

The Messiah Revealed **John 4:16-26**

Our sermon text will be John 4, verses 16 to 26. We'll pray before we have that reading. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we do ask now that you would bless your word to us, that we would be given ears that hear, eyes that see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

John chapter 4, we'll read from verse 1 through to verse 26 to get the whole story in its context again, but tonight we're looking at verses 16 to 26.

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came 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 said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' ¹¹ The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?' ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.' ¹³ Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' ¹⁵ The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.'

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' ¹⁷ The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.' ¹⁹ The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.' ²¹ Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' ²⁵ The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.' ²⁶ Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'"
Amen. So far God's word.

All of humanity has a problem, not just the woman at the well, not just the people whom we might consider to be open, public sinners. All of humanity has a problem. All of humanity is living in a state of spiritual death, a state of spiritual blindness. We've been separated from God. We've been separated. What by? We've been separated from God by the very fact that we are sinners, the offspring of sinners. God is holy, God is good. One thing that we can't really conceive of, being sinners, is the absolute purity and holiness of God—His utter perfection.

You know, it's impossible to sort of get there with words to describe the superlative glories of God. All preachers fail when it comes time to try and describe to you the praises and the glories of the living God, who created all of this creation that we know. He's great, glorious, infinite, eternal, all-powerful, almighty. He's good.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 4, is: "What is God?" The answer is: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." That's good. It's good. Everything said there is true. We can know so many true things about God. When I say that God is separate, holy, good, I'm not saying that He can't be known. I'm saying that we can't know Him in His fullness.

It's very hard to know any person in their fullness, even our husbands or our wives. It's very hard to know them in their fullness, to know every thought that's in their mind, every intention that's in their heart. That's why even husbands and wives, the happiest of couples, can have bad days. You can have a fight, you can have an argument, you can have a misunderstanding. You do one thing, it's interpreted in a different way completely to the way that you intended it to be interpreted. And there's trouble, there's friction.

Even the closest possible human relationship, the oneness of marriage, when it comes to just another finite person, you don't know them to their very depths. Even though you may know many true things about that person, you don't know that person to their utter depths. You know what they let you know. And in love, in a good marriage, you try to be honest, and you try to let your beloved know you as well as you can possibly be known. But even so, it comes to the point where your beloved realizes they don't know everything about you. You actually surprise them. They actually surprise you.

When we talk about God, we're talking about someone whom we will never, ever know in all of His fullness. The things that we know are true. God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and this is true. You know what you know about God because God lets you know, and He's no liar. He speaks the truth. His word is truth. His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the way, the truth, and the life.

His Holy Spirit, Scripture tells us, knows the very deep things of God, and His Holy Spirit speaks to us: one, by the Spirit-breathed word of God; and two, from the Spirit-breathed word of God through the Holy Spirit, who Himself indwells all believers, uniting us into one church. And I don't mean this one local congregation, I mean the church universal, the church of all true believers, united by the indwelling power of God's own Holy Spirit.

So though we can't know all there is to know of God, and though we will never know all there is to know of God, we can know truth about God, we can know true things about God, we can know true things from God. By the way, that's one of the reasons that eternity's never going to be boring—being saved, coming into that life we're given in the new heavens and the new earth—my friends, we will never cease learning about God, His goodness, His glory, His power, His love. We will never cease learning about God, and we will love Him more as every day passes. Why? For He is infinite and eternal, and in this thing that we call salvation, we've been brought into fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What a blessing!

Jesus tells us in our text today that it's actually impossible to worship God whom you do not know. Verse 22 of John chapter 4: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." You worship what you do not know. It's actually not true worship. People speak these days as though everyone was searching for God. Well, I'm telling you now, Scripture tells me that no one is searching for God. Everyone might be searching for a god, everyone in the world might be searching for something, for something that they can build their lives upon. Everyone in the world might be searching for something that they can say suits them. But man, woman, any person in and of their abilities, is not searching for the true and living God. "For no one seeks after God, no, not one," as the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 3. "No one seeks after God, no, not one."

