

Worship in Spirit and in Truth

John 4: 19-24

This is a portion of a very familiar passage of Scripture. I'm sure that most of us have heard the account of the woman at the well many times. She was a woman that was shunned and rejected by those who knew her. She was an outcast of society due to the promiscuous lifestyle that she lived. But her destiny was about to change as she met Jesus who gave her living water that she might never thirst again. Every time I read this passage, I rejoice for the day that Jesus must needs come by my way. I too was thirsty for the water that only Jesus could give.

There is a beautiful lesson regarding salvation in the text, but we can also learn much about worship. Jesus taught the Samaritan woman much concerning worship as He talked with her by the well. Jesus spoke of two different and very distinct types of worship. I want to preach on the thought: [Worship in Spirit and in Truth](#). Let's consider the two types of worship Jesus spoke of.

I. Religious Worship – This is a type of worship that was very prevalent in Jesus' day and it remains prevalent in our day as well. Much of the worship in our day falls under this category. Let's look at what it consists of. It is:

A. Worship that is Earnest (20) – [Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.](#) The Samaritan woman revealed that their fathers had worshipped upon a particular mountain. They had been very sincere in their worship. They had been faithful to worship God in a particular place. She seemed to have a sense of pride in the fact that generations of Samaritans had been faithful unto worshipping God.

- We live in a day that many are earnest in their worship. They are faithful to worship and are deeply committed to that worship. There are a lot of people who are sincere in their worship. They clearly possess a form of religion that they take great pride in. It is a very important part of their lives.

- Sadly, hell will be filled with sincerely religious people, those who were earnest in their religion and all of its traditions. Religious worship cannot save. You could attend a religious service every day you live and still die lost in sin.

B. Worship that is Established (20) – She was not involved in some new age movement. She was influenced and involved by worship that had been established for generations. She was worshipping the same way that her fathers had for generations. There was no doubt in her

mind that she was right in her approach to worship. The Samaritans had an established form of religion, one that she had embraced and held to.

- We continue to see that in our day as well. There is a lot of established religion around the world. There are those who are worshipping the same way that their fathers have for thousands of years. They hold firmly to the same traditions and rituals that their worship has always demanded. They have not deviated from it in the least.
- Could I say that just because a form of religion has been established and has endured for hundreds or thousands of years does not make it right in the eyes of God. Men can be sincere in their worship and yet be sincerely wrong. Just because generations have embraced a form of religion does not guarantee that it is approved of God.
- There is much, even in Baptist churches, that is held to because of tradition rather than a biblical basis. Often these traditions are harder to move away from than fundamental doctrine. Folks are often unwilling to change in their worship simply because that is the way they have always done it. What if it has been done wrong for years? We must not become slaves to tradition and man-made rituals or formalities. Our worship should be dictated of God.

C. Worship that is Empty (22a) – **Ye worship ye know not what.** Jesus revealed that all she possessed was an empty form of vain religion. She was faithful to go through the motions and attend a religious service, but she had no idea why she did those things. She worshipped simply because of tradition. It was of no benefit to her spiritually.

- I see a lot of that in our day, empty religion. There are a lot of religious people who are faithful to a form of worship, but there is no help for their souls. They attend service after service and leave as empty as they came. Worship to them is an exercise rather than an experience.
- I don't know about you, but I want to experience worship. I am not interested in just going through the motions. I want to know that I have been in the presence of God. I want to find nourishment and help for my soul. Genuine worship unto the true and living God is the only worship that can supply that. If your worship is empty, it isn't the Lord's fault.

I. Religious Worship

II. Righteous Worship – After Jesus spoke of religious worship, He then turned His attention to genuine worship, righteous worship. This is the type of worship that we need to engage in. Let's look at its elements.

A. The Place of Worship (20-21) – **Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.** The Samaritan woman was focused on the mountain as the only place of worship. She believed that if she did not worship there, then she couldn't worship. Jesus revealed that there was coming a time when men would neither worship in that mountain or in Jerusalem. He was eluding to the cross and the sacrifice that would be made for the sins of mankind.

- As Jesus died upon the cross, the veil of separation was rent in twain. Men no longer have to go to the temple in order to seek the presence of the Lord and worship Him. Our worship is not defined by a particular place, but rather the condition of the heart. It is good to worship at the house of God, but this is not the only place we can worship!

