

**WHO ARE WE: WORSHIP**  
**(SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2012)**

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**Scripture Reading:** 10 Words; John 4:21-26

**Introduction**

We continue in the series started three weeks ago – Who Are We and What Should That Mean?

**Who are we (3)?**

We believe in the gospel message as the sovereign and gracious means God uses to save rebellious and miserable sinners.

**What should this look like?**

Our belief should be demonstrated by openly identifying Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, a desire to share the truth of the gospel with others, and a clear willingness to stand for God's truth even though it means suffering.

**Who are we (4)?**

We believe in importance of corporate worship.

**What should this look like?**

Our belief should be demonstrated by joyful and reverent worship according to the power of the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ. We worship because God deserves to be worshiped. We also worship because we need what God alone can provide for us.

It has been a few years since I last preached directly on the subject of worship. Each Sunday that we gather for worship should testify to what we believe and should be a demonstration of our belief. I want to emphasize today the reason why we worship and why it is such an awesome activity to be gathered together as a local church to praise our Triune God.

Worship I would define is the intersection or union of two great truths.

We worship because God deserves the best that we can offer to Him. He deserves the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

We worship because of our great need. We need the mercy and grace that only God can provide for us. We come into God's presence to bless and to seek His blessing.

Worship is the beautiful joining of God's infinite being and worth and His salvation and goodness given to His people. We worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and only through the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit could we ever offer up anything to God that would be acceptable to Him.

**Keep in mind God's infinite worth and your incredible need.**

I would like us to consider two passages that address the subject of worship – John 4:23-24 and Psalm 100. I will conclude with further application before we celebrate together the Lord's Supper.

**1. JOHN 4:23-24 – WE MUST WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH**

**John 4:23** But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. **24** God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The word worship, used to translate various Hebrew and Greek words, comes into English from the Old English word “weorthscipe” which relates to the worthiness of the person or thing that is being revered. The Greek word often translated as worship means literally to bow down. The 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment reflects this same idea as it prohibits both the making of carved images or idols and bowing down to them as well as serving them.

A single definition for worship can be somewhat difficult. In one sense all of life is to be an act of worship. Scripture also encourages private times of worship and family worship. Much of the OT deals specifically with the worship of the tabernacle and temple. Some Christians think of worship as the part of a service that involves singing.

We cannot deal with all these issues, but by worship I refer to our entire gathering which begins at approximately 11 a.m. and ends sometime later. Our entire gathering or service is part of our corporate worship.

The word service is also an interesting word. Our word service comes from a similar sounding Latin word *servitium*. The word service seems to emphasize what we do for God. And that is certainly part of the meaning, but remember that God also blesses us. He has chosen to love and bless us. He provides for our needs. We when we celebrate the Lord's Supper in a special way we are confronted with what God has given to us in His Son. He has given to us salvation through Jesus Christ. He forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. In this sense it is proper to speak of God serving us. So our

worship service should reflect our rightful service to God and our thankfulness that He graciously serves us.<sup>1</sup>

The entire story given in John 4 of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is certainly worth our attention. Our focus will be on verses 23 and 24.

**First**, in verses 23-24, Jesus speaks concerning the essence of true worship. Jesus again speaks of a coming change, in fact one that had already started to take place. **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.**

The hour was still coming in that Christ's work had not been completed. But with the ministry of Christ, the hour at least in principle had already come. In the incarnation and ministry of Jesus, the most significant change in the worship of God's people already was being changed. His ministry even to this Samaritan woman was an indication that this most radical change would include not just the Jews but the despised Samaritans also.

Jesus declares that true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. This statement is so significant that it is repeated in verse 24. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him **must** worship in spirit and truth.

