

An Introduction to a Theology of Worship - Week 3

by Greg Willson
www.gregwillson.com

Immanence

Review: Transcendence

Bach's Kyrie Elieson: the sound of a cathedral.

Ps. 29: answering God's call and transcendence in our worship

vertical and horizontal aspects to worship

rectangle diagram of transcendence and immanence

complex theology in song = transcendence

more accessible theology in song = immanence

incommunicable vs. communicable characteristics

incommunicable: those traits that only God has (like omnipresence)

communicable: those traits that God has that we are able to have a finite piece of. God has them perfectly, eternally. We have them imperfectly, and not eternally. And the reason we have these characteristics is because we are made in the imago Dei, the image of God.

We'll get to more of the imago Dei when we talk about man's dignity

Temma on Earth - Tim Lowly

Four panels together, eight by twelve feet, it shows a girl lying on the ground— Temma, the Lowlys' only child. 14 years old, she has been severely disabled, mentally and physically, since birth.

Commenting on the work's "monumental" scale, Lowly says, "There's something very intriguing about what happens when you take a person who in the view of much of our culture is a nonperson and depict her in a fashion traditionally reserved for the gods."

She is surrounded by an expanse of dried earth and foliage, drained of vivid color. Her peaceful expression seems at odds with the harshness of her surroundings.

Physically one with the ground yet seeming to journey far away, weighted down while being lighter than air, Temma's image speaks of her ability to transcend her real life disabilities.

floating/not-floating

Lowly's attempt to get away from one-point Renaissance perspective, with its implication of art created for a single viewer. "I

wanted an image where there is no single point of reference,"

detail/style/color celebrates a physicality that does not exclude the spiritual
It is this kind of interaction taking place in our space and our time that can be labeled "immanent"

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/timlowly/2075255866/>

<http://www.timlowly.com/resources/tglcamper.html>

Systematic Categories of Communicable Attributes (mostly from Grudem, p. 190ff):

Knowledge

God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.
all things:

"God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything." (1 John 3:20 ESV)

all things actual:

"And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Heb 4:13 ESV)

all things possible (what might happen, but that do not actually come to pass):

"Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, please tell your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you." Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition." (1 Sam 23:11-13 ESV)

things that did not happen:

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matt 11:21 ESV)

in one simple act: not divided

in one simple eternal act: God's knowledge never changes or grows

Though our capacity for knowledge is not the same as God's, we do have a capacity of knowledge and that capacity comes from the imago Dei

Wisdom (hoekma for tabernacle peeps?)

God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals

“to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.” (Rom 16:27 ESV)

“He is wise in heart and mighty in strength” (Job 9:4 ESV)

“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” (Psa 104:24 ESV)

He is above our wisdom:

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Cor 1:18-20 ESV)

Paul, after writing 11 chapters on God’s redemption, writes

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom 11:33 ESV)

Though our capacity for wisdom is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity of wisdom and that capacity comes from the imago Dei

We’ll get to more of what wisdom is for us when we talk about man’s dignity

Goodness

God is the final standard of good, and all that he is and does is worthy of approval

whose approval? ours? yes, but ultimately his: the circular reasoning of any absolute.

all he is, all he does:

“For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (Psa 100:5 ESV)

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!” (Psa 34:8 ESV)

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Gen 1:31 ESV)

everything good comes from Him:

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17 ESV)

Though our capacity for goodness is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity of goodness and that capacity comes from the imago Dei

Love, mercy, grace, patience

*God eternally gives of himself to others
and gives to those who
are in misery or distress
deserve only punishment
deserve immediate punishment*

Love

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8 ESV)

“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24 ESV)

“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:8 ESV)

Mercy

“Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man.”” (2 Sam 24:14 ESV)

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:16 ESV)

Grace

“But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor 15:10 ESV)

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Rom 3:23-24 ESV)

the blessing of “grace” is the most popular apostolic blessing (Rom. 1:7, 16:20; 1Cor 1:3, 16:23; 2Cor 1:2, 13:14; Gal 1:3, 6:18)

Patience

“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,” (Ex 34:6 ESV)

“What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,” (Rom 9:22 ESV)

Though our capacity for these is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity, and that capacity comes from the imago Dei

Holiness

He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor

“I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.” (Psa 71:22 ESV)

“And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”” (Is 6:3 ESV)

We are to imitate God’s holiness:

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” (Lev 19:1-2 ESV)

In fact, we should strive to imitate all of God’s communicable attributes, but we should also strive to *not* imitate any of God’s incommunicable attributes.

