is meant as a remembrance of the rest that god took but it's also setting aside a time for them to worship and to rest from their labors as we think about how this points backwards as well this is a reminder for them of the slavery the bondage the oppression they had in egypt god brought them out he saved them that they might have rest from their oppression rest from the bondage and slavery and so as they continue to celebrate the sabbath they're being reminded of god's care for them god looking out for them god's salvation from their bondage we also have to understand that this is for there or we could say for our benefit as an enduring command god in his infinite wisdom knows us better than we know ourselves he knows what we need now there may be some of us who think we need three or four days of rest every week and god says work six days and there may be others of us who if we had the opportunity we're going to keep working every day of the week and it tears us down our bodies aren't made for that god knows what we need and so we take a day of rest for our bodies but also to dedicate to god's worship that he might be glorified that we would set aside a time to focus upon him and not upon all the chores the labors that so burden us the rest of the week and so as we think about that we have to understand that this sabbath was never intended to be a burden upon man oh no i can't get done what i wanted to get done today but to be a blessing for man that we might worship a break from our regular routine the a break from that that we could have time to think about god and god alone to focus upon him and we're reminding this passage that this is to be done even during busy times look at verse 21 in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest there's always that temptation in an agrarian society you want to get the plowing in at the right time you want to have the fields prepared that you can get the seed in so that it will produce the crop at the right time or maybe before the rain but you have this seems like there's always this push to get it done at a certain time and likewise with the harvest if you leave the grain out it may go bad the rain may spoil it animals may get into it so you want to harvest it you want to have it guarded and protected and ready as soon as possible and so the temptation would be there at these busiest times of the year to say i'm too busy for worshiping god i'm too busy for a sabbath and so god's reminded them and this is good for us as well that even in our busiest times we're never too busy to meet with god to take a rest to enjoy the sabbath and worship our god it's also a reminder that god is a creator and sustainer of all things we are dependent creatures we're reminded on that on the sabbath god has done all this but we we take our rest we look to him the sabbath was also intended to feed our love

for god to grow our love for god

[20 : 23] the people are going to take a time apart the other nations aren't doing this they're going to set aside a day in which there's there's not commerce going on people aren't working they're all taking the time to worship god and to rest from their labors a solemn rest is how it's described and so they set the day apart as holy to the lord as a reminder for them of god is goodness that they would still worship because it's easy for us when things are going well or when things are busy just to keep pressing on and forget to take time aside to worship our god and so in that way as it fed their love for god we might view that as a positive way that god is preparing them to battle against the temptation of worshiping false gods right we understand that we've talked before of i think it was thomas chalmers who said the explosive power of a greater desire if we love god more and more and more we desire sin less and less less and so you're going to be tempted to worship other gods what's going to be a help to you positively each week we set aside a time and we worship our god and our love for him just grows and grows so that we're not tempted to go after these false gods and so we see even with the sabbath this is a way that god's protecting them helping them in their worship to keep them away from false gods and we know that in the new testament jesus encourages us to go to him for rest matthew 11 28 through 30 come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and i will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for i am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light and so we're reminded of the sabbath to keep the worship of god to grow their love for god but it also points us to christ and the rest that he provides and even we were looking at that this morning in the worship leading the new heavens and the new earth and the rest that will be there not just from our labors not just the rest of worship but even a rest from the fallenness of this world no more tears hardship heartbreak and then we also have thirdly the sacrifice that's verses 19 and 20 all that open the womb are mine all your male livestock the firstborn of cow and sheep the firstborn of donkey you shall redeem with the lamb or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck all the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem and none shall appear before me empty-handed so one aspect of their worship of god was to be their sacrificial or the sacrificial system and here particularly it's not just the first fruits of the harvest that are celebrated but all throughout the year the firstborn of the animals are to be sacrificed to god specifically a certain type it says of your male livestock the firstborn of cow and sheep are to be sacrificed to god now again this is part of their covenant relationship it's demonstrating their exclusive commitment to him that they're reminded even in the good things that they receive that this is foremost god's he's provided again we're dependent creatures and so god's the one who's given us this so we give back to god a portion of what he's given to us think about how that helps him to fight against the temptation to worship false gods it's not these gods that i give my animal to or sacrifice to it's yahweh the true god that i give

sacrifice to and they're told that none of them are to come empty-handed there at the end of verse 20 none shall appear before me empty-handed everybody's going to have a firstborn of something or if not even the first fruits that we saw but you're not to come to god i think he's specifically speaking of in these three times of of worship gathering corporate worship no one's to come empty-handed they all are to express their gratitude to god his provision by bringing a portion of what god's blessed them with that to show their devotion that again covenant relationship with god when they come and i've touched on this already but that bring their very best the first fruits the firstborn of their animals think about even we talked about the first fruits in terms of plants but if we think about in terms of animals as well the firstborn animal would be the first one to grow up and mature and be either ready to eat or to produce milk or to breed and we're going to postpone the enjoyment of this by giving the first fruit to god the firstborn to god so god is the creator of life every creature belongs to him everything that we have god has given to us graciously and so they're to give back a portion of that which god gave them and so i said already that in terms of sacrifice your male livestock the firstborn of cow and sheep are to be sacrificed but then we see something change in verse 20 the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck now why is this not brought for sacrifice it's an unclean animal and so it's unfit to be sacrificed to god it could not be offered to him in worship and so they do it symbolically by replacing it with a substitute with a sheep or if they're unable to do that they break the neck of the first one that they're not taking benefit from this they're acknowledging it belongs to god but it cannot be sacrificed to him because god has called that unclean but did you notice what else was there in verse 20 all the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem and none shall appear before me

