



Pastor Michael O'Neill  
February 5, 2017

## Hebrews 12:28-29

### 1. **Shake Loose the Shakable**

- *Isaiah 6:1-5*

### 2. An **Unshakable** Kingdom

- *Romans 8:35-39; Hebrews 12:28-29*

### 3. Unshakable **Gratefulness**

- *Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 18:21-35;*  
*Hebrews 8:5, 9:9, 14; 10:2, 13:10, 15-16*

### 4. **All-Consuming Fire**

- *Galatians 2:20*

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2/5/17  
West Valley Church  
Michael O'Neill

## **The Heart of Worship, Pt. One**

### **Hebrews 12:28-29**

Last Sunday I shared two very important announcements with you that I just want to say again, in case you missed it: One was the news that West Valley Church has been recognized for our work with Wide Hollow Elementary, and we have been awarded a grant from the Northwest District Church of the Nazarene in the amount of \$25,000 in order to expand our work with Wide Hollow, and then to duplicate that work at another elementary school. This is an important next step in the mission of West Valley Church, so I want to briefly give you some key details. I will also say that we are scheduling a time when we can share in more detail with you what this means for our church and our future – so watch for that.

Over seven years ago, when we first accepted the call to come be your pastor, I knew that an important part of our future vision would be the development of another campus outreach. In fact, many of the changes we've made over the years, has been for our church's health and missional impact, and to position us for this very next step. So I want you to know that this is something that has been on God's radar for our church for several years, and now the time is right to take this very important step!

Late last spring and early summer, Pastors Jason, Casey, and I wrote a proposal for the district grant. We read books, met with experts in church planting and with our church's Leadership Team to gain insight and wisdom. Our proposal for the grant was to expand our work with Wide Hollow with more equipment – some fun things, like more big toy inflatables that we could use at their PTA events, but much of the grant request was for materials for enhanced summer education camps like the science camp we did last summer. By the way, those took place thanks to Pastors Jason and Casey's leadership. In the grant we also requested money to purchase several "chromebooks" (*hold up*) – these are sort of scaled-down laptops. Here's why we included these in the grant: starting next year, every middle school student, junior high, and high school student in the West Valley School District will be using a chromebook. So we want to be able to work with the elementary school to begin training the children on how to use these properly so they will be ready when they get their own. We also have people in our church who do not have access to the Internet or have computers, so we will use these for an Internet café at our church in the evenings.

The grant funding also allows us to purchase a trailer that all of the equipment can fit into so we can take it all and use it at a second school.

Some have asked which elementary school we will work with; we will be identifying that other school through research and prayer, and then once identified, we will

begin the work with the intent that some of our people will start a small group near that school, and as we reach families in that school, we can invite them to that small group that will grow to the point that they will begin having worship, and when it is large enough, could begin meeting at that school's campus. That small group will eventually grow into another campus, and when it is able, it will become its own church. This will expand West Valley Church's impact for the Kingdom and the Gospel, utilizing the methods that come naturally for us – things that we've become good at and that we are recognized for. The school district has asked us in the past if we would expand to another school, so we feel that God has given us favor with the school district in order to take this next step. Please, pray with us as we identify the school we will work with and as we begin purchasing equipment. As I said, we are planning a meeting in the very near future in order to give you complete details and to answer any questions you might have. Okay?

Now, about the *other* announcement I shared last week: We are continuing the search for a youth pastor, and I will keep you informed along the way. But I am really excited that we have a worship pastor who will be joining our pastoral team next month. In case you missed it, here is a picture of him and his family. His name is Roger Allen, and his wife Joy, son Camh, and daughters Emma and Kaleigh. The girls are in college and their son is nine.

Roger has been the Worship Pastor at Kansas City First Church for the last 15 years. For ten years before that, he was a school music teacher in Kansas City, so this is a big move. But you are going to love them and I know they will love you!

Even though he won't be here until next month, Roger has already begun working with us for this month's sermon series that begins today, and he's also working with us as we prepare the next series leading up to Easter.