Though our capacity for holiness is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity, and that comes from the imago Dei

Righteousness, justice, jealousy, wrath

God will always act in accordance with what is right and is himself the final standard of what is right.

righteousness and justice are not two different words in Hebrew or Greek (*tsedek* and *diakainos* word groups)

““The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.” (Deut 32:4 ESV)

“I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.” (Is 45:19 ESV)

““Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.”

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?” (Job 40:2; Rom 9:20-21 ESV)

ANE: those who make something also have ownership rights.

Jealousy: God continually seeks to protect His own honor

Jealous is often put in a negative connotation, but it can be used in a positive light

“Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their

pillars and cut down their Asherim (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),” (Ex 34:12-14 ESV)

If there was not something better than us, if we are the best thing around, we should be jealous for ourselves, and having people seek out our honor. But there is something better than us in the world, and that’s what people should seek. And that’s why God *must* be jealous: He is the best thing around, to not be jealous would be deceiving us.

Wrath: God intensely hates all sin

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36 ESV)

“Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you.” (Deut 9:7-8 ESV)

Why should we praise God for his wrath? What kind of God would he be if he did not hate sin?

God’s wrath being satisfied in Jesus for those united to Him:

...“and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1 Th 1:10 ESV)

Typical middle of the road evangelicalism often does not affirm wrath or justice as positive or even communicable attributes (think of Ned Flanders), but

Though our capacity for righteousness, justice, etc. is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity, and that comes from the imago Dei

Will

God approves and determines to bring about every action necessary for the existence and activity of himself and all creation

“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,” (Eph 1:11 ESV)

ta panta - often used by Paul to refer to everything that exists or everything in creation

Sometimes it is mysterious, like in suffering:

“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.” (1 Pet 3:17 ESV)

just like the rest of these attributes (be it communicable or incommunicable) we will never completely know them:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deut 29:29 ESV)

Though our capacity for the will is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity, and that comes from the imago Dei

Freedom

He does whatever He pleases

Nothing in all creation can hinder God

Again, response to idol worship:

“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.” (Psa 115:3 ESV)

Though our capacity for freedom is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity, and that comes from the imago Dei

Power

God is able to do all his holy will

“Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!” (Psa 24:8 ESV)

“Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.” (Jer 32:17 ESV)

Though our capacity for power is not the same as God’s, we do have a capacity, and that comes from the imago Dei.

We can use our power and freedom and will, etc., in ways pleasing to God. In doing this, we bring him glory; it reflects his character

Summary:

Perfection

Blessedness

Beauty

Glory

Immanence: Jesus as “liturgist” our minister, mediator a contact point between man and God:

Heb. 8:1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

While transcendence affirms Jesus’ Deity, immanence affirms Jesus’ humanity.

“For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”” (Heb 2:10-12 ESV)

affirming our emotional range found in our humanity (a topic we’ll flesh out more later):
Psalms and our emotions

Musical example:

Alison Krauss and Union Station - It Doesn’t Matter (longing)

Alison Krauss and Union Station - Little Liza Jane (fun, happiness that is not ironic or pretentious)

Immanence means everyone can play along:

William Smith Monroe (September 13, 1911 – September 9, 1996) was an American musician who helped develop the style of music known as bluegrass, which takes its name from his band, the "Blue Grass Boys," named for Monroe's home state of Kentucky. Monroe's performing career spanned 60 years as a singer, instrumentalist, composer and bandleader. He is often referred to as The Father of Bluegrass.

bill monroe: Cryin’ holy to my Lord, weeping willow tree (longing), mule skinner blues (normal mundane aspect of life- what does it say to make that into a song?)

Everyone can play along, and it can be meaningful

Krystyna Sanderson - Places of Light #3 - immanence- god meeting us- the power of a cathedral (<http://www.krystynaphotography.com>) (IoF)

the light creeping in to the darkness, coming and making itself known, connecting

Connections: where transcendence and immanence meet:
the sacraments

God's humility in His being able to be approached by us

using simple, earthly means to participate in something eternal
bread, wine, water

ministry of the word and sacrament:

Makoto Fujimura - January Hour—Baptism (IoF) - Baptism, grace

if worship is not existential, it's simply not

folk art/kitsch vs. high art

Garden gnome and Rembrandt self portrait

Examples through Architecture:

what's being communicated? primarily transcendence? immanence? both? a proper communication depending on culture (these are contextual-less examples) Faith and Form Architecture Awards

<http://faithandform.com/awards/index.php>