

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Worshiping God in Spirit John 4:20-23

Let me ask you a question? We call this a worship service but are you worshipping? I know that you have sung a few songs of praise, but have you truly worshipped?

I don't know how you might answer this question, and I really don't know how God might answer that question for you, but I certainly hope that God has been pleased with what we have offered to Him this weekend.

Unfortunately, we cannot take this for granted. Let me read for you the words of A.W. Tozer, "I wonder if there was ever a time when true spiritual worship was at a lower ebb. To great sections of the Church the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing called the "program." This word has been borrowed from the stage and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us."

Hopefully, we understand that worship is a tremendously compelling and important subject! In Philippians 3:3, the Apostle Paul lists it as one of the three great distinctives of true belief. True believers; "glory in Christ Jesus, put no confidence in the flesh, and worship by the Spirit of God."

Asking you if you are truly worshipping certainly is a very legitimate question, and to help us in answering this question, we need to go back to the passage that we have been considering over the past several weeks, **John 4:1-26**.

The passage that we began to examine several weeks ago records for us Christ's *interaction* with a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26). Let us for a moment quickly review what we have already covered.

We have examined the *request* that Christ made of this Samaritan woman in John 4:1-9. Let me read these verses for you. **"When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), (3) He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. (4) And He had to pass through Samaria. (5) So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to His son Joseph; (6) and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (7) There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' (8) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. (9) The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"** What was the first area that we examined in Christ's interaction with the Samaritan woman? We examined His request.

What else have we examined? We have examined the *offer* that Christ made to this Samaritan woman in John 4:10-14. Let me read for you **John 4:10-14, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'**

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(11) She said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? (12) You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?’ (13) Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.’” What was the second area we examined in Christ’s interaction with the Samaritan woman? The second area that we examined was His offer.

And finally we have examined Christ’s insight into the Samaritan woman’s encounters with various men (John 4:15-19). Let me read for you **John 4:15-19**, "The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw.’ (16) He said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ (17) The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband;” (18) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.’ (19) The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.’” Obviously, her view of Christ dramatically changed when He shared with her intimate details about her life. This changed view will lead us into the next area of our examination of John 4:1-26.

What is our next area that we will be examining in Christ’s interaction with the Samaritan woman this weekend?

This weekend we will examine the instruction of Christ to the Samaritan woman about worship (John 4:20-26). My hope is that this examination will not only expand our knowledge of worship, but would lead us to experience the joy of it on a personal level. What exactly led up to Christ instructing the Samaritan woman on the topic of worship?

After the Samaritan woman acknowledged Christ as a prophet in **John 4:19**, what did she say? You might think that she would have said, "Sir please give to me the gift of living water so that it might become in me a well of water springing up to eternal life?" This is what you might have expected.

But, there is another issue that she needed to resolve before she could respond in this way. What was that issue? I believe before she could ask Him for a drink of living water she needed to clarify exactly whom this person was who had made this offer to her. Why would I say this?

If she was in fact considering, as a Samaritan woman, the possibility that Christ was "a prophet" it would imply that she was considering the possibility that Christ was in fact "the prophet" promised in **Deuteronomy 18:18**. Why would this be true? The Samaritans did not believe in the possibility of a prophet coming after Moses other than that prophet who was promised.

And who exactly did the Samaritans believe that the promised prophet in **Deuteronomy 18:18** would be? They believed that the promised prophet would be the Messiah. In other words, when she said in **John 4:19**, "**I perceive you to be a prophet,**" we would have to conclude based on the beliefs of the Samaritans that she had begun to entertain the possibility that the man who had disclosed all these very personal things about her life might, maybe, perhaps, could be the Messiah.

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The disclosure of certain personal details about the Samaritan woman's life turned her attention from the gift that Christ was offering to the *identity* of the person offering the gift. I believe this is why after she said, "**I perceive you to be a prophet.**" She does not immediately ask Him for the gift of living water, but rather chooses to introduce a rather difficult theological conflict that had existed for centuries between the Jews and the Samaritans. I believe that the Samaritan woman introduced a long-standing theological *conflict* between the Jews and Samaritans primarily, but not entirely, to gain more personal insight into Jesus (John 4:20). What exactly was the conflict that the Samaritan woman introduced?

Let us go back and read **John 4:19**, but this time we will add **John 4:20**. What do these two verses say? "**The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. (20) Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."** The conflict that the Samaritan woman introduced to Christ focused on the proper place of worship.

Both Jews and Samaritans recognized that God intended them to worship in a certain *place* (Deuteronomy 12:5). Let me read for you Deuteronomy 12:5. "But you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come."

Though the Jews and Samaritans agreed that God intended them to worship in a certain place they disagreed *where* that place should be. The Samaritans believed that the proper place for worship, based on rather circumstantial evidence provided them in the Pentateuch, was Mount Gerizim. The Jews believed that the proper place for worship, based on very specific statements contained in the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, was Jerusalem.

How is Jesus going to respond to this long-standing disagreement now put before Him by the Samaritan woman? Jesus refused to be drawn into the argument between the Samaritans and the Jews about the proper place to worship. Rather than being drawn into the argument between the Samaritans and the Jews, He chose rather to use her statement as an opportunity to communicate certain basic truths. What was the first basic truth that Jesus chose to communicate to this Samaritan woman?

The first basic truth Jesus chose to communicate was the impending *obsolescence* of the temple in Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim as definitive places of worship (John 4:21). Let me read for you **John 4:21**, "**Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.'**" What an interesting statement.