But you say, But hang on. I meet people, and people will come to a church, or people will start talking to Christians, and people will start asking questions. My friend, if they're truly seeking for God, our passage tells us why they're seeking for God. Why are they seeking for God? "The Father is seeking such people to worship him." The Father is seeking them. If God is seeking for you, you will start to seek for God. If God is speaking to you, you will start to speak to God. If God is giving life to you, you will start to live before God. Those who are seeking are those who are sought, and that's why we seek.

People seek all kinds of things to worship, but only those who are being sought by God seek after God. It's not hard to get somebody to say they believe in a fluffy, far-off, distant god—the loving old grandfather who would never, ever say that there's anything wrong with you, who would never ever judge sin. It's not hard to get someone to say they believe in some kind of life force that started things off.

No, it's not hard to get people to say they believe in those things. But try and talk to someone about the living God who has revealed Himself in Scripture, try to talk to someone about this beautiful, holy, righteous, Creator-God, who's involved in our lives day by day, who's grieved by our sins, who hates the sin of humanity, who will not accept human works, will not allow a person to redeem themselves.

If anyone's going to be saved, they're going to be saved by God according to His will. He will save whom He wills to save, by the means by which He has appointed their salvation. In other words, God and God alone saves through the completed works of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, by the power of His Holy Spirit. Try and get someone to tell you they believe in that God, and watch the excuses, and watch the human reasoning start to come out. "Oh, oh, no, no, no, no. No. No. God is forgiving, always forgiving. He understands."

Well, once again, you see the way it works. You take some truth, you mix it with some lie. God is loving. God loves. Scripture tells us that God loved the world. First John tells us that God is love. It's true, but, apart from the fullness of the revelation of God, apart from the fullness of God's character, it's only just enough truth to be a lie.

It's a little bit like the words that the woman answered when she said to Jesus, "I have no husband." It was true—just true enough, just true enough to be recognized by truth. But what about the baggage train of history that's behind what she said? What did Jesus say to her? "You are right in saying you have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one that you now have is not your husband." You see, she spoke just a little bit of truth, but she used that little bit of truth in order to try and conceal the depth of the truth.

The way false god worshipers use their little bit of truth is they use the little bit of truth that they might know about the true God to conceal the truth, or the depth, or the breadth of the revelation of the character of God. And so they say, God is loving. God is love, and God is loving.

Now we know God is love and that God is loving, don't we? But we also know that God in His perfection, as the creator of the universe, God in His holiness, God in His righteousness, that God cannot stand sin. We know that just to say God is love and love alone, and try to push off everything else that God tells us about Himself, is actually to believe a lie.

And they'll say, But God is forgiving. Now we know that God is forgiving. All a person must do is come to God, believing that He is, repenting of their sins, begging forgiveness, and God will forgive. But if you want God to forgive, you've actually got to be repentant, and you've actually got to be faithful, and you've actually got to acknowledge God for who He is.

You know, when you're begging God for forgiveness, you're begging for forgiveness from the one who can destroy you for your sins. You're begging for forgiveness from the one against whom you have sinned, and the one who, as God, has every right—not just the right, He actually, according to His nature, has the compulsion, He has the necessity, to judge sin.

God doesn't just judge sin because He thinks it's a good idea. God judges sin because He is God and He is truly good, and to be truly good means that He must judge evil. He could not be a good God if He did not judge evil. He would be a wicked god, if he did not judge evil, and call evil "evil." He doesn't do it just because He thinks it's a good idea. He does it because it is His nature to do it. Everybody in all of existence, and God Himself—God Himself—every person is a person according to their nature, and God is God according to His own nature as God.

There's one thing God can't do, and that's stop being God. There's one thing God can't do, and that's betray His own divinity, His own Godness, His own goodness, His own holiness. God is God in all that He does.

I'll read something to us from the London Baptist Confession of 1689, chapter 2, paragraph 1. Please just hear this:

“The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose Essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, Almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.”

