

Thursday Group Studies
The Fatherhood of God
Study 4
November 9th 2017

Worshipping the Father

Worship and the modern culture of spirituality

To worship is part of our DNA as human beings. It is not something extra called spirituality that we add to a secular humanity by doing ‘spiritual things on spiritual occasions or in spiritual places’. Human beings are always in the process of worship. Honouring, valuing, giving worth to and serving are always with us in every decision and activity. So we must avoid the division between the spiritual and secular so often held by Christians. Down that path we find all kinds of false notions about God, the creation and what it means to be human beings. Some feel that because they haven’t got certain skills or haven’t broken into a certain system of worship that they are second rate citizens in Father’s family. Others may think that because they are not on the mission field, what they are about is somehow outside the pale with God and the ‘elite worshippers’. What they are doing or have done is not spiritual enough. Their jobs are seen as a hindrance to their worship. We will only love our job when we find ourselves loved and set free into it for the glory of the Father. Otherwise we will begin to look to our leisure activities to fill us. In other words the things we have been speaking about, Listening to the Father and Walking with the Father get relegated to certain people or special days with very little appreciation as to how it all connects the rest of the time. So we become like ‘divided’ people. We think we have a God side and a normal side. Then we have bursts of activity when we try and apply the God side to the work side, convinced by ‘how-to’ books that such activity is do-able, particularly if you follow the ten steps etc. But worship is not about ‘how-to’ discipleship but rather enjoying the Sonship we share in Jesus. C S Lewis made the point,

As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling.

When worship degenerates into following steps of discipleship, our attention will be fixed upon the process not the Father and ultimately upon ourselves. However, when we follow our Lord, the great worship leader (Hebrews 8:2), then worship is a dynamic Father-son issue. His delight in the Father was not generated by certain abilities to do certain ‘religious’ activities. As his great parable showed, it is based upon a heart that has been received into Father’s family, not one that has ‘always served’ with a spirit of entitlement. In Jesus we see the true human perfectly at home with the Father, not counting steps of discipleship or assiduously trying to work into the centre of God’s will.

Worship then has always been the human response to the prodigal Father

The first couple became spirited people when God breathed his Spirit into them. Every part of being alive and vital resulted from God’s breath, Father’s spirit. *The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the*

breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7, see too Psalm 105:27-30). We must not spiritualise this event. They became truly human when they were spirited. Not that they then ‘had a spirit’ but they were spirited. Their humanity reflected the Animator, the life and glory of God. He didn’t simply blow them up like one would blow air into a balloon. All the mystery of the riches of life that had been hidden in God the Father, Son and Spirit now began to explode across the face of the earth in the presence of two human beings.

We note that their spiritedness, their rich humanity was not self-contained. It was not as if in breathing into them God deposited a little bit of himself in a lump of dirt so that from then on they ‘had’ God. To be and remain spirited they needed that open flowing child-Father connection that God’s breath had created for them and in them. To separate them-selves from God was to separate them-selves from the One who made them spirited. They had no spirituality in themselves. There was no other source of spirituality out there in nature or any part of the creation. The modern notion of spirituality, as a free floating thing to be plugged into whenever we choose, is entirely alien to God’s revelation.

So God made these things clear to Israel continually. *Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you will serve your enemies whom the Lord will send among you* (Deuteronomy 28:47, 48). But the true Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, brought the final, full revelation of truly spirited humanity.

Jesus, the truly Spirited Son

Jesus of Nazareth received the Spirit without measure from the Father who gives without measure (John 3:34). In other words Jesus lived in the constant knowledge and flow of the ‘joy and gladness of the abundance of all things.’ This is precisely why he could minister to the woman of Samaria. Not only did he discern the cause of her dispirited existence but he knew how to breathe into her the spiritedness he had. Her worship had been a confused search in immorality not the abundance of the Father. Added to this her religion had complicated her hearts dryness. Jesus made it clear that the essence of worship is our relationship with the Father, not seeking fullness in men and not going through rituals at certain sites. *Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father* (John 4:21). The Samaritan woman would never find the Father in her idol-worship. She was destined to come to isolated well sites in the heat of the day forever.

Jesus was with her as a truly spirited man who knew the truth about worship. The Father was seeking her, in him, to know the same (John 4:23). Jesus had already made it clear to another dry human being (Nicodemus), that the flesh cannot create a spirited human being. Only being re-spirited by the Spirit of the Father is that possible (John 3:6).

The woman obviously became a truly spirited woman. She was freed from the ‘men’ issue and became an instant enjoyer of the abundance of the Father. How do we know that? She felt able to live in the presence of those who knew her sins and were sinners with her without the alienating, de-spiriting fear of her past (John 4:29). But how did that come about in her exchange with Jesus? For those wanting an obvious ten point plan, sorry! It seemed to happen when Jesus revealed to her that he was the Messiah that she looked for to clarify spirited and true worship of the Father (John 4:25). Her hour to experience true spirited worship of the Father arrived in the presence of the Messiah. As the light dawned she realized who Jesus was. But

simultaneously with that revelation came the flooding reality that she was with the Father's Messiah and not being condemned, so she could be with Messiah's Father and not be condemned. This was her hour to, '*Serve the Lord her God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.*' This was the truth that set her free. This was the truth the seeking Father was communicating. This was the way He breathed into her and she became a spirited woman.

But behind this liberation lay the deeper mystery of Jesus and the Father. This release for the woman could only happen if the Messiah was one day going to become all she was and would be and bear the present unrelenting curse of that away. There was no magic happening here, no psychological sleight of hand: This was a prefiguring of the 'Hour of Calvary' that would deliver true spirited worship back to a desiccated and arid humanity.

Are we spirited people or de-spirited people? Not, are we high spirited and always up, but are our actions towards others directed by the life and the freedom the Spirit gives?