

## **“WHOEVER SAID WORSHIP IS SUPPOSED TO BE FUN?”**

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Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

A friend of mine, who serves as a pastor in Wisconsin, recently told me about an encounter he had with a woman who was visiting his congregation for worship. As he was shaking hands and greeting people after the Service, he noticed a woman he had never seen before. He introduced himself and said, “It was wonderful to have you with us this morning. Please know that you are most welcome to stick around for coffee and snacks in our fellowship hall.” Her response was shocking, not only to the pastor, but also to the other people who were in the vicinity and heard her. She said, in a firm, loud voice, “I won’t be staying for coffee and I won’t be setting foot inside this church ever again! I don’t know what that was, but it wasn’t worship! Worship is supposed to be fun!” She then stormed away in obvious disgust, exited the building as quickly as she could, hopped in her car, and sped off.

Evidently, this woman had some pretty serious convictions about what she thought worship should be like, and what she witnessed in this congregation simply did not stack up. She is certainly entitled to her opinion and free to disagree with what she witnessed, but that is no reason to behave as she did. One wonders why she stuck around until the end of the Service. If she was so disgusted with what was going on, why didn’t she just quietly sneak away? Or, if she thought it might appear rude to sneak away during the Service (which hardly seems likely, since she obviously had no problem being rude after the Service), she could have simply shook the pastor’s hand, kept her opinion to herself, and went on her merry way.

Be that as it may, my question to this woman and to all who share her opinion is: Whoever said worship is supposed to be fun?

It may seem an odd question to ask, since “fun worship” is so prevalent among Christians in our day and age, but it is a pertinent question, nonetheless. I mean, if Christians have bought into the concept that worship is supposed to be fun, it would be helpful to know from whom, or from where, they learned that concept. And, I would hope that, if they are truly convinced that this concept is valid, the whom and the where would be God and His Word.

But, therein lies the problem: God never says in His Word that worship is supposed to be fun. I have read the Bible from cover to cover numerous times. I have studied it thoroughly, and continue to do so. As a Lutheran pastor, I was even required to learn the original languages in which the Bible was written (Hebrew and Greek, with a splash of Aramaic). At no time does God ever even come close to promoting the idea that worship is supposed to be fun.

On the contrary, in every instance where worship is discussed or described in the Bible, it is a holy, reverent encounter between God and His people. In fact, the Hebrew and Greek words which we translate with the English word, “worship,” both literally mean, “to fall prostrate in reverence.” Thus, to “worship” the Lord in the Biblical sense is to realize that you are in His presence and to bow down accordingly. Being in His Holy presence demands your reverence and awe, a fact that the concept of “fun worship” fails to comprehend.

The idea that worship is supposed to be fun is a recent concept, developed, for the most part, by Christians right here in America. These Christians became convinced that if they made their worship fun and entertaining, they would make their churches more appealing and attract more members. From a marketing standpoint, and from the world's perspective, it is hard to argue with this logic. People love to have fun and to be entertained. They are willing to pay top dollar to attend a sporting event, visit an amusement park, go to a music concert, and so on. We have become entertainment junkies here in America. So, obviously, it seems like a smart move to combine worship with fun and entertainment.

But, from God's perspective, worship and fun do not mix. To be sure, there is a time to have fun and be entertained. Worship in God's House is just not the time for that. Instead, it is a time to escape the world for a bit and enter the presence of our Holy God, that we might confess our sins and receive forgiveness and be fed on God's Holy Word and Sacraments for the strengthening and preservation of our faith, in order to depart from God's House and re-enter the world refreshed and ready to live for Him and for our neighbors.

True worship in God's House is so much better than fun. It is reverent and holy, fulfilling and joyful, meaningful and lasting. It is an other-worldly experience, a time when heaven and earth come together as God dwells among His people to gift them with His love, mercy, and grace. If ever there was a time for us to take something seriously, this is it. We have enough fun and entertainment in our lives. Let's let the time we spend with our Lord in His Holy House be what He intends it to be for us – a holy and reverent encounter with our Holy and Awesome God.

But, hey, if you are not convinced and wish to cling to your belief that worship is supposed to be fun, fine. Just do not be rude to the pastor and the people of a congregation if you happen to visit and find their worship to be too reverent and serious for your own personal tastes. There is simply no call for that. Is there?

In Christ,

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