A  Whom should we worship?

❖ Worshipping idols
— God’s commandments were clear. However, the people of Israel made an image of a calf and worshipped it (Exodus 32:4; 1 Kings 12:28).
— After some time, they also worshipped other gods and became like them: capricious, bloodthirsty, immoral...
— They began to treat others unfairly instead of sowing justice. This was a natural consequence of them worshipping unfair gods.

❖ Worshipping the Creator
— Why should we worship God (Deuteronomy 10:17-22; Psalm 146:5-10; Isaiah 61:11)?
— God is just and merciful. He has always cared for His people and for the poor and oppressed especially.

B  How should we worship?

❖ External worship
— Isaiah 1:10-17 harshly condemns the worship in the Temple at that time.
— Why was God rejecting their worship?
— God doesn't accept the external worship of those who don't do justice and don't care about the suffering and oppression of others.
— God is pleased with the sacrifice of acting with justice and mercy (Micah 6:6-7).
— The Pharisees acted like the religious people at Isaiah's time. They believed that their religious practices made them worthy of having a relationship with God, but they were exploiting the poor and ignoring those in need.
— Jesus' toughest sermon against merciless external worship can be found in Matthew 23.
— Jesus wasn't criticizing the external expressions of worship (“These you ought to have done”, v. 23), but unfairly treating the helpless.
— Our acts of worship cannot replace treating others in a fair and merciful way.

❖ A life of worship
— The people couldn't understand why God wasn't listening when they fasted. However, they were seeking their own benefit by oppressing their workers (Isaiah 58:1-5).
— Worshipping God involves caring about others (v. 6), surrendering oneself and enjoying His company (v. 13-14).
— God has promised blessings as a response to true worship: “And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.” (v. 14)