

Discovering the Missing Jewel

Thirsty Anyone – Part II

John 4:1-42

Introduction

May I ask you a question? Have you ever worshiped God? Are you worshiping Him now? For many people, who claim to know Jesus Christ, worship is inactive, rather than interactive; it is passive, rather than passionate.

Worship has become, what A. W. Tozer has called, “the missing jewel of the evangelical church”.

Part of our problem is the development of several myths over generations of time.

Myths Concerning Worship

Let me give you several myths concerning worship.

Myth #1

1. Myth number one is that worship is passive observation, not active participation.

The problem in our church today is that we are so different. The Old Testament system of worship involved personal participation – standing in line with the animal sacrifice, responding verbally to priestly declarations, chanting. In the early church there were probably testimonies, public praying by many, partaking of communion. It was highly interactive. Today, worship tends to take place by actors on a stage, with the audience doing the critique.

One theologian, from the past generation, wrote, *People have the idea that the preacher is an actor on a stage, and the audience are the*

critics . . . what they don't know is that they are the actors on the stage; he (the preacher) is merely the prompter standing in the wings, reminding them of their lost lines. And God is the audience.

You might hear, “That was tremendous worship today.”

“Why?”

“Because I liked the solo . . . Because the sermon was short . . . Because I got a blessing.”

We have been conditioned to think that corporate worship is entertainment, and, if the show is good, then we have worshiped.

The truth is, we come to church today to worship, which is the Anglo Saxon word “worth-ship,” that is, we come to testify to the worth of God, His word, the saints. We come to praise all that is God's, to put our praise and petition in song, to hear from Him through His Word, to corporately encourage, challenge, learn, and confess all that we are to Him!

Myth #2

2. Myth number two is that corporate worship is an isolated event, independent of the previous week.

The truth is, corporate worship is the combined overflow of personal worship.

John MacArthur writes,

Worship is not energized by artificial methods. If you feel you must have

formalized ritual, or a certain kind of mood music to worship, what you do isn't worship. Music and liturgy can assist or express a worshiping heart, but they cannot make a non-worshiping heart into a worshiping one. The danger is that they can give a non-worshiping heart the sense of having worshiped. So the crucial factor in worship in the church is not the form of worship, but the state of the hearts of the saints. If our corporate worship isn't the expression of our individual worshiping lives, it is unacceptable. If you think you can live any way you want and then go to church on Sunday morning and turn on worship with the saints, you're wrong.

Worship on Sunday is an overflow of worship throughout the week. The reason some of you, in church, feel nothing, think nothing, and sense nothing, is because all week you have ignored the Lord. And you are wondering, now that you are in church, why you cannot seem to worship the Lord or sense anything from Him but a cold shoulder.

Imagine a husband who has grumbled all week at his wife – complained about the food, “Too many vegetables.”

I made supper, this past Friday night – Hamburger Helper. The directions were on the back with pictures, “This is a pot.” I skimmed off all the peas!

Now imagine a husband who has made a sarcastic remark about her hair and asked her why the house seemed dirtier than usual. Then, on Saturday night, he decides to take his wife out for dinner. He gets into the car and, after honking a few times, she finally comes out and gets in. Now this man would really be dense to think that, just because it is Saturday night and they are on a date, she is going to be anything other than an living, moving, iceberg. In that car, there is a hurricane from the north that is about to sweep through and leave nothing standing or alive, “Brrrrr.”

I have personally never had that experience!

So, you come to church. You have your Sunday clothes on, you have slid into that seat, and you are thinking, “Okay, Lord, it's Sunday, let's worship! Give me a sense of your presence.”

Not a chance! Ladies and gentlemen, your worship on Sunday is directly affected by your

worship Monday through Saturday. Worship is a way of life.

Myth #3

3. Myth number three is that worship is something that takes place only on Sunday, and only in church.

In John, chapter 4, we have discovered a woman who has a terribly empty life; and yet, she has tried in vain to find something lasting, something meaningful. She has been divorced five times and is currently living with man number six. She is drinking from an empty cup, as the prophet spoke, from broken pitchers that cannot hold water.

And, as soon as Jesus began to challenge her heart, she brought up the age old debate, “Should we worship on Mt. Gerezim or in Jerusalem?”

She had identified worship with a place!