I want to quickly give you a bit of history and reasoning behind our hiring of Roger. Three and a half years ago when our last worship pastor left, I right away set out to replace him. But as I had interviews and prayed about that decision, I felt the Lord correct me, and God was being very clear with me about some things. One thing the Lord made clear was that our next staff position should *not* be worship, but discipleship. Essentially, the Lord asked me where I felt the next big change in our church needed to come from. I realized that the next change we needed to make was not in worship – we all had made those changes already. Then the Lord clearly indicated that the next big change in our church that was needed at that time was in helping us grow in small groups and in our spiritual growth. As a result, I had to change gears in our pastoral search at that time, but that led us to Pastor Jason – and hasn't he done an amazing job?! I'm so grateful that just over three years ago, Pastor Jason, Tricia, Holland, Savannah, Addison, and Brooklyn accepted the call and have joined our family.

But there was another reason the Lord didn't want us to hire a worship pastor right away – because the Lord wanted to do a work among us in worship: to develop our own leaders, to cause us to not be dependent on one person who was the "star" but instead to be led by our own volunteer leaders so that we could look past the

platform to the throne room of God. Our previous worship pastor was such a strong and gifted worship leader (which was great! But...), we had a tendency to depend on the leader rather than to focus directly on the Lord. So our volunteers have taken over leadership of worship, and have helped us look past them and to the Lord. Pastor Jason has been instrumental in helping us develop our teams, and for the last three and a half years, week in and week out, with the leadership of Tricia, Adam, Clay, Nathan, Steven, and all of our worship teams, we have been incredibly well led in worship of God – Amen?!

These folks volunteer hours and hours of time in preparation, practice, and rehearsal each and every week so that all of us can worship on Sundays. Could I ask those on our worship team to stand? Thank God for these people!

They do such a great job that you might wonder why do we need a worship pastor?! But let me tell you why: all of our worship leaders agree that they have reached their potential in their ability - *on their own*. But there is even greater skill and leadership that they can achieve if we have someone who can equip them and lead them. And there are far, far more things we could incorporate into our worship service experiences and our worship participation, it's just that our volunteers have no time to do anything beyond what they are already doing – they are giving all that they can right now. Besides, they have worked so hard for so long, we want to make sure we don't burn them out, which they have graciously avoided reaching up to this point.

My plan is for Roger to come and observe for awhile, working behind the scenes with our leaders until he has a good grasp of our church's personality and culture before he then takes us forward. You can imagine that West Valley Church is a much different culture and personality than the culture and personality of Kansas City First Church! So Roger will need a little time in order to get a feel for things and then to best lead us into the future. I can't wait for you to meet him, but I don't want you to think he's going to bust out of the gate leading our singing. And please pray for him and his family; this is a major change for them for sure, but they are willing to do it for you and to obey the Lord's call on their lives.

*But* in the meantime, we are spending this month preparing our hearts and minds for new levels of worship and for the Easter season, with a new sermon series called, "The Heart of Worship." I want you to know that Pastor Roger is giving input to this out of his wisdom and years of leadership in worship, to help us set the stage for what is ahead. He and I have worked together on the direction and some of the content of these sermons. So in a way, you are getting some of Pastor Roger's heart even before you meet him in person.

There is a passage of Scripture on my heart that is our clarion call during this series. It comes to us from the book of Hebrews, chapter twelve. There are two verses in particular, but I need to back up a little to give you the context. This is what it says:

“At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ The words ‘once more’

indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.”

***(Now here are the two verses that are our theme verses for this series:)***

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” (Hebrews 12:26-29, niv)*

Everything that the writer of Hebrews has been leading toward is this statement. There are deep theological truths in these passages, which of course also means that within these truths we will find meaning and fulfillment for our lives. Not surprisingly, the answer to what we seek with our lives is found when we worship the one who is greater than ourselves; the one who is greater than all things.

