

The Wonder of Worship

David Gooding

A Myrtlefield House Transcript



MYRTLEFIELD
HOUSE

www.myrtlefieldhouse.com

David Gooding has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

Copyright © The Myrtlefield Trust, 2018

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. You may not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible. Quotations marked KJV are from The Authorized (King James) Version. Rights in the Authorized Version in the United Kingdom are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown's patentee, Cambridge University Press. Other quotations are Dr Gooding's own translations or paraphrases.

This text has been edited from a transcript of a talk given by David Gooding at Raleigh Street Chapel, Cambridge, New Zealand, on 5 July 1998.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce this document in its entirety, or in unaltered excerpts, for personal and church use only as long as you do not charge a fee. You must not reproduce it on any Internet site. Permission must be obtained if you wish to reproduce it in any other context, translate it, or publish it in any format.

Published by The Myrtlefield Trust
PO Box 2216
Belfast, N Ireland
BT1 9YR

w: www.myrtlefieldhouse.com

e: info@myrtlefieldhouse.com

Myrtlefield catalogue no: ppw.005/bh

The Wonder of Worship

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus be with you. It is a great pleasure for me to be here this morning and to greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus. Thank you for your invitation and for the warmth of your welcome.

I've been asked to introduce myself. My name is David Gooding. I am an Englishman, but I have lived in Northern Ireland for nearly forty years. I am therefore, what the Irish would call 'an improved Englishman', not just an ordinary Englishman! My chief qualification for standing before you here this morning is that I came to conscious faith in the Lord Jesus when I was ten years old and (though I wouldn't divulge my age to anybody) that's over sixty years ago. So it's delightful to come and mix with fellow believers here in this beautiful country and to do so on such a sunshiny morning. I have come to the conclusion since being in New Zealand that this world is an unfair place and its benefits are not equally distributed. You have so much sunshine in winter, of all times, and not only in summer that I think I must apply to the United Nations to see if you can get taxed a little bit more, by way of compensation for us who have to live in so much darkness!

This morning you have suggested that I lead you in a meditation on the topic of the wonder of worship, and for that purpose I would like to read with you three short passages from the New Testament. The first of them is this famous incident of our Lord Jesus talking to a woman of Samaria.

Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.' (John 4:21-26)

Our second passage comes from the first Epistle by Peter.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' (1 Pet 2:4-6)

And our final Scripture is in the last book of the New Testament, the book of the Revelation.

And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.' Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!' (Rev 5:9-12)

So may God give us understanding of his word.

The first big wonder: What can it matter to God what we think about him?

As I thought about this topic, it seemed to me that the greatest of all the wonders connected with worship is *the wonder that God should seek worship from us*. What can it possibly matter to God, I ask myself, what we think about him?

Let us remember for a moment just who God is. 'Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales' (Isa 40:15). Such is the immensity of God that, if you were to put all the nations together, they're like a drop in a bucket to him, or dust in the scales. When the greengrocer has weighed out your carrots (if that's what he does here in New Zealand) he puts them into your bag and is left with a few bits of dust in the bottom of his weighing scale, which he tips out on to the floor. All the nations put together are like the dust in the balance or a mere drop of water.

So I ask myself, what can it possibly matter to God what I personally think of him? We're rather tiny, aren't we? We can see that, if we look at the great universe around us with its teeming billions of stars. And not only billions of stars but billions of galaxies, each containing billions of stars, and he made them all. Compared with that, how tiny we are; how infinitesimal. So I say again, what can it possibly matter to God what I think about him?

The Prophet goes on to talk about God's great capacity. 'Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering' (v. 16). If you were going to offer something to God, what could you possibly offer that was big enough to satisfy him? If you were going to offer God a burnt offering upon the altar, a great sacrifice to God as they did in those far-off days, Isaiah says that the whole of Lebanon with its innumerable animals and mighty trees wouldn't be enough to satisfy God. How could we possibly satisfy him? God himself says to Israel, 'If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine' (Ps 50:12). How could we possibly bring anything to God that would satisfy his hunger?