Yet, you can hear her lament as she, I believe, sincerely says, “When the Messiah comes He will clear it all up for us, and teach us how to worship; He will give people like me meaning in life.”

Every human being has a built in spiritual longing for communion with God. Every human being has a thirst for God. The trouble is, the world is trying to satisfy that thirst with a pursuit of other things, and even with religious things. As one author wrote,

Much of the religious activity of today is nothing more than a cheap anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life.

The pain in people, who, perhaps like you, are tired of rat race religion!

It is no coincidence that it would be in a conversation that Jesus had with a thirsty woman that we would discover the plan of God for true worship. His commentary on worship, found in John's gospel, chapter 4, will help you and I get out of the rat race, called religion, and experience the refreshment of true worship.

Let us pick it up with John, chapter 4, verses 13 through 23a.

Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; 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.”

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw.”

He said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband’;

for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.”

The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.

You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

The Messiah is coming from among the Jewish race and the worship of Yahweh is God’s prescribed system of worship. Continue to verse 23a.

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth . . .

Notice that, “But an hour is coming and now is . . .”

What does that mean?

Jesus is saying, in effect, “I’m standing in the transition and, in one hand, I have the Old Covenant and, in the other hand, I have the New Covenant. The hour is coming, and it is already here, because I am here, when the current system of law and sacrifice and ritual will be gone and the New Covenant of grace will come.”

God dramatized it in an incredible visual message – it occurred when Jesus died on the cross. Suddenly, without any visible hands, the veil that separated the holy of holies and the holy place was ripped apart. Only the high priest, once a year, could enter that sacred place, where the glory of God’s presence was manifest. Now, with the sound of that curtain ripping in two, the message was, “Anyone can come into the presence of God and worship.”

Turn to Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 19 through 20 and verse 22.

Since, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh . . . let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

There is no need for priests anymore! There is no need for ritual and sacrifice; no need of fear; no need of one representative going into God’s presence . . . now! Jesus Christ is the mediator and His blood paves the path for us to commune with the Father.

“This is new,” Jesus said, “and I’m here to introduce an entirely new way to worship God.”

By the way, this verse also gives us terrific insight on how to prepare for worship.

Prepare For Worship

Let us go back to verse 22, in Hebrews, chapter 10, and uncover, what one author called, three checkpoints to test our readiness to worship.

Checkpoint #1

1. Checkpoint number one is, “let us draw near with a sincere heart . . .”.

We come with a transparent heart – in other words, hypocrisy and worship never occur simultaneously. We are open books before God, so the question that precedes worship is, “What is the condition of our heart?”

Checkpoint #2

2. Checkpoint number two is, “. . . in full assurance of faith . . .”.

We come with a confident heart – we are worshiping not because of our goodness, but because of our faith in Christ’s perfection. Our assurance is Christ.

Checkpoint #3

3. Checkpoint number three is, “. . . having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

We come with a grateful heart – Jesus Christ allows us to worship because everything about us has been cleansed. In the eyes of the Father, we are seated with Christ in the heavenly place.

Now, He is not saying that you must literally take a bath before you worship, any more than you can literally have your heart organ sprinkled clean. A Saturday night bath is a good idea however, and it will certainly aid the worship of those around you! We come, grateful that our sins, though as scarlet, have been washed as white as snow.

Now go back to verse 23.

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.

Did you notice – who does the Father seek? Pastors? Missionaries? Rich Christians who can contribute large amounts to the church? The talented? The bright? The influential?

No! That is who we would seek. But God the Father seeks transparent, confident, grateful worshipers!

Imagine, God longing for fellowship with you! But how selfish we are! We often go to church to see what is in it for us. We read the Bible so we will receive a blessing. We pray so that God will fulfill our wishes. Think about it, everything, from our church, our devotions, and our service, is judged by how it profits us! The question of worship is not, “Did I get?” but, “Did I give?”