The writer of Hebrews painstakingly reviews God’s work throughout the Old Testament, and reveals to us that what God’s people were saved for, and what they lived for, was only *temporary*; it had to do with temples and laws and lands and lineages. But now, we – the people of God – have received a *greater* revelation of God – in Christ. *What God promised with temporary places, he has now provided permanently in Christ.* That truth brings us to some important realizations when it comes to worship:

## **1. Shake Loose the Shakable**

The writer of Hebrews is helping us see that the only thing that will last forever is God’s Kingdom – what Revelation calls the “New Jerusalem” if you remember from our sermon series last summer.

The problem is that there are things in our lives that we cling to that belong to this shakable kingdom.

When the Old Testament prophet Isaiah had his encounter with God in his vision of the Temple, he makes an interesting statement:

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple.” (Isaiah 6:1, niv)

Pastor and writer Oswald Chambers points out that Isaiah enjoyed a favorable relationship with King Uzziah. He suggests that nothing significant had happened in Isaiah’s life yet because he was relying too much on King Uzziah and not the King of Kings. In order for Isaiah to be able to see God clearly, he needed to be shaken loose of depending on anyone but God.

Like Isaiah, we too rely on things other than God. What are the things in your life that you are relying on? Your paycheck? Your skill? Your friends? Your family? Your possessions? In light of this passage on worship, I think we can say that anything you or I rely on – other than God – anything we rely on is an *idol*. That may sound harsh, but it is true. If there is anything in your life that you consistently rely

on ahead of God, that thing is an idol. Let me share with you what Pastor Roger has written about this:

“Theologian, John Calvin, is credited with the saying that, *‘the human heart (nature) is a perpetual factory of idols’*. We were created for the pleasure of our God and He is most pleased when He is in intimate, unbroken, uncompromising relationship with us – the objects of His deepest affections. But even a cursory glance at the track record of God’s own chosen people, the Israelites, confirms our frail and fickle human nature. Time and time again in the Old Testament, despite spectacular signs and wonders performed by an omnipotent God on behalf of His people, we see Israel drawing near to God and then turning away again.”

Isaiah relied on King Uzziah, but when that was shaken away from Isaiah’s life, he saw the unshakable God:

“I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.” (Isaiah 6:1-4, niv)

Isaiah saw the unshakable God whose presence shakes even the doorposts of heaven. If we are going to worship God, we must first shake loose of everything that is shakable. We must repent of, and let go of, whatever it is we are holding onto other than Christ.

The missionary CT Studd once wrote a poem that said this:

Two little lines I heard one day,  
Traveling along life’s busy way;  
Bringing conviction to my heart,  
And from my mind would not depart;  
Only one life, twill soon be past,  
Only what’s done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, yes only one,  
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;  
Then, in ‘that day’ my Lord to meet,  
And stand before His Judgement seat;  
Only one life, ’twill soon be past,  
Only what’s done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, the still small voice,

Gently pleads for a better choice  
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,  
And to God's holy will to cleave;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, a few brief years,  
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;  
Each with its clays I must fulfill,  
living for self or in His will;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
When this bright world would tempt me sore,  
When Satan would a victory score;  
When self would seek to have its way,  
Then help me Lord with joy to say;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Give me Father, a purpose deep,  
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;  
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,  
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Oh let my love with fervor burn,  
And from the world now let me turn;  
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,  
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.  
Only one life, yes only one,  
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";  
And when at last I'll hear the call,

I know I'll say "'twas worth it all";  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last. "

Notice Isaiah's response to having seen God:

"Then I said, 'It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies.'" (Isaiah 6:5, nlt)

Our response needs to be like Isaiah's – repentance, and a return to reliance upon God and God alone.

What Isaiah saw, and what we can receive, is...

## 2. An ***Unshakable*** Kingdom

What the writer of Hebrews is pointing out is that when we shake off the shakable things, what's left is unshakable: God has given us an unshakable Kingdom through Christ. We receive this unshakable Kingdom from God; He offers it to us in Christ. When we repent of our shakable ways, and ask his forgiveness, he gives us a kingdom that can never, ever, ever, be shaken. No circumstance is overwhelming enough, no evil is overpowering enough, no false love is compelling enough, to shake you loose from God's love:

"Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39, nlt)

My friends, when you trade the shakable things of this world for Christ, you will have a kingdom of love that *nothing* can shake. Nothing! And the natural response for someone who receives this unshakable Kingdom is to worship the One who gives it.