B. The Person of Worship (21) – **Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.** She had spoken much of the mountain, her fathers, the differences in Jews and Samaritans, and even worship, but she had not mentioned the object of her worship. Jesus wanted her to realize that her perception of worship was a distorted one. All of the things she placed emphasis on were actually her idols. These were not the things that deserved her worship. Worship is reserved for God and Him alone.

- I know that seems ridiculous, but it still happens today. If I were to ask among our church whom it is we worship, I know that the answer would be overwhelmingly that we worship Jesus. But, do we really worship Him? Is Jesus the object of our worship services? Have we come today to honor and worship Him as the Lord and Savior of our lives?

- I know that many are worshipping today, but are they worshipping the One they ought to worship? Men often worship traditions, buildings, programs, and even people rather than the Lord. Jesus is why we are here!

C. The Principle of Worship (22) – **Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.** Here Jesus revealed a sad truth to this woman. She didn't even know what it was that she worshipped. The only reason that she had religion was because of her fathers and their traditions. She thought she was worshipping God, but there can be no real worship apart from salvation.

- Jesus was born a virgin of the lineage of David. He was a Jew and salvation would come to all through the Jews. He was simply saying to her that one must know Him if they are to worship.

- There is a lot that is labeled worship in our day, but much of it really isn't genuine worship. The principle that Jesus spoke of has not changed; it never has and it never will. If we are not born again, we cannot worship God. You may come and sit on a pew in a Baptist church all your life, but if you are not saved then you cannot worship the Lord. There must be a personal relationship with Jesus if we are to worship Him.

- That is why I believe that a lot of folks never achieve worship. They can't. They have never been saved. Just being a church member and attending a worship service does not make you right with God and able to worship Him.

D. The Provision of Worship (23a) – But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:

This was very early in Jesus' ministry and He was already looking to the cross. He was looking forward to the time when He would give Himself as a sacrifice for man's sin. That is why He came to this earth.

- For thousands of years priests had offered sacrifices for sin, but they could never fully atone. Jesus had come to fulfill the law and bring salvation to humanity. He would rid the veil of separation; through His blood the saved have access to the throne of God.
- We have the privilege to worship today because of the provision that Jesus made for us. He is the only way to God. All who were ever saved have come by and through the blood. The OT saints were saved by His blood; they looked forward to Calvary. We are saved by His blood, looking back to Calvary. Had Jesus not died for our sin, we would still be dead in that sin. I can worship because I belong to Him.

E. The Presence of Worship (23-24) – But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Here Jesus further confirms that worship is not reserved to a particular place; it is not achieved through rituals, formalities, or genealogies. Those who worship the Lord must worship in spirit and in truth. We must worship the Lord with a pure spirit, a heart that is right toward Him.

- We must worship Him in truth, believing the gospel message and embracing the cross. We must see ourselves as worthless and undone without Him. Worship can't be achieved without the proper presence.
- Many in our day never realize this fundamental truth. They live their lives as they please, never dealing with sin. They go throughout each week and never give any thought to the Lord. There is resentment and discord with others. Their hearts are not right with God and yet they come to the house of God and expect to worship just because they are here.
- This will never happen. If we are to worship, we too must worship in spirit and in truth. Our hearts must be right with God. Worship is not based on the outward actions; it is achieved through an inward devotion to the Lord.

F. The Passion of Worship (23b) – for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. Isn't that a blessing and a challenge to our hearts? God seeks those who will worship Him. Jesus desired this Samaritan woman to worship and He desires that we worship also. The Lord is seeking those right now who will worship Him.

- Consider all that the Lord has done for each of us. What could we possibly offer Him in return? There is no way that we could work out or earn our salvation, but we can return our praise and worship to the Lord who saved us. We can live holy lives so that we are able to worship when we gather in His house. I stand amazed that the Lord desires anything from me, but I want to be in a position to give Him what He desires!

This has been a challenge concerning our worship. We need to be reminded of the dangers of religious worship. We need to learn to achieve and offer righteous worship. How is it with you today? Is all well with your soul? Can you worship the Lord in spirit and in truth? Do you know Him as your personal Savior? If not you can. Why not come before Him today?