There’s a lot there in that to think about, isn’t there? For our little human minds, there’s a lot of thought and study gone into producing that paragraph, isn’t there? When it says God is “a most pure spirit,” they’re not really talking about pure, in terms of having something like water that is 99% pure, or 99.9% pure, you know, and you’re talking about relative purity. God is “a most pure spirit.” What they’re saying is, God is God and only God, and God is God and only God—purely, holy, completely, utterly, totally God. And He can’t be what He is not, for He is God. Full stop. God must be God.

And so the gospel that we preach, the gospel that we believe, the gospel that we find in Scripture, is the gospel that reveals to us how God can be all of these things, all at once. He is good, He is longsuffering, He does forgive iniquity, He is merciful, most loving, and He is just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin and who will be no means clear the guilty.

To our human mind, those things cannot be reconciled. To our human mind, those things are irreconcilable. To our human mind, those things can’t come together. How could a person, myself, yourself—how could a person be both most loving, longsuffering, gracious and merciful, and at the same time, be just and terrible in judgment, hating all sins and who will be no means clear the guilty?

We’re people, aren’t we? A person cannot be those things in purity. A person cannot be those things in truth. A human person cannot be those things, but God can. And not only God can, but God is, and God has been, and God has indeed demonstrated these things to us. These things actually have been reconciled.

What does reconciliation look like? What does this reconciliation of all of these attributes of God look like? It looks like the cross, doesn’t it. It looks like the cross upon which our Lord Jesus Christ died. It looks like a dying Saviour, shedding His blood for sins that He did not commit. And there, the righteous wrath, the vengeful judgment of God, the anger and hatred towards sin that God feels found its full expression, the Father pouring out the fury of His judgment against sin upon the Lord Jesus Christ—revealing the righteous wrath of God.

And Christ, pure, sinless, as sinless as God Himself, pure, holy, without stain, bearing that burden, bearing that burden. Why? For Christ Himself was the expression, the bearer, the embodiment of the love of God. He was the embodiment of the love of God.

Not only at the cross do we see the righteous judgment of God on full display, we see the almighty, all-powerful, saving love of God on full display. For Christ, being the sinless one, God the eternal Son of God, could not be defeated by death. Though He died, death could not hold Him down. Death could only kill Him because He surrendered His life to it, to pay the price of those sins, to pay them off in full, to pay them off in completion. Why? Because God loves His church. God loves His elect.

So the love of God is on display, and Christ did not remain dead. He couldn't. Scripture tells us that He was raised by the Spirit. According to the will of the Father. He was raised. Why was He raised? Why was it right that the Father could call Him back from death, when death is the penalty of sin? Because He was pure and innocent and holy. He was guilty of no sin.

And so the Father could call His Son back from death, He could call the Lord Jesus back from death without breaking His holy, immutable law. That was the problem. Sin brings death. That was the word to Adam and Eve, "In the day that you eat of it, you will surely die. In the day that you sin, you will die." "The wages of sin are death." The Lord Jesus Christ, being guilty of no sin, but having been the sin-bearer, the Lord Jesus Christ, being perfectly innocent, the Father was able to raise Him from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit—what?—without breaking His own immutable law, without denying His own perfect nature.

And so that reconciliation, that revelation of all the facets, the attributes of our God, you'll see it nowhere more clearly than in the properly understood death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Calvary. You need knowledge. You need to know God to worship God, and you can't get that knowledge from anywhere but God. You can't know anything of God, other than what God tells you. The blindness of sin darkens our eyes and darkens our understanding.

But you get to know God when God makes Himself known. And our passage tonight ends in revelation—a revelation. "²⁶ Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'" You see, the woman at the well, she now knew something. Jesus said, "You're a Samaritan, you worship a god you do not know." In other words, He's saying, "Your worship is not legitimate."

But now He has spoken to her. Now He has revealed Himself to her. "I who speak to you and he," and you see, she can become a worshiper in spirit and in truth—not just a worshiper going through the motions, not just a religious pretender, not just a religious formalist, or whatever she may have been in her Samaritan life, but a true worshiper, in spirit, a true worshiper according to truth. She now has true knowledge of God.

