

What is Worship?

Worship is a word which is so familiar that we can easily forget the breadth of its meaning. It is a biblical word: in Genesis 22 Abraham tells his men that he and Isaac will go and worship; in Matthew 4 the devil offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if only he will bow down and worship him: two out of some 150 references.

Worship is sometimes one of the most difficult aspects of Christianity for outsiders to comprehend. Is it an attitude or an activity? And who benefits from it, is it something believers do for God or just to satisfy themselves?

But worship is also a word of everyday experience; not just the title given to some high officials, but about things to which we assign honour and value. And so, without always realising it, we may give worship to all kinds of things: money, status, family, work are just a few of them. Even, sometimes, to our particular view of the Christian church, excluding others.

In the coming months, we shall look at a whole range of the uses of the word 'worship'; both religious and secular, and see how these relate to Christian faith. We shall explore ways in which our worship of the God we know in Jesus the Christ and through the power of his Holy Spirit has implications for the kind of worth and value we give to everything in life: status, mobility, money, technology, relationships.

We shall also think about the two most characteristically Christian acts of worship: baptism and the Eucharist. But none of this will be abstract ideas; worship always begins where we are, in God's real world. A world which we share with others; how we relate to others will determine how we share worship with them.

**Elizabeth Goodridge and Ian Yearsley of Southwark Diocese
begin a new series on worship.**

God's fragrance – do people catch a whiff of it on you?

'and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.' John 12.3

A story runs of how a lady was having tea outside a tea shop late one afternoon, when she became aware of a pleasant scent filling the air. She asked the waiter the source of the scent and was told that it came from the people passing by. He explained to her that they worked in a perfume factory down the street and were on their way home. When they left the factory they carried with them the fragrance that had permeated their clothes during their day's work.

As the perfume workers leave the factory full of the fragrance of where they have been, so we, as we leave our churches and chapels and wherever we spend time with God, are meant to carry the perfume of his presence with us. We are called to spread everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him (2 Corinthians 2.4). If we allow ourselves in worship to be permeated with Christ's love and the sweetness of his presence, then we will be able to take the Jesus in us out into the world.