The writer of Hebrews tells us what our worshipful response is to be:

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'" (Hebrews 12:28-29, niv)



Because we are receiving this unshakable kingdom, our best response, our acceptable form of worship, is...

### 3. Unshakable *Gratefulness*

Our response is to be grateful. In the words of our soon to be Worship Pastor, Roger Allen:

“Worship is our response to God...Like, Isaiah, when we see God for who He is, we are humbled and can do nothing else, but stand in awe. His holiness, love, and grace is overwhelming. He is beyond our understanding, yet chooses to reveal Himself to us. Our worship, our responding actions, don't end with simply acknowledging the greatness and transcendence of God. It informs the way we do life. Like Isaiah in that same passage from chapter 6, we are moved to action. We are to give our lives in response to God and His love. ***“Here I am, Lord. Send me.”***”

In Romans 12, Paul reinforces this idea of this all-encompassing, total-life response to God as worship. He writes to the believers in Rome:

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”  
(Romans 12:1-2, niv)

Our only acceptable, worshipful, grateful response is to live for him – to show our gratitude with our lives.

Jesus told a story about a man who owed a king millions of dollars, and when he was arrested he begged for mercy. The king forgave the man's debt and sent him out a free man. The first person the newly forgiven and freed man saw was a neighbor who had owed him a few thousand dollars. So the freed man grabbed him around the neck and threatened to throw him in jail if he didn't pay back the money he owed. This man had just been forgiven millions; now he's throttling a guy for a few thousand. The king found out, arrested the previously forgiven man and threw him in prison. The King said, “Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?” The point Jesus is making is this: our appropriate, grateful, worshipful response is to treat others as God has forgiven us. **(Matthew 18:21-35)** We are to live out our gratitude by extending the Kingdom of love to others.

Christ's sacrifice allows us to acceptably serve God (see Hebrews 8:5; 9:9, 14; 10:2; 13:10). God is pleased when we act in ways that are consistent with the way Christ acts toward us; to do good to each other and others and share what we have with others:

“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don’t forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.”  
(Hebrews 13:15-16, nlt)

A life of lived-out gratitude is pleasing worship to God.

And we’d better get it right, because our God is an...

#### **4. All-Consuming Fire**

When we worship, what we are really doing is seeking to be consumed by God, totally lost in God, to be engulfed in God himself. The writer of Hebrews is quoting Moses as he was given the law from Mount Sinai, having seen God in the burning bush. In that case, when Moses talked about consuming fire, he was referring to God’s holiness and his judgment of our sin. But the writer of Hebrews extends this meaning, because remember he is talking about our relationship with God through Christ. And remember, he is writing about this in the context of worship. It could be that the writer is referring to the burnt offering that was offered at the Temple; God’s pleasure and acceptance of the offering resulted in his consuming it with fire.

The author is giving us a double entendre; he is saying is that God will either consume you in judgment, or he will consume you in love. Which would you rather? If we do not shake off the shakable and we continue to worship our idols, we will be consumed in holy judgment by God. But if we repent and accept the Kingdom of love, and worship by living out lives of gratitude by loving others, we will be consumed by God’s holy love.

The Apostle Paul said:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live (*He could say, ‘I have been consumed by Christ’*), but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”  
(Galatians 2:20, niv)

My friends, our best worship is not about style, or about tradition, or about what’s presently playing on popular Christian radio. Our best worship is to abandon idols and respond to the unshakable Kingdom of the love of God, to live gratefully in that Love for others, seeking to be completely consumed by and in God’s love for us.

Will you be consumed by God’s love? I warn you; if not, you will be consumed by God’s judgment. It is either love or judgment for you.

Seek him.

Sing: *“I’m coming back to the heart of worship”*