So this is my first question this morning: how could it possibly mean anything to God what I think or don't think about him? How could my worship satisfy his heart?

The second big wonder: The Father seeks worshippers

We have it from the Lord Jesus himself in these verses where he was talking to the Samaritan woman. It is the fact that *the Father seeks worshippers*. It was a long, dusty road from Jerusalem to Samaria, but our Lord came down that road and sat upon a well, and asked for water from this woman of Samaria. It would have been unusual for a Jewish man to make the first initial

contact, but almighty God incarnate came down that dusty road to sit beside a well and ask a woman of Samaria, 'please could you give me a cup of water?' Stranger though he was, he began to get through to her heart that God needed her; God wanted her; God desired her heart, her love and her worship.

It was an even longer road that brought our blessed Lord from the glory of heaven, where he was continually adored by the angels of God. A longer road indeed, and an infinitely more painful one, that took him to Calvary to buy for us the possibility that we should one day be priests of God and able to satisfy the Father's heart by worshipping him.

So this morning we have it on the authority of the Lord Jesus that the Father seeks our worship. It's understandable, isn't it, that if God Almighty is seeking our worship we can't just bring him any old thing. We can't just bring him the odd five minutes left over from a busy life, and present that to God and suppose it will satisfy him.

As we think of his immensity, and the extraordinary wonder that he asks us to come and worship him at all, we can understand that the Lord Jesus says there are certain necessities that must be met if we are to worship God acceptably.

The true God is spirit

That is, God isn't material like this desk at which I stand. 'God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth' (John 4:24). So Jesus said to the woman, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father' (v. 21). The place where they worship won't matter, but the true worshippers must worship God in spirit and in truth.

Why's that? Because of what God is. He is spirit, and therefore, if our worship is going to rise to God and satisfy him, our worship must be in spirit.

You say, 'What do you mean by that, "in spirit"?'

AN ILLUSTRATION

I don't know if you like dogs. I do, though I don't have one. They can be very intelligent creatures. If your dog sees you eating a juicy beefsteak, he will come around wagging his tail. He understands what's going on, doesn't he? He likes beefsteaks himself, and he's got a stomach like you've got a stomach, and so, when he sees you putting a piece of steak into your mouth, he's got some idea of all those lovely sensations that you are experiencing. He comes round wagging his tail and gently nudging you, suggesting that you share some of it with him. He has certain things in common with you that he understands.

But suppose you were to take your dog into your sitting room and show him a beautiful painting hanging on the wall. You say, 'Look, Fido, isn't that a beautiful landscape? That's a Constable, you know! Now what do you think of that?' Well the poor old dog would be a bit perplexed, wouldn't he? If you allowed him to, he'd try to lick the thing to see what it was like. He wouldn't get much success that way, so he'd smell it, or he might do all sorts of other things to it! He'd have a go at understanding it, but he would never have a clue.

Why not? Well, it's because painting pictures is a thing that humans do and you would have to have a human spirit to understand what the artist was trying to do. That's something a dog would never have, unless somehow it could be born again as a human being.

God is spirit. There used to be a little poem when I was a boy that says,

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
 The song of the birds for mirth,
 One is nearer God's heart in a garden
 Than anywhere else on earth.¹

Well, that's absolute nonsense! God made the flowers and they're beautiful and we can enjoy them; but God himself is spirit, and if we would understand God the Bible says we must be born of his Spirit (John 3:6). If you want, we must be on God's *wavelength*. Our worship must be in spirit.

True worshippers worship God in spirit

So the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, 'The hour is coming when it won't be a question of worshipping God in the temple at Jerusalem, or the temple on Mount Gerizim. Where you worship won't be the thing; the true worshippers will worship God in spirit.'