Let's get to our text. Remember where we were left last week. Jesus had asked this woman for a drink, and she was somewhat stunned that Jesus—obviously to her, He was a Jew—asked for a drink, and she knew the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, but He was prepared to share a drink with her from her vessel, something that no Jew would ever have done.

Now Jesus is speaking to her of spiritual things, and remember, she's answering with physical things. Jesus says to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." Spiritual talk, talk about things that a person cannot know unless they're revealed to them from God.

“¹¹ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?’” “You’re talking about water, there’s a well here, the well is deep—sixty, seventy, maybe a hundred feet deep—you need a bucket, you need a rope. How are you going to get living water without a bucket and without a rope?” He’s talking spiritual; she’s talking physical.

Verse 13: “Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” Spiritual food, spiritual water, spiritual drink.

“¹⁵ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.’” Once again, she’s talking physical. “I have to come here to draw water.” I think she might have actually known that Jesus was speaking of spiritual things. I think she knew that Jesus was speaking of more than just water, but I think she was trying to hold back and stay on safe ground. And that’s where we were at last week: “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

Verse 16: “Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’” That’s a sudden change of subject, isn’t it. Sudden change of subject. You see, Jesus knew something. Of course He knew something. He’s God the Son of God, living as a man upon this earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Why did He change the subject? Because He wanted to get to her heart. He wanted to get into the depths. He wanted to get to the truth.

“¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ ¹⁷ The woman answered him, ‘I have no husband.’” I have no husband. As I’ve already said, just enough truth to hide the rest of the truth. It’s just true enough. It’s just true enough not to be called a lie. “I have no husband.”

“Jesus said to her,”—now here we have it, by the way, here we have it, here’s the spirit of the heart—“Jesus said to her, ‘You are right in saying, “I have no husband”; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.’” What you have said is true. All the façade is taken away. The front is gone. The self-defenses that a person builds into their life, stripped. Here she is, open-hearted before Him, all the pain of that life.

When I think about this woman—and Lesa and I were talking about this—when I think about this woman, I think she was both a victim and a player. She was a victim of circumstance. Men had the power to divorce in that society. She could be kicked out at a moment’s notice.

But she was also a player. “One man gets rid of me, I can get another one. One man gets rid of me, I know how to get another.” And the man she’s now with is not even her husband—no pretense of any kind of legal or covenant relationship. She’s both a victim and player, and the words of our Lord Jesus have torn her heart open.

Think of the defenses that she's thrown up. Jesus speaks of the living water; she says you need a bucket. Jesus speaks of water that becomes a spring that wells up within you, and you never thirst again; and she says, "I'd like not to have to carry water every day." Jesus says, "Call your husband"; she says, "I don't have a husband." You see, they're all defenses—one, by one, by one—every one of those answers was defensive. And now, as I've said, it's all open before her.

Here is what she says: ¹⁹ "The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.'" She's now realized something, hasn't she? She's not in the presence of any ordinary man. Remember the question she asked and, as I said last week, that question was set in the negative. It was something along the lines of, "You're not greater than our father Jacob, are you?" Or, "We know that you're not greater than our father Jacob, are you?" Set in the negative.

And now what does she say of Jesus? "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet." Jacob was a prophet. Suddenly she's realized she's not dealing with any average Jew. She's in the presence of God. And what does she know? That God knows her, and God knows every detail. God knows all about her. There are no secrets for her. There are no defenses. She's in the presence of the Holy One. And what does she know? She knows that she's not a holy one, and what's more, she knows that the Holy One knows that she's not a holy one. She's got nothing.

Verse 19: "The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.'" Now, I can tell you that many people wonder how to interpret that line. Is she trying, once again, to throw up a defense and deflect the conversation? I think she might actually be asking a true question. I think this woman, who's life has now been torn open before her, is actually asking a true question. I think she might be saying, "Okay. Okay, you've got me. You're right. I'm a player. You're right, the man I live with is not my husband. But you Jews say that we Samaritans don't even worship the true God. What's the good of it to me that you, a prophet, have come to me to tell me my sins—you've come to me to tell me sins?"