When Jesus speaks of the God being Spirit, Jesus is not simply speaking of the "nature" of God but rather the way in which God reveals Himself and is present to His people. In 1 John 1:5 we read that **God is light** and in 1 John 4:8 that **God is love**. Again these are statements not just of God's nature but especially of how God relates to His people. Here in this context, Jesus' statement, God is Spirit, means that wherever the Spirit is present that is the place where God can be known and properly worshipped.<sup>2</sup> Now since every true believer in Christ has been given the Holy Spirit, we are able to worship and be in fellowship with God. This is true wherever we are and all times. But here, Jesus is especially addressing the corporate gathering and worship of God's people which is made possible not because we are gathered in a special building but **rather because we have been made the place where God's presence is known.**

Therefore when Jesus states that our worship must also be in spirit and truth, He is not referring to our own spirit. Jesus is not saying that true worship is simply an internal or spiritual action. True worship is not just a feeling or emotion that we have in our hearts. True worship is not the result of a beautiful place or caused by stirring music. Rather Jesus is declaring that true worship takes place through the working of the Holy Spirit and according to the truth of Christ. Spirit and truth are not two separate things. Paul in Philippians 3:3 wrote, "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit,

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Meyers, *The Lord's Service*, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Meyers, *The Lord's Service*, 311.

rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Jesus also in John 14:17 declared, “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; **but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**”

Here Jesus demonstrates that our true worship is only possible because God first gives to us. He gives us the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus Christ we have true access into the very presence of God through His shed blood.

Our worship is always a response to God’s calling and His first giving to us. This is one reason why we begin our worship with a formal **Call to Worship**.

I would encourage you that as you prepare for worship you would consider how much God has given to us individually and corporately. And as we humbly gather, He continues to bless and give to us.

Second, going back to verse 23, Jesus says, **for the Father is seeking such to worship Him**. This is the only time in the NT that we find such an expression. The Father is seeking those who worship in spirit and truth. True worship is not just important for God’s people, but even more for the Father. This is what He desires, seeks, and will find. Even in times of great darkness for the visible church, the Father always will seek and find those who worship Him in the proper way.

It is worth noting that the great passages in the OT that speak of the gospel going to all the nations often refer to the nations coming in the true worship of God.

**Psalm 22:27-29** All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. **28** For the kingdom is the LORD’S, And He rules over the nations. **29** All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive.

Indeed the ministry of Jesus to this Samaritan woman, one who was not of Israel, but of the nations, was a testimony of the Father’s desire being fulfilled. We read towards the end of this story in John 4:

**John 4:39** And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of His own word.

The second passage I would briefly have us consider is Psalm 100.

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

**Psa. 100:1** Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

- 2 Serve the LORD with gladness;  
Come before His presence with singing.
- 3 Know that the LORD, He *is* God;  
*It is* He *who* has made us, and not we ourselves;  
*We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture.
- 4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,  
*And* into His courts with praise.  
Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.
- 5 For the LORD *is* good;  
His mercy *is* everlasting,  
And His truth *endures* to all generations.

From this passage I would encourage you to see that it brings together our service to God and His great blessings to us.

The Psalm opens with three commands to worship. These three commands are followed by three reasons for worship – who God is and what He has done and continues to do for us. Then there are three more commands to worship and give thanks which are again followed by three reasons for so doing.

Again, worship is the union of God's greatness and our great need, the union of our service to God and His blessing to us.

And what should our worship of God in Spirit and truth look like according to this Psalm?

First, joyful singing and gladness.

The opening command is that we raise a joyful shout to the LORD. This shout is the joy of a people in the presence of their king.

I think back a few years when I attended a few basketball games at the old Chicago stadium when Michael Jordan was still playing. When he first appeared or after a particularly spectacular shot or play, the crowd roared to levels almost dangerous for human hearing.

How much greater should be our joy in the presence of our God! Not that we express this in the same way as a raucous crowd at a sporting event, but shame on us if our worship is weak and lifeless. No, God deserves and commands a joyful shout.

Verse 2 speaks also of joy or gladness and joyful singing.

Without gladness can there be true worship? Oh, that God might give us greater gladness in our worship.

Verse 3 gives three reasons why we are to praise God and also they call us to consider His blessing to us.

God has chosen a people who are rarely the majority. I recently noted some statistics of the world's population.

There are over 7 billion people in the world as of a July 2012 estimate.

Of that population 33.3% are identified as 'Christians' – 17% Roman Catholics, 6% Protestant, 4% Orthodox and another 1.25% Anglican.<sup>3</sup> God only knows from this percentage how many are true believers. Still over 2/3 of the world's population worships idols and false gods. Some see this as a challenge to the true faith. Why can't we all just get along and look for common ideas.

No, we are to consider gratefully that God has opened our eyes. There is only one true God – Yahweh is His name. There is only way to God, through Jesus Christ.

