

Can Baptists Learn to Perpetually Adore Jesus?

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Roman Catholics in Boston now have the opportunity to participate in the revival of a centuries-old practice, something called the Ritual of Perpetual Adoration.

It's pretty simple and self-explanatory: hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month (that is, perpetually), a few people will always be on hand to worship (that is, adore) a consecrated Eucharistic wafer, which is understood to be the real physical body of Jesus, miraculously transformed from a piece of bread.

Doesn't it stand to reason that people who truly believe in transubstantiation would do their part to make sure that someone is always thanking, honoring, worshipping, adoring the incarnated and living Jesus?

In this case, the incarnated and living Jesus will find his place, according to the [Boston Globe](#), in a "golden wafer-holder placed in a red velvet niche surrounded by wood carvings of sunrays and angels carrying incense."

The Rev. Peter Grover, director of the St. Clement Eucharistic Shrine where the ongoing ritual will take place, explains how the revival fits in with contemporary life. "To get anything done these days, you have to make an appointment, so let's make an appointment with God." He then asks, "You can get cigarettes 24/7, you can buy milk, and you can't have church open?"

Tim Van Damm is one of the laypersons pushing for the reinstatement of the old ritual. The rationale for his advocacy has a sense of paradox. "God is everywhere, but there is a difference when you are physically in the presence of God." Yet he is inarguably truthful when he asserts, "Any time you come in contact with Christ, you are changed."

Should I, as a Baptist Christian, be envious?

Does our disbelief in transubstantiation – and our contention that when Jesus said, "This is my body" in that upper room, he wanted us to understand it only symbolically – mean that we are denying ourselves a practice of "perpetual adoration?"

Not according to Matthew's Gospel, which has a different take on the doctrine of the "real presence" of Jesus:

"I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me. ...Truly, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."

We lose a great deal, however, if we don't take advantage of what a practice of "perpetual adoration" would mean for Mathew's understanding of the "real presence" of Jesus.

As Van Damm rightfully affirmed, "Any time you come in contact with Christ, you are changed."

We would be changed, that is, even if we signed up for only an hour each week to be in Jesus' presence by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, taking care of the sick, visiting the prisoner.

But given this opportunity for perpetual adoration, only an hour?