Notice later on when she returns back into the town—jump forward to verse 39 of chapter 4—when the woman goes into the town, testifying that she has met the Messiah, notice that she says, "He told me all that I ever did." He told me all that I ever did. He knew—knew me to the core, knew everything about me.

I think that what she's trying to say to Jesus is, "I've got nowhere to go. All right, you're a Jewish prophet. All right, you've come here, Mr. Jewish prophet, and you've ripped my heart open, as it is. And you've shown me that you and God, that you know what I'm like, you know the truth about me, you know that I'm unclean. What can I do about it? I'm a Samaritan. What can I do about it? Even if I grant to you, Mr. Jewish prophet, that you're telling me the truth and that true worship is in Jerusalem, what can I do about it? It's not as though I can go up to Jerusalem to the temple, start making sacrifices and repent. I'm an unclean woman of Samaria."

I think that's what she's saying. I don't think she's actually trying to deflect the conversation. I think that she's trying to communicate to Jesus what she sees as being her lost estate, her lost state of mind. She has no hope. She has absolutely no hope. Yet, "You're right, I'm a player. And what can I do about it? What can I do about it?"

“²¹ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.’” You see what He said to her? “You’re a Samaritan. It doesn’t matter. You’re a Samaritan. It doesn’t matter. You don’t have to get into the ‘in’ club in Jerusalem to be saved. You don’t have to go up the mountain to be saved.”

You see what He’s saying to her? “Woman, put your faith in me. Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”

Verse 22: “You worship what you do not know.” So He’s confirming the state that she has said that she is in. “I’m from Samaria, and according to you Jews, I’m not a true worshiper.” And Jesus said to her, “You worship what you do not know.” And then He speaks truly as a Jew. “We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

Notice, that was said fairly carefully too. Jesus nowhere there says that a Jew is saved simply by the fact that he’s a Jew. Salvation is from the Jews, for, as the Apostle Paul tells us, they have the covenants, the circumcision, and the Scripture. A Jew is saved through faith—they’re not saved through their religion, they’re saved through a true and living faith. And so He confirms what she has said about herself. It’s true—salvation is from the Jews.

Verse 23: “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” You see what He’s saying to her, what He’s saying to her as He calls this woman to repentance and faith and life? He’s saying to her, “If you are a true worshiper, if you are one who truly loves God, you will be saved. You will be saved. You don’t have to be a Jew, you don’t have to go to the temple, you don’t have to go into the sacrificial system. You don’t have to renounce Samaria.”

Mind you, we know that a true convert renounces all of the things that were in the past. What I mean as I say that is that she’s not going to be saved by some particular work. She’s not going to be saved by doing some particular thing. “If you worship the Father in spirit and truth, you will be saved.” Why? “For the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.” For the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. Where did the Father find a worshiper? Think of this. Who has the Father found who is a worshiper?

You know, there’s a delusion in the Christian world today, and that is the idea that there’s such a thing as a likely convert—a good person, a good person who doesn’t have to change much, all they have to do is say they believe in Jesus, and they’ll be on the road, they’ll be in the way. That’s a delusion. That’s not true. I know that they are people in the world who, in terms of their relationship to other people, we could say they’re good blokes, good women. They’re good people. They’re nice people. They’re good to work with, they’re good to be friends with. It’s nice to visit their house. They’re good to have a dinner with, have a meal with. They are, in every worldly sense, in every sense of humanity, they are good people. But that doesn’t mean they’re a likely convert.

We need to understand something. The people that we think are the furthest away are just as likely to be converts, just as likely to be those who worship in spirit and truth, whom the Father is seeking out, whom the Father is seeking and calling. Anyone—the single mother with four

different kids by four different men—she could be one that the Father is seeking. Anyone. The drug addict, the drug user, even the dealer could be one whom the Father is seeking. The swearing, rolling crazy drunk could be one whom the Father is seeking. We might work with them, we might live with them, we might be related to them. They're all around us.

The only thing that makes a person a likely convert is that the Father is seeking such people to worship Him, people who will worship in spirit and in truth; people whom He is going to save from their sins. "The Son of man did not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners." He came to call sinners. There's hope for anyone. There's hope for me. There's hope for anyone in this world.