What does he mean by the words 'true worshippers'? Are there *false* worshippers then? Well, there are people who worship false gods; but our Lord wasn't thinking of that so much. He was thinking of worship in the Old Testament. When they came to worship God, perhaps they'd bring a sheep and offer it to God. There was a priest all dressed up in his beautifully coloured garments, and there was a house that they met in. It was all covered with gold, and there was incense and many a blast of a trumpet.

That was their idea of worship. It was all material things: blood on an altar, sacrifices of sheep, beautiful clothes and a lovely looking building, but it was outward and external. It had to do with *matter*. Yes, it was a kind of worship; God had given it to Israel in the days of their spiritual infancy. 'But the day is coming,' says Christ, 'when you won't worship like that any more.'

Do you see that it isn't the ideal worship? It isn't the true thing. Our Lord Jesus doesn't minister in a literal, physical building, like the tabernacle in the Old Testament: that was only a figure of the real thing. He ministers in the true tabernacle, in the very presence of God (Heb 8:1-2). Even as we sit here this morning he ministers in the spirit realm, and the true worshippers nowadays must worship God in spirit and in truth. How could we possibly meet that requirement and worship God in spirit? Left to ourselves we couldn't. You might as well ask Fido to be interested in a picture.

How can we worship in spirit and according to truth?

Christ is the one who enables us to do it, because he gives the Holy Spirit of God to all who trust him. As he talked to the Samaritan woman that day about the secret of worshipping God in spirit, he said, 'I know you've found worship very unsatisfactory, but if only you would ask of me I would give you living water' (see John 4:10). He spoke of the Holy Spirit that God gives to all who trust him (see 7:39). Once we were dead in trespasses and in sins, dead to God

¹ Dorothy Frances Gurney (1858-1932), *God's Garden*, lines 13-16 (London: Country Life, 1913).

(Eph 2:1). But when God took us and saved us he made us alive in spirit; and in spirit we have access to the Father of spirits and worship God in spirit. That is important, isn't it?

But we have to worship God not only in spirit but, said our Lord Jesus, according to *truth* (v. 24). If we're going to really worship God, we have to know what God is like and worship him in reality.

Suppose you found a person in the remotest of jungles, who has come to worship and he's brought an animal or a plant that he's offering to God — what would you say?

You'd say, 'Well he's doing his best.'

Suppose you found somebody in New Zealand, taking bread and wine and offering it to God in order to get forgiveness for their sins, what would you say about that?

You'd say, 'But God doesn't want an offering like that.'

You can't get forgiveness of sins by offering God anything. God isn't like that. The truth is that Christ has offered one sacrifice for sin for ever (Heb 10:12 KJV). Our Lord finished the work at Calvary and there is no more process of offering God a sacrifice to get forgiveness of sins. To come to God offering anything at all to get forgiveness of sins is contrary to the actual facts. God isn't like that; and to offer things to God that are not true according to his word is to offer worship that isn't acceptable. We must worship God in spirit and according to truth, and that is the truth of God's holy word.

You see, when we worship God, it is primarily a question of what God is like, isn't it? We're responding to what he is. True worship is not just me working up nice feelings in my heart and my mind. True worship is when I catch a glimpse of what God is like, and it really bows my heart in worship to him. That's a very important thing.

Suppose one of these days you were in Paris and you entered the great art gallery there, and found me standing opposite the famous painting of the Mona Lisa — the woman with the mysterious smile upon her face. So here I am, standing in front of the Mona Lisa. I've got my eyes shut and I'm a bit dreamy and jigging about a little bit!

'Hello, Gooding, what are you doing?'

'I'm admiring this picture here.'

'Yes,' you say, 'it's a very nice picture, isn't it?'

'Yes, it's a marvellous picture. Look at the landscape of it. I think all those trees are beautiful and look at the horses running across the plain.'

'Wait a minute, Gooding; are you looking at the same picture?'

'Yes,' I say, 'I'm admiring this picture. It fills me with wonderful feelings.'

