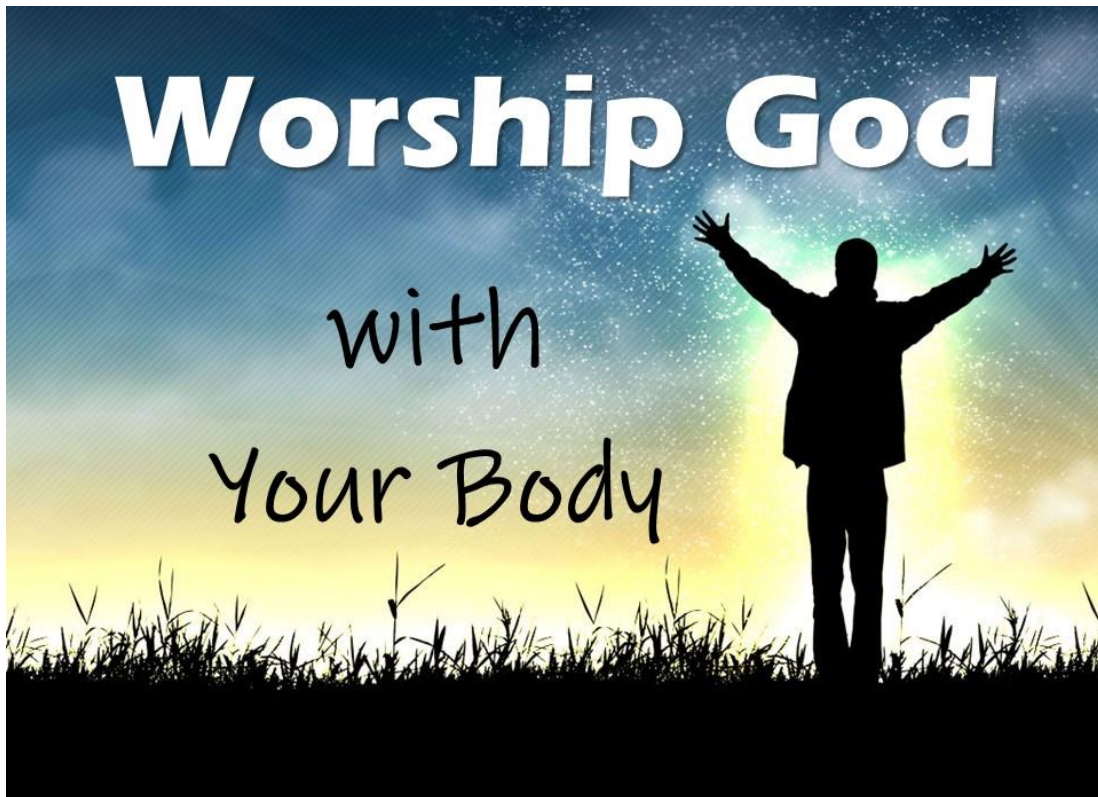


**Sermon, February 14, 2021**  
*(Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 6:12-15, 17-20)*  
**“Worship God with your Body”**  
**Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, Associate Pastor**



Once upon a time, there was a young woman named Temple. She grew up thinking she was worthless and ugly. (That’s what people told her.) She grew up feeling unloved, unlovable, and unwanted. (She had been passed from one foster home to another for many years.)

If Temple was worthless, ugly, unloved, and unwanted, why bother caring about herself or her body—nobody else did, so why should she? So, she ate what she liked—all the junk food and candy that caused her to crave more. She stayed up late, trying to drown her sorrows in junk food and adult beverages, but none of them helped. She just grew more tired physically... and tired of life. Exercise? Why bother? She was ugly, worthless, unloved, and unwanted! Who cared what she looked like! She abused her body with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. In her vain attempts to find love and fill the emptiness she felt inside, she gave herself to others in one promiscuous relationship after another.

Until one day, Temple discovered she was pregnant... She wasn’t worried about it—if she wasn’t anything, neither was the fetus growing inside her. She went to a crisis pregnancy center to “take care of it.” The nurse introduced herself and said, “Hi, my name is Grace. It is so nice to meet you.” After getting some

background information, Grace asked Temple to lie down on the examining table. A few moments later, Grace gently moved the fetal heart monitor over Temple's stomach, and then stopped and said quietly and reverently, "Listen!"