We need to blow up, or destroy, or burn, or get rid of that idea of the likely convert, the good potential church member. No one's a good potential church member. You want to ask the people who were around when I first became a church member. I don't blame them. I'm not trying to be sort of nasty or judgmental here, but I'm telling you that they were not very impressed with the potential that they saw in me. Let's just say, in their eyes, I didn't make a very good potential church member. I understand why. Much of it was my fault. I'm not trying to be bitter about it.

But there's no such thing as a good potential church member. There are those whom the Father is seeking, those whom the Father is calling, those who will worship in spirit and in truth. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth." Before there was anything, before there was any *thing*, what was there? God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What were they in that state? God is Spirit—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons whom we know as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were Spirit.

What's the difference between the Father and the Son? The difference is the Father is Father and the Son is the Son. In every way, the Father is fully, truly, totally, completely God, and so is the Son. The Son is fully, truly, totally, and completely God. What's the difference between the Spirit, the Son, and the Father? The Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, the Spirit is the Spirit—the three are one. In every way, the Spirit is fully, truly, totally, and completely God. Before God created any thing, God was. Outside of time, in which we exist, God *is*. When time has finished, if God closes down all of creation, God will be. And He will always be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is Spirit.

A change occurred only, only, in that the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate, that He took upon Himself flesh, that He added humanity to divinity. How did Jesus become less than God? Well, in His divine nature, He never became less than God. If God is God, God cannot change. If Jesus is divine, his divine nature cannot change. God is God. But in the incarnation, He added humanity to divinity, and thereby underwent humiliation.

The theologians call Jesus' incarnation the state of humiliation. Why? Was it because He was being humiliated day by day, and people were calling Him names? Well, no, that's not actually what they mean. The God of all the universe, in the person of the Son, became a baby—who needed nappy changes. And He wasn't born spouting Scripture, He was born a baby, crying as a baby does, crying for milk.

He underwent the humiliation of humanity, even though He is divine, truly God. In His divine nature, always God, truly God, unchanging God, never to be anyone but God. And yet He combined with true divinity, true humanity. And that's what they call His incarnation, the state of humiliation. But now, He's what? He's in the state of glorification, still truly human, still truly divine, reigning on high at the right hand of the Father.

My friends, our God is the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our God has identified with us as a man, as a person. This God who is Spirit has now through Christ taken upon Himself flesh, and what does that mean? It means He's bound Himself to His creation for all of eternity. He's bound Himself to His people for all of eternity, even through the Lord Jesus Christ.

That might just be the most powerful testimony to the love of God towards all of humanity. I guess that's almost equal to what happened on the cross—that God the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, pure Spirit before He took upon Himself flesh, that God the Son of God is now, for all of eternity, the God-man—truly human, truly divine; that God through Christ and in Christ can have a beautiful, eternal, righteous, holy, loving relationship with people like you and me, worms that we are, dust that we are. Think of it. For all of eternity God the Son took upon Himself flesh, and now, as I've said, He's the glorified King of creation.

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John chapter 4, verse 24. “Worship him in spirit and truth.” In spirit—willingly, with all the heart, nothing held back, true devotion. Worshiping in spirit—not going through the motions, not just going through religious routine, turning up, doing what you're told to do, and then going home. “That's enough for me. I've done my bit. It was Sunday, I turned up on Sunday, I did what God required. Aren't I good.” No, worshiping in spirit, with a heart given over to love for God—loving God willingly.

“And truth.” Truth. According to the truth, according to true knowledge of God. A person who does not truly know and have knowledge of God, a person who has no true understanding of God, cannot possibly worship in spirit and in truth. It's just not possible. How could you worship God who is unknown to you? And yet, to a sinner, God is unknown, unless God is making Himself known. Though God testifies through all of creation—the heavens declaring the glory of God, the sky above proclaiming His handiwork—the sinner can close that out, can't they? Darken their eyes, block up their ears, harden their hearts, refuse to hear. And they end up in that downward spiral that we read of in Romans chapter 1, where they exchange the worship of the living God for idols, and in exchanging the worship of the living God for idols, they're given over to their sinful and lustful desires.