You say, 'That isn't a landscape; it's a picture of a woman's face. It isn't a landscape with horses on it.'

I open my eyes and say, 'Now don't you be critical; you're trying to be too intellectual and too analytic. I'm admiring the picture and having a marvellous time.'

You say, 'You might be, but it's nothing to do with that picture. You're just worshipping the nice feelings conjured up in your imagination. You're not face-to-face with reality.'

And when we worship God, the prime necessity is that we're responding to what God is like; not just working up emotions in our own hearts and imaginations. That is absolutely fundamental to the worship of God.

How shall I know what God is like?

Once more we come to the Lord Jesus, don't we? When we're born again he gives us his Holy Spirit, so that we might have access to God who is spirit, and worship in spirit. He himself shows us what God is like. 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,' said the Lord Jesus (John 14:9). The preparation for worshipping God is to look at the Lord Jesus; to fill your heart and mind and soul with the Lord Jesus. When we see the wonder of the Lord Jesus in the way he behaved; in what he said, in what he showed us about God; we feel our hearts and spirits move in response to the fact that, in Christ, we are looking upon God.

Two things that we have to fulfil, then, if we would worship God acceptably:

- We have to worship in spirit;
- We have to worship according to objective reality; according to truth.

But there's another thing:

- We have to offer sacrifices that are acceptable to God.

First Peter 2 reminds us that we are a spiritual priesthood and our task is to offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God (v. 5). So this is a slightly different question, isn't it? Not now, what is God like; nor, is my worship a response to what he's like; but now the question is, 'What does God himself like to receive?'

AN ILLUSTRATION

That's only common sense, isn't it? I'm not sure about the rest of us, but every husband knows that, when it comes to a birthday present for his wife, the prime consideration is not what he likes, but what his wife likes!

You're rushing out of the kitchen door to go to work and your wife says to you, 'Do you know what day it is today?'

You pause and think like lightning, 'I hadn't forgotten that it's your birthday; I was going to get you a present. Would you like roses, or would you like chocolates?'

'Not chocolates,' she says, 'they make you fat. Roses, please. I'd prefer roses.'

You come home at night. 'Here's your present,' you say.

It's a rectangular looking thing wrapped up in paper with a pink ribbon. You give it to your wife, who looks suspiciously at this object and eventually opens it.

'It's chocolates!'

'Yes,' you say, 'it's chocolates.'

'I thought I said I'd prefer roses.'

'Yes, I know you said that.'

'Weren't there any roses available?'

'Yes, there were plenty of roses.'

'Why have you brought chocolates?'

'Because I like chocolates,' you say. 'I enjoy chocolates. I don't think much of roses.'

If you did that, you'd have to beware that the dear lady didn't throw the box of chocolates in your face! If it's going to be a present for your wife, the consideration is not what you like, but what your wife likes.

And if you're coming to offer a sacrifice to God, my dear brothers and sisters, it's not a question of what we like; the prime question is not whether we enjoy it or don't enjoy it. Thank God, when we worship it is a joyful thing, but the prime consideration is not what I am feeling; whether I feel good or don't feel good. The question is, is it acceptable to God? How shall I know what's acceptable to God, what God likes? Again, of course, the answer is our blessed Lord Jesus.

God is in process of building a spiritual house

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (v. 5)

Not a material one; God is concerned with building a spiritual house not made with hands. It is made of living stones, not material stones.

'When I came to Christ,' says Peter, 'he looked on me and said, "You are Simon; you shall become Peter, which, being interpreted, is a stone." Now you too, as you come to Christ, are being built up as stones. You're being built up into a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.'

How will I know what God likes?

'That's simple,' says Peter, 'for in the building of this spiritual house God has laid an enormous cornerstone.'

If you go to the present Temple Mount in Jerusalem, you'll see perhaps an illustration of what Peter was talking about. At the angles of the Temple Mount that supported the original temple of Herod there are some gigantic stones, thirty-five feet long. They form the corner angle and the building above takes the corner from it. The building stones are all built on and round that chief cornerstone and they have to be shaped so they fit the cornerstone. It is the thing that gives the angle to the building and the shape to the rest of the stones.