empty handed so there's all this talk about these animals and the donkeys and then right after the donkeys comes your children and so is god asking them to sacrifice their firstborn child how many of you in the room are firstborn i'm a firstborn okay so the church might look a half the size maybe so many firstborns but god's not calling them to sacrifice it is he it's like the donkey congratulations firstborn you're like the donkey that they're to be redeemed and again god's already established a price and we've seen it earlier in the book of levi but the price of redemption for the firstborn would be a lamb sacrifice for them so back earlier levi 13 13 very similar every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with the lamb or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem so again we're seeing a repetition of what god has said earlier now as we think about this in terms of their worship and remembrance of what god has done the covenant relationship what does this point back to well remember the passover during the passover god sent his angel to passover egypt and killed the firstborn of all of egypt human animal the firstborn was taken from them but not of god's people if they were covered by the blood of the lamb so as they bring their firstborn as they redeem them they're reminded the firstborn belongs to god and god let us keep our firstborn when he demanded the firstborn of the egyptians and so it's a remembrance a thankfulness of god in the passover and their salvation 1 peter 1 talks about our redemption same kind of language we see here in exodus 1 peter 1 18 and 19 says knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of christ like that of a lamb without blemish or spot and so as he speaks here of us being ransomed it's really that same idea we've been redeemed specifically we've been saved from we've been brought out of the futile ways inherited from your forefathers what are the futile ways inherited from their forefathers and our forefathers it's the worshiping of false gods it's not knowing the true god and so they've been saved from that not with cheap stuff like silver and gold perishable it doesn't last even though we highly value it but something even more precious and kids precious here means of great value we sometimes talk of precious gems or precious stones these are very valuable so not with the cheap stuff of silver and gold but with something of greater value the precious blood of jesus christ and notice the comparison like that of a lamb without blemish or spot which was what was required to redeem that firstborn and so like that christ came and laid down his life he offered his precious blood that we might be saved and so god here is preparing them as they go into the land don't worship like those other nations we will see or you probably have seen throughout the old testament that many of the canaanites they would sacrifice their children to malik are the israelites to sacrifice their children to malik no that's never to happen why because our firstborn are dedicated to god we've already committed them to god we cannot offer our children to false gods and when we do that we don't sacrifice them and it's not elaborated here but we can understand that that's because we're made in the image of god and so we don't take life we're made in the image of god and so that's preserved that's defended by god and so no we don't offer them instead we redeem them you may have noticed also there's some discussion of things that might seem a little odd look at verse 26 the best of your first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the lord your god you shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk now I don't know how many of you have ever thought of doing this I don't know probably not something we struggle with and we could look at this and say well why is god saying this it could be the simple idea of the the harsh irony of taking the milk that was meant to feed the young goat and cooking it in it instead so we see an aspect of that but I think what god's really addressing is you're not to worship like the canaanites don't follow in their practices there are things that are going to set you apart from these other nations they may cook their goat this way but you're not going to cook your goat this way of course it fits with many of the ceremonial laws we'll see of cleanness and uncleanness so god's preparing them to enter into the promised land and to worship him as their covenant god and to protect them to guard them from breaking the covenant like they've already done with the golden calf so how does this apply to us let's look at some application well even these idea of feast are fulfilled in christ the worship continues but we don't offer the same feast for example we know jesus is our passover our paschal lamb who by his blood covers our sin and so we don't have to sacrifice the lamb and put it over our doorpost to redeem our firstborn if we want to redeem our firstborn what do we do we point them to the blood of christ we give them the gospel and then the feast of unleavened bread first corinthians 5 7-8 says cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump as you really are unleavened for christ our passover lamb see the connection there has been sacrificed let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven the leaven of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth and so

because of christ his work as a paschal lamb the way we celebrate the passover or the way we celebrate the passover and the feast of unleavened bread is not by remembering that week or setting it apart but it's a life that's characterized by sincerity and truth it's living out of the blood of christ now the feast of wheat was in jesus's day called the day of pentecost and think about they're celebrating the first fruits of the harvest and on that same day christ sent his holy spirit to be with his church and what was produced in that moment the first fruits the first ingathering of god's people remember on the day of pentecost they spoke the gospel in languages they didn't know and those that were gathered in jerusalem they hear the gospel and they believe and the church really begins and so it's the first fruits of what the gathering that god's going to make of all the earth he will redeem people from every tribe tongue and language and that began on the day of pentecost and so we celebrate that again not by some festival but by looking at the day of pentecost by rejoicing in the fact that we have the holy spirit given to us we're also told that christ is a representative of the first fruits first corinthians 15 20 but in fact christ has been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep so as we think of first fruits we're reminded of the resurrection christ was resurrected first and that's a guarantee of a harvest to come that there will be other resurrections others that are brought from the dead to life as we think