Thump-thump; thump-thump; thump-thump. Temple gasped—The fetus growing inside her... had a heartbeat? Thump-thump; thump-thump; thump-thump. Something stirred w/in her, and for the first time in a long time, she *felt* something... (She hadn't felt anything for years.) She felt a connection to her baby growing within her..., and tears began to run down her cheeks. Grace gently and lovingly asked, "Are you ok?" But Temple couldn't speak...; she was too overwhelmed. Grace could tell Temple was upset and confused, so she gently and lovingly told her: "I'm not sure what is going on in your life or what you're facing, but God knows and He wants you to know that He loves you and your baby—and He'll help you figure things out."

Temple looked confused and asked, "God loves *me... and my baby?*" The nurse explained, "Yes, Temple! God created you in His image. He has loved you since before you were born—in the same way He loves your baby now. He loves you both and wants you to know Him so He can guide and help you in life." Temple asked again, "God loves *me?*! No one has ever loved me..." Grace's heart ached for this young woman. "Even if no one else loves you, God does!"

But Temple argued, "How could God love me? I'm so ugly and worthless; I haven't done anything to earn His love!" The nurse lovingly responded, "No one can earn God's love; He just gives it—He just chooses to love us and you... no matter what! And you definitely are *not* worthless! You are worth so much to Jesus that He paid the price for your sins by dying on the Cross."

Temple gasped; she'd never heard any of this before! The nurse continued, "But Jesus didn't stay dead! Three days later (on the day we call Easter), Jesus came back to life! He overcame sin and death, and He wants to help us do the same.

Grace continued, "Jesus loves you and wants to live inside you—in your heart." "Inside me?" Temple asked. "I thought God lived inside the church or something." Grace said with a smile, "God is everywhere, but He wants to live in our hearts. When we believe in Jesus and let Him be the Lord of our lives, He comes to live inside us—and our bodies become His temple." "Hey!" said Temple, "That's my name!" "That's right!" Grace responded excitedly. "That's perfect! God wants to live in you, Temple, and to make you His temple!"

Temple didn't know what to think... She was in awe that God—or anyone—might love her and adopt her! When Grace asked Temple if she would like to learn more about Jesus, Temple nodded her head "Yes!" Grace gave Temple a Bible and some information about Jesus, and then invited her to come back later that week to meet with her and other young women who wanted to learn more. Temple thanked her for her help and information and decided then and there—she would be back. And Temple did come back to meet with Grace and others to learn more about Jesus.

In the weeks and months that followed, Temple learned so much. She learned that she is [You are] made in the image of God! Neither she nor her baby was ugly; they were beautiful in God's eyes!

She learned that she is loved - unconditionally! No matter how many times or ways she messed up, God would always love her. That brought tears to her eyes every time she thought about it—she had never felt loved.

Temple learned that she is forgiven! God loves her so much, He sacrificed his Son, Jesus, who died on the Cross and paid for her sins. She wasn't worthless after all—Jesus paid for her with his life! To Jesus, she is priceless!

She learned that in the same way Jesus rose from the dead, He wants to raise her from the deadness of sin and make her new and give her and everlasting life!

As she learned more about Jesus, she wanted to get to know him personally. She prayed and confessed her sins and addictions to God and asked Him to set her free—and He did!

When she let Jesus be the Lord and leader of her life, God's Spirit came to live in her body, and she, Temple, became God's temple! ("How cool is that?" she thought!)

Since God made her, and Jesus paid the price for her, she learned that her body belongs to God. God has entrusted her body for her to care for while she lives in this world. After all God did for her, Temple wanted to Worship God with her whole life—including her [your] body! She chose to quit eating only junk food, and to take care of her body by eating right and exercising. She decided that she wanted to take care of her body—not only for her sake, but for the sake of her baby living within her. She wanted to live as long as possible to be with her baby and to share with others the good news she was discovering! She chose to quit abusing her body with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. She wanted to make the most of the life God gave her! Temple chose to quit trying to find love in promiscuous relationships. She learned that the only place to find true love is in God, and she wanted to honor and worship God with her whole life—including her body.

Your name may not be Temple, but you are (or can become) God's temple. When you meet God's GRACE, God will transform your life from the inside out! Regardless of what you or others think of you, God knows: You are beautiful! You are loved! You are wanted! You are worth so much that Jesus gave his life for you!

If you let Jesus be the Lord of your life, He will come to live in you—and you will become His temple. Will you worship God with your whole self—including your body? Will you take care of the temple God has entrusted to you? Remember, YOU are (or can become) God's temple!