God says, 'Do you know what's acceptable to me? If you would like to bring something to me that's acceptable, here's how you start. You come as a living stone to the chief cornerstone and see how you fit round him.' Where you don't fit, those bits will have to be cut off and you'll have to be shaped round the great cornerstone so that you fit round him. That's how we become acceptable to God, and learn how to offer to God what he finds acceptable.

He laid that chief cornerstone when he sent his dear Son to Jerusalem. The priests and the high priests came and looked at our blessed Lord Jesus; they listened to him preach and watched him do his miracles, and in the end they curled up their lips at him, and said 'No! Who does he think he's talking to? We are the high priests; we don't have to be born again—it's absolute nonsense.' They preferred their temple, so they laid hold of the Lord Jesus and took him outside Jerusalem. They put him on a tree and then went back to their temple to worship God. What do you think God said about that? He gave them time to repent, of course, but forty years later he allowed the Romans to come and destroy their temple completely.

It's Christ that God is interested in. He is acceptable to God; he is the *preciousness* (v. 4 KJV). He is God's concept of what a temple should be, and we are to keep coming to him. Did you notice that it doesn't say, 'To whom having come'—once and for all when first we got

converted, but, 'To whom coming'—constantly coming, from one Sunday through to the next Sunday in life, to the Lord Jesus. As believers, we too need to be fitted ever more closely around Christ.

You will see it happening with Peter himself. He was a dear believer, and on the whole he respected the Lord. But there were occasions when he decided the Lord had got things wrong and suggested that he should change his ideas. So when the Lord said to the disciples, 'I have to go to Jerusalem and be rejected and crucified and the third day rise again', Peter said, 'Oh, no, Lord, you've got it wrong. I mean, this idea of being rejected and crucified, you mustn't think like that. You have to be positive in your thinking. You want to say to yourself, "I'm going to Jerusalem and I'm going to be a success." That's what God wants us to be; he wants us to be a great success' (see Matt 16:21–22).

Peter was talking utter nonsense, and wicked nonsense actually. The thoughts he was entertaining came from his satanic majesty and our Lord had to rebuke him. Peter had to have those ideas knocked out of his head, and he had to be fitted round the chief cornerstone so that he might be built up a spiritual house, to offer up sacrifices that would be acceptable to God.

So it is for us as well. Hasn't preparation for this Sunday morning been taking place all through this last week? As we have constantly come near to Christ and read his word, we've seen where we don't fit yet and asked God to build us more closely around Christ—the way he thinks, his attitudes, his teaching. That is the preparation, so that when we come our spirits are prepared to offer praise to God that is acceptable.

And finally, what can Christ do to us and for us?

We are presently to gather for the Lord's Supper. As we take the bread and the wine we remember how he gave his life for us and by his blood purchased our forgiveness. But he did more than that. Revelation 5 says 'by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth' (vv. 9–10). What a lovely thing he did. Can you see the drama of it?

In Revelation 4, the high intelligentsia of heaven are seen bowing before the throne of God. It is the Creator's throne, and in their worship they say, 'Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created' (v. 11). The whole great universe was made for God to run as he wanted it to run; and every single man, woman, boy and girl on earth was made for him. That was the original intent of the Creator—'by your will they existed and were created.' Thus, as the great intelligentsia of heaven sing, their marvel is that the creation has gone astray. 'We all like sheep have gone astray; we've turned—every one—to his own selfish way' (Isa 53:6). Why doesn't God intervene and wipe the planet clean, have done with rebels forever and start afresh?

I met a young gentleman once. He said he didn't like the idea of sin. He thought *sin* was an old-fashioned, silly word.

I said to him, 'Suppose you were able to make a motor car, and five times out of ten it went where you wanted it to go, but five times out of ten it went where it liked, what would you do with it?'