Those who worship God must worship in spirit and in truth. You must know God. You must have true knowledge. You see, it's impossible—you know, people these days, “I'm a spiritual person. I'm a spiritual person. I believe in God, but not like the Bible. I believe in God, but not like the church. I believe in God, but not like you.” They don't know Him. If they deny the revelation that God has given us in Scripture, how do they know Him in order to worship Him? How do they truly know Him?

And what's happening, if that person is acknowledging God as Creator and yet refusing to know Him in truth, they're in no better condition. They're actually in a worse condition. The person who says, "I know there's a God, but I'm not much interested," is actually in a worse condition than the person who proclaims himself to be an atheist. They're actually sinning against the light, sinning against the knowledge. That's the problem with the testimony of creation, the preaching of all creation. All it is, is enough to condemn anybody. It's enough to condemn.

If in my non-Christian life I had somehow managed to go through that whole non-Christian life without ever having heard the gospel or met a Christian—and don't worry, I did meet Christians, and people did try to teach me stuff in Scripture lessons, I just didn't want to hear it—but if I had managed somehow to go through that whole life and got through to the end of my life in some nation which is not like Australia, where the gospel is not preached, where there aren't churches, and I come before God, and He says, "Why did you not worship me," and I try to say, "Because you didn't reveal yourself to me," He'll say, "Didn't you live in the world that I made? Didn't you breathe the air I created? Didn't you live under the sunlight that I gave you? Didn't you eat the food that I created?" I would be silent if that were me at that time.

All of humanity is without excuse. No excuse, absolutely none. The testimony of creation says, "Made by God. Look at me. God made me. And you should be a worshiper of the living God. Seek Him out." That's what creation says to every human being on this planet, and the fact that so many choose to ignore that testimony is more than enough, more than enough that they will be condemned for their willing ignorance and hatred of God.

Those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. They must worship according to the revelation of God that we have from Scripture. I'm willing to admit that as a Christian, I'm painted into a corner. I can't know God unless God makes Himself known. God has made Himself known in Scripture. How do I know that God has made Himself known in Scripture? Because God says He has made Himself known in Scripture.

Now I understand. Someone who wants to get into the strict rules of logic will say, "Clements, that's circular reasoning. You have assumed the end result. You've assumed what you wanted to assume, and then you've worked out a way to circle back around to it and get the result you want." Here's the thing. If God is God, revelation always ends up back at God. It can't be any other way. If God is God, there can't be any greater truth than the truth that God chooses to reveal. And so it always ends up back at God.

A true believer worships God because God is God, and you can't find an external proof that is willing to submit to our mere humanity in order to prove the existence of God, in order to prove that this word is the revelation of God. If God is God, if mankind is made in God's image, mankind is made to communicate. God communicates. How does God communicate? We say God communicates through Scripture. What does Scripture say? Scripture says that this word is the word of God, that God is communicating to you from Scripture. Submit to this word, worship the living God according to the revelation of this word, and you will be in an eternal relationship with that God.

But here's the thing. Everyone's painted into a corner in the end. Everyone works on some kind of presupposition. The only way you can reason through to the idea that you think there is no God is to start with the idea that there is no God. The only way you can say that creation wasn't created by a Creator is to say that there is no Creator, therefore, there is no creation. And they end up circling back to where *they* want to be—in nothingness, random stupidity, foolishness and ignorance, darkness. That's where they want to be, because that's where they imagine they're safe in their sins, and so they find a way to reason themselves back around to it.

Everybody works on presuppositions. But God is seeking those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. I just want to look very quickly at verse 24: "Those who worship him *must* worship in spirit and truth." *Must* worship in spirit and truth.

From John chapter 3 through to now, there's been three *musts*. John chapter 3, verse 7, Jesus said, "You *must* be born again." You must be born again. John chapter 3, verse 14, Jesus said, "The Son of man *must* be lifted up," speaking of the cross. And now, John chapter 4, verse 24, Jesus says, "God is spirit, and those who worship him *must* worship in spirit and truth."