about sacrifices we're not killing animals today we don't redeem our children in some way but god's word does still speak of sacrifices in worship today hebrews 13 15 through him let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to god that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name and so god calls us to bring a sacrifice but specifically it's a sacrifice of praise to god we give god the praise that do his name and you did you catch that it says that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name think again of that idea of the first fruits what sacrifice did we bring we don't bring the first fruits that are produced in our garden we bring the first fruits of our mouth of praise to god what drips from our mouth the fruit it produces is praise to god and then first corinthians 16 2 also says on the first day of every week each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when i come and so god doesn't call us to bring sacrifice but he does call us to bring offering to him to give to him a portion of that which he's blessed us with and in the new testament he doesn't set aside some specific percentage we can probably get some guidelines of what might direct us by what we've seen in the old testament but he says we're to give with a cheerful heart what we have set aside in our hearts to god as we look at this we're restarting the covenant in this passage they're going to get the ten commandments again god's helping them to see how they're to worship him and how they're to avoid worshiping false gods are they going to keep the covenant really okay i got one no okay that's good one no of course not are they even capable of keeping the covenant no i hope you got that when we went through the ten commandments none of us keep those perfectly the positive and negative requirements of the law the heart of obedience none of us keep it perfectly and so even as god's renewing this covenant with them there's also the reminder that they could not and we cannot keep god's covenant perfectly and so we are reminded to rely upon god's grace and the redemptive work of jesus christ for our redemption it's not our perfect obedience it's the perfect obedience of our substitute the perfect obedience of jesus christ that we look to the blood of that lamb that covers us and then his righteousness granted to us and so god graciously provides a way for us to have covenant relationship with god communion with god that fellowship that desire that we've had from the fall we want to be in the presence of our god we want to worship him we want him to dwell among us like we've seen the tabernacle but how's it going to happen because we're covenant breakers like they are remember god said if i go amongst you i'll wipe you out but god has graciously provided for a way that we would not be wiped out that we could be with god through the work of jesus christ and so the covenant sealed with the blood of the passover lamb foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice of jesus christ the lamb of god who takes away the sins of the world this passage also reminds us that god requires an exclusive relationship relationship he's already made clear in the commandments that they're not to worship other gods well they've done it so he reminds them of that we've already seen that but now

[39 : 44] here we see it's not just the worship of other gods but there's certain things that sets them apart from the world around them if i were to really relate this today i would say god intends for the church and for christians to look different than the world around them there's been a push in the last few decades to try to make the church look as much like i don't know a sporting event or a movie production as we can that people would be comfortable with it but the reality is god intends for his worship service to be unique different from the world around them set apart in worship to god lest

we confuse the two and we're reminded that our god is a jealous god he's jealous for our affection our emotion our attention our time we're to give these to god and finally our own worship we're reminded of the priority of corporate worship i was thinking i'm glad you're here i know some of you couldn't make it today because of the snow but some of our families travel from far away and drive through the snow to get here because corporate worship is a priority for them and again it may not be possible certain areas i know we're difficult this time but it's not just the snow that sometimes keeps us away from church do we make the worship of god a priority i think about the israelites three times a year they were to gather for corporate worship and it wasn't a 30 minute or one hour commute for most of them it could be a multi-day walk and yet god's pointing to the importance of god's people gathering for worship we're to also have a life that reflects god's character and that brings glory to his name we're to live in such a way that god is glorified among us i talked about how these feasts celebrated commemorated identity forming events in the life of israel what sets them apart from the nations and we might think of something similar in our worship today god has given us the ordinances or sacraments of baptism in the lord's supper that's different from the world around us that sets us apart that forms our identity in baptism we're pronouncing that we have had our heart transformed by the holy spirit that we have become a child of god that we've been buried with christ and raised to walk in newness of life a new life different from the world around us in the lord's supper as we eat of that supper we're identifying with the people of god much like we do in baptism as well we're announcing identifying with god's people he sets us apart in those ways and just as we've seen with the people here we too should express our gratitude even our obedience we should show a desire to worship the god who's called us into covenant with himself how gracious is our god that we who really are no better than the israelites our covenant breakers that god would graciously give his son that we might have covenant relationship with him and worship him and so worship isn't just something we check off the list it's a celebration of that redemption that god has worked for us in the person and work of jesus christ let's pray together dear heavenly father we thank you that you are such a good and gracious god that you have not left us in our sins that you have not wiped us off the face of the earth though we know our sin requires that instead you have sent christ your son to become incarnate to enter into this world this fallen world to live perfectly and offer his life as a sacrifice that we might have

forgiveness for our sins and redemption by his blood or that we might have righteousness imputed to us because of christ's obedience lord we don't deserve this and we pray that we would respond in worship even today right now that we would worship you we pray in christ's name amen it you