He said, 'I'd scrap it.'

I said, 'I rather thought so. Suppose nine times out of ten it went where you wanted it to go and just one in ten, whatever you did to the steering wheel and the brakes and anything, it just went where it wanted to go itself—what would you do with it?'

He said, 'I'd scrap that too. If I made a motor car it would have to go where I wanted it to go ten times out of ten, and if it didn't I should scrap it.'

I said, 'God made you to do his will, you know. You'd better look out that God doesn't put you on the scrapheap of eternity likewise.'

We were made to do God's will. One day God will rise up and execute his judgment, and clear this earth of rebels completely. But who is worthy to execute that judgment? That is the question of Revelation 5:2: 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' when the breaking of every seal will launch on this world a devastating judgment for those who do not know God. *Who is worthy to do it?* At first no one was found worthy to open the book or to let loose the judgments. So has creation got to meander on in its rebellion against God? Not so. One has been found worthy to open the scroll and break its seals. That one is our blessed Lord Jesus.

Why is he worthy to do it?

And here is the marvel of the story of God's grace. You see it isn't a question of somebody being *able* to do it. I nearly said anybody could 'press the button'. Anybody could press the nuclear button that would blow our planet and everybody in it to smithereens. Anybody *could* do it. The question is, who is *worthy* to do it? The worthiness depends on the fact that the Lamb himself lived here a life utterly pleasing to God. He never sought his own will, he always did the things that pleased his Father. He has the right to do it.

But before the blessed Lord will break those seals and start the judgments, listen to what else he did. 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, *for you were slain*, and by your blood you ransomed people for God' (v. 9). He was slain to redeem rebels like you and me and bring us back to God. And not only to bring us back to God, in the sense of our sins being forgiven; but to bring us back to God and make us something for God in the place of rebels that go their own way through life, with the odd hymn thrown in when it seems good to.

He wants to make us men and women who have given up their rebellion, who live for God and constantly make it their business to please him. Men and women who come constantly to Christ to be fitted round him as a spiritual house, a kingdom of priests who obey and please and worship God. And so we remember our blessed Lord Jesus and the price he paid to bring us back to God, and fulfil the Father's secret longing to have men and women that shall worship him.

I wonder if you're saying, 'Our English preacher this morning has made life seem very difficult. We always thought worship was an easy thing. You could just run in and do it, so to speak, and then rush out. Now he seems to be saying it's very difficult.'

We have a high priest

Yes, it is difficult. We are worshipping the almighty God. Ah, but there's another wonderful thing that Christ does for us. He is our high priest and the Bible puts it this way:

Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:19–22)

There is an open road into the presence of God; the veil has been taken aside and we have been prepared to enter and worship God. Our hearts have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ from an evil conscience; the guilt of sin has gone. Our bodies bathed with pure water, regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, we are able to worship God in spirit. Do we find ourselves saying, 'Yes, but to enter the presence of God in the holiest of all, how shall I know what to say? If I was suddenly introduced into the presence of God, how shall I know how to behave?' 'We have a great priest over the house of God' (v. 21). That's lovely, isn't it? We're called upon to be priests in the presence of God, and if we feel incapable our great high priest is there, ready to help us.

So this morning let us come to him as we remember him, and, putting our hand into the hand of the high priest, say to him, 'Blessed high priest, you are the one responsible to lead the praises of your people. We want to praise God; we want to worship him acceptably. Lord, help us now, lead us to the Father; help us to know how to behave, what to say, and how to pour out our hearts, silently or audibly, in worship and praise and gratitude that shall find acceptance with the Father.' *'For the Father is seeking such people to worship him'* (John 4:23).

About the Author

DAVID W. GOODING is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. His international teaching ministry is marked by fresh and careful expositions of both testaments. He has published scholarly studies on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John 13–17, Acts, Hebrews and the New Testament's use of the Old Testament.