Put the musts together and what do you get, in terms of a worshiper? One who is born again, who has come to God through Christ lifted up, or crucified, and being born again. Through Christ lifted up or crucified, that person is a worshiper of God in spirit and truth. The way to God is through Christ and His cross. And you must, you *must* be born again, and you *must* be a worshiper in spirit and truth.

Let's get back to our lady. Verse 25: "The woman said to him." Now she's reaching. You see what's happened now? Heart's being burst open, sin is being revealed, Christ has revealed truth to her—"The Father is seeking those who worship in spirit and truth." And so now we get her reaching out.

You see, the Samaritans did believe in the Messiah, the Coming One, the coming Saviour. I think there's a flame of hope in her heart as she makes her statement. "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.'"²⁶ Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'" I who speak to you am He.

You see where she is? She was brought to the state of mind where she knew herself, her own state, her own state of heart. Her state of being was opened up before her very eyes. And then when she knew herself, Jesus led her on to know God. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. And remember, He's already told her, "Don't worry about Samaria. Don't worry about Jerusalem. You can be a worshiper in spirit and in truth."

And she says, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." She was waiting for a Saviour. She was waiting for a Saviour, bouncing from man to man, and hoping for something better—hoping for something better. Hoping for salvation. And the Lord Jesus Christ says to her, "I who speak to you am he." I who speak to you am He. She's there. She's there. Salvation.

Salvation comes to a defeated, almost destroyed woman, a lost soul, one who searched for something that she would never find upon this earth, that she would never find in empty Samaritan religion, or, for that matter, formal Jewish religion. She's found the Saviour. She's found the one who was promised. She's found the answer. She's found the way, she's found the truth, she's been given the life. She's been called into worship, the most unlikely convert—defiled, broken, beaten down.

As I said to you last week, I really think she knew how to talk the talk—the conversation, the brush offs, the almost flirtatious way she spoke to Jesus. And now, she's come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has revealed herself to her so clearly, so clearly—more clearly than He spoke to the Jews, more clearly than He spoke to the priests, more clearly than He spoke to the Pharisees, more clearly than He spoke in Jerusalem. He's literally said it to her in plain, clear words. She said, "I know that Messiah is coming." He said, "I who speak to you am he." I who speak to you am He—the graciousness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, spoken so clearly to one so stained by the world, and so stained by sin. "I who speak to you am he."

He speaks to us. Our God is a God who speaks. He speaks from Scripture. I hope and pray and trust that He speaks from His word. I hope and pray and trust that He speaks even through someone like me. I hope and pray and trust that you hear His voice. I hope and pray and trust that you understand His compassion, His love, His willingness to receive a sinner. "I who speak to you am he." What do you need? You need a Saviour. What do you need? You need the Saviour that the Samaritan woman needed. You need the same Saviour. You might not have committed the same sins. It doesn't matter. It makes no difference. You need a Saviour.

And the one who speaks to you from Scripture is the Lord Jesus Christ, and I'm telling you, it is He who saves. It is He who draws you into fellowship with the Father. It is He, who by His completed works upon the cross can make you a worshiper in spirit and truth, one who is truly acceptable to the Father, one who can live and dwell in fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for eternity! And the one who speaks to you is He.

O, I hope He's speaking now, because it's certainly not me. You don't need a revelation of me, you need a revelation of *He*. You need a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the Saviour, the only Saviour, the only way to God the Father, the only way to eternal life, the only answer for our sins—the Lord Jesus Christ, King of all creation, the one who took upon Himself flesh, the one who lived a perfect, pleasing life in the sight of God, bore the price of our sins upon the cross. He's the only hope for all of humanity, just as He was the only hope for a woman of Samaria who has had five husbands, and the one that she's with is not her husband now—He's the only hope for you and for me and for any other person on the face of this earth. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do indeed thank you for the things that you show us from your word. We do indeed thank you that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the earth to save sinners. And we confess that we are sinners, and that we would not be saved apart from the works of God. We thank you and we praise you, for you alone are God, and you indeed, through Christ, are our salvation. We say these things in Jesus' name. Amen.