## **2. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves (or we are His).**

The doctrine of creation is one of the best ways of motivating worship. Think often on the fact that God has created you and that He sustains you. Give attention to His power displayed in all that He has made.

## **3. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.**

The Psalm opens with a command that all the earth worship God. Here the Psalm recognizes that not all the earth has been given the privilege of being called the people of God. There is no place for pride in this statement. We declare it not because we are special or wise in ourselves. Sheep don't choose their shepherd; their Shepherd is the one who chooses them.

Those who believe in the doctrines of grace, in God's Sovereignty, should be the most humble of people, if we truly believe what we profess.

## **4. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise.**

The Psalm continues the idea of God's people coming for worship at the tabernacle or temple. Just as every Sunday should be a day for celebrating Christ's resurrection, every Sunday should also be a Thanksgiving Day. It is good and proper to have a special day for this, but we recognize that God is deserving of constant thanksgiving and praise.

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics taken from the *CIA World Factbook*.

In the OT, the words thanksgiving and praise are closely related. And it is interesting how thanksgiving in the OT can take the form of an actual sacrifice or of the form of a prayer of thanksgiving. God desires that you think on who He is and what He has done. He wants you to express your thanksgiving in both word and action.

#### **5. and 6. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.**

These two commands are at heart of all true worship which is a response to the Lord in who He is and what He has done.

Just as we often have to tell our children to be thankful, so God gives us this important and needed instruction. Be thankful to God.

**Col. 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be **thankful**.

#### **3 Final Reasons for Worship:**

The Psalm ends with three simple but most powerful proclamations of who God is. These three things do not surprise us; we have seen them and even declared them hundreds and even thousands of times. And as God gives us life and breath we will continue to declare these blessed attributes of God.

#### **4. For the LORD *is* good;**

**Lam. 3:25** The LORD *is* good to those who wait for Him, To the soul *who* seeks Him.

Knowledge of the Lord's goodness is given as a special comfort to those who face adversity. You are not to determine that the Lord is good simply based on your own experience; rather you are to interpret your experiences knowing that the LORD is good.

#### **5. His mercy *is* everlasting,**

The mercy of God is His **covenant-love** for us. This particular expression I think is one of the most repeated phrases in the OT. This number is greatly assisted by Psalm 136 where each of the 26 verses ends with this great declaration.

God's people were to know and be assured of a number of very important things. The never-ending mercy of God is one of the most important things that we constantly keep in mind.

#### **6. And His truth *endures* to all generations.**

I think especially because of where we find ourselves as a nation, this is a comforting promise.

Spurgeon declared, “As our fathers found Him faithful, so will our sons and their seed forever.”

After we are long dead, buried, and even forgotten, it is good to know that God will continue to have a people who will acknowledge His faithfulness.

Worship because God deserves the best that you can offer to Him – joyful praise and thanksgiving. Worship because of your great need. You need the mercy and grace that only God can provide. Come to serve and worship and to receive God’s gracious service.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Before our celebration of the Lord’s Supper, I would like to make one main application that is relevant to our study – preparation.

J. I. Packer in his excellent book on the Puritans discusses the Puritan’s view of Sunday. We don’t have time to share all the insights he made, but his first point he stresses under practical principles is that of preparation.

Everything you do that is of importance involves preparation. The same must be true of our service to God in worship. Preparation is essential.

Packer writes:

The battle for our Sundays is usually won or lost on the foregoing Saturday night, when time should be set aside for self-examination, confession, and prayer for the coming day. Richard Baxter’s young people’s fellowship used to spend three hours each Saturday evening preparing together for the Sabbath in this way... The last rule for preparation comes from the supremely practical mind of Richard Baxter: ‘Go seasonably to bed, that you may not be sleepy on the Lord’s Day.’”<sup>4</sup>

Part of preparation also involves making sure that you arrive for service not just on time but early if possible and that also if possible you take care of any needs you have so that you don’t have to leave the sanctuary during our time of worship.

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Lord’s Supper is a beautiful picture again of our duty in worship and what God so graciously gives to us.

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<sup>4</sup> J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 241.

**Prayer**

**Hymn: 365**

### **Benediction – Hebrews 12:1-3**

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.