What did He mean by what He said? He begins with the words, "**Woman, believe Me.**" He said this in order to emphasize the startling character of the declaration that He is about to make. And what was that statement? He said, "**an hour is coming when neither in this mountain (Mount Gerizim), nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.**" Jesus was in effect saying that there was little to be gained by a prolonged debate over which place was the proper place for worship since both places would soon be by-passed. When and how would this actually take place? Jesus gives us a clue when he uses the word "hour."

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The word "hour" in John's gospel always points to the hour of Christ's cross or events related to Christ's cross (John 16:32).

For centuries, Samaritans had made their way up Mount Gerizim in order to worship; for it was there they believed that priests were to offer up, on their behalf, sacrifices to God. For centuries, Jews had made their way up to the temple in Jerusalem in order to worship; for it was there they believed that priests were to offer up, on their behalf, sacrifices to God. But, after the death of Christ, all this changed.

Today, Christians through the once for all sacrifice of Christ have been set free from the Old Testament *sacrificial* system and therefore set free from a definitive place of worship (Hebrews 10:8-12).

Does this mean that God does not expect us to assemble ourselves together for worship in a place such as Valley Bible Church? No, this is not what it means. **Hebrews 10:24-25** tells us, "**And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.**" Just because all Christians do not have to go to one and only one specific location for worship, as the Samaritans and the Jews believed, this does not mean that we are not to be gathering at some location such as Valley Bible Church in order to assemble ourselves.

What is the first basic area of truth that Jesus chose to introduce to the Samaritan woman? The first basic truth Jesus chose to communicate was the impending obsolescence of the temple in Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim as definitive places of worship (John 4:21). What is the second basic area of truth that Jesus chose to share?

The second basic area of truth was though Gerizim and Jerusalem would pass away as definitive places of worship they certainly were not on an *equal* plane (John 4:22). Let me read for you **John 4:22, "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews."**

Because the Samaritans only accepted the first five books of the Law, they had a very limited view of God and what He required. This is why Jesus was able to say, "**You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know.**" If the Samaritans knew what the Jews knew, they would not have been worshipping at Mount Gerizim. Why? They would have known the place that God would have wanted them to worship, and they would have known that this was the place that they needed to worship. Why did Jesus say, "**For salvation is from the Jews?**"

Let me ask you a question. If you visited Mount Gerizim in Old Testament times, how brightly would the light of God's word have been shining? It would not have been shining very brightly at all. In fact, it would have been quite dim. Let me ask you another question. How likely would it have been that Jesus, the light of the world, would have made an appearance on Mount Gerizim? He wouldn't have. Why? He wouldn't have because that was not God's plan.

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What was God's plan? God's plan was that the stream of His saving revelation would come through the Jews and temple in Jerusalem, not through the Samaritans and Mount Gerizim.

Let me read for you **Isaiah 2:3**, "And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, And that we may walk in His paths.' For the Law will go forth from Zion, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Let me also read for you **Micah 4:2**, "And many nations will come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths.' For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

What have been the basic areas of truth that Jesus chose to introduce to the Samaritan after she had introduced a very longstanding theological controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans? The first basic truth Jesus chose to communicate was the impending obsolescence of the temple in Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim as definitive places of worship. The second basic area of truth was though Gerizim and Jerusalem would pass away as definitive places of worship they certainly are not presently on an equal plane. What is the third basic area of truth that Jesus chose to introduce to the Samaritan woman?

The third basic area of truth that Jesus chose to introduce was the essential nature of worship (John 4:23-24). Let me read for you **John 4:23-24**, "**But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. (24) God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**"

What does Jesus mean when He says, "**But an hour is coming, and now is.**" In **John 4:21**, Jesus had already spoken of the hour that was coming and, of course, we have identified that coming hour as referring to Christ's death or events related to Christ's death. But, here He tells the Samaritan woman, "**But an hour is coming and now is.**" What does He mean by the phrase, "**and now is?**" I would think that we would have to conclude that since Jesus was addressing the Samaritan woman in the body that He would very shortly sacrifice; His imminent death, or in other words, the "coming hour" was in a sense a present reality, and that is why he said, "**an hour is coming, and now is.**"

After saying this, He then goes on to say, "**But an hour is coming, and now is, when true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth.**" True worshipers are not those that go to a particular worship site, but rather those who worship God in *spirit* and truth.

What does it mean to worship God in spirit? The Greek is quite clear. It does not say "The Spirit" but "in spirit." When Jesus speaks of worshipping in spirit, He is talking about the human spirit. Jesus wants us to know that worship must be *sincere* and not just simply lip service.

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CONCLUSION

Let me go back to the original question that I asked you when we first began this message. Do you believe that you are worshiping God this morning/evening?

To answer this question we must first of all examine our sincerity. We can't simply be going through the motions and giving lip service to God by singing about how wondrous and glorious He is, on the one hand, while we push Him aside by living self centered and self absorbed lives.

Let me read for you **Romans 12:1, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."** What is our spiritual service of worship? Our spiritual service of worship is presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God. When we do this we are worshiping in spirit because our worship is sincere.

Let me again ask you the question that I asked you when we first began this message. Do you believe that you are worshiping this morning/evening? Have you presented your body as a living sacrifice? Are you worshiping in spirit?

Hopefully, your answer is yes. If you are, in fact, worshiping God in this way, what can we expect to experience?

According to **Ephesians 5:19**, we will find ourselves, "**speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.**"

I asked you this morning/evening if you are worshiping. Outward performance may or may not be worship. As Spurgeon said, "God does not regard our voices, he hears our *hearts*, and if our hearts do not sing we have not sung at all."