One author wrote,

In today's world we have shifted away from finding God toward finding ourselves. Fondness for ourselves has become the highest virtue, and self-hatred the greatest sin. It all began innocently enough; the church had to face the uncomfortable fact that the followers of Christ were often miserable. As never before, the church is aware that its people are in pain. But this welcome sensitivity has backfired. Rather than drawing us closer to God and freeing us to care more deeply about others, the spotlight has fallen on us as abused, wounded, needy people and God has been cast as the great Higher Power, waiting in the wings for His cue to come heal our hurts and restore us to responsible living. We are

learning not to worship God in self-denial and costly service, but to embrace our inner child, heal our memories, overcome addictions, lift our depressions, improve our self-images, and replace shame with an affirming acceptance of who we are. Although the Gospel does bless us with a new identity that was meant to be enjoyed, it calls us to higher values than self-acceptance – like esteeming others as greater than ourselves, enduring rejection and persecution, living not for the pleasures of this life, but for those of the next one, and clinging to the promises of God when we don't feel His goodness . . .

Now you would think that a theologian or a church historian wrote these cryptic words. No, a well known Christian psychologist and counselor, Larry Crabb, wrote that. And he continued on to write,

Today, feeling better has become more important than finding God.

Do you want to find God? Will you answer His seeking heart? Will you worship God? Then Christ tells you how to do it! Look at verse 24.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.

Two Key Phrases On Worship

There are two key phrases, in that verse, on worship. We must worship the Father in spirit and we must worship Him in truth.

Worship in spirit

1. The first key phrase is to, “worship . . . in spirit”.

Now, what does it mean to worship in the spirit? First, notice that the “s” on the word “spirit” is lower case. That is because, in the Greek text, the predicate lacks the definite article which would have caused us to translate it, “The Spirit,” which is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

This is a reference to the human spirit – that immortal, invisible part of you, and I, that was brought to life when we trusted Jesus Christ (as Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 5, tells us).

Worship then, is that communion, that connection between our spirit and God's Spirit. Worship is to flow from the inside out.

It is not a matter of being in the right place, at the right time, with the right music, wearing the right clothes, with the right formalities, in the right mood, with the right prayer, and with the right preaching. All of those things may aid in promoting worship, but they cannot produce worship!

David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 103, verse 1,

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name.

The Psalm ends, in verse 22, with the words,

Bless the Lord, all you works of His, in all places of His dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul!

Worship is created in your spirit, which like dry wood, is sparked into flame by the fire of communion with the Holy Spirit.

By the way, this lets us know that communion and worship can take place in the heart of a believer anywhere, anytime.

A. W. Tozer wrote,

I want to deliberately encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and that imitation of the world, which marks us all, testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all. He waits to be wanted . . . too bad that, with many of us, He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

The source of most of the problems we have in our Christian lives relates to two things: either we are not personally worshiping six days a week with our spirit, or we are not corporately worshiping one day a week with the saints. We must have both.

Worship in truth

2. The second key phrase on worship, in verse 24, is to, “worship . . . in truth”.

What does it mean to worship God in truth? Let me suggest a couple of things.

- Worship “in truth” is initiated by truthful people.

What I mean by that is that we must come honestly and open-heartedly.

Jesus lambasted the people of his day when he said, in Matthew, chapter 15, verses 8 and 9,

This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me . . . in vain do they worship Me . . .

God does not want “lip service” on Sunday and secret service throughout the week.

There is the old epigram which says, “Too many Christians worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.”

Pretenders never worship.

- Worship “in truth” is based on the foundation of Scripture.

I made an interesting discovery – the word “orthodox,” which relates to doctrine, is actually derived from two words: “ortho” meaning “correct,” and “doxa” meaning “praise”. The word “orthodox” literally means, “correct praise or worship”.

When correct doctrine is correctly taught, the result is not a headache, the result is praise!

David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 29, verse 2b, in the King James Version,

. . . worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

An attribute of God was the theme of David’s worship. Perhaps our worship is so hampered and hindered today because we know so little about the God we are trying to worship.

Part of our problem is that we go to the Bible looking for a “quick fix”. We are more interested in speed than depth. For David, the study of God’s holiness produced worship!

David also wrote, in Psalm, chapter 111, verses 2 through 3a,

Great are the works of the Lord; they are studied by all who delight in them. Splendid and majestic is His work . . .

I arrived home from the office recently and both of my boys were standing in the driveway holding hammers. I broke out in a sweat and began to look around to see what they had “fixed”.

I noticed a boulder – one of several in our side yard that are decorative. One of them had really been worked over.

I got out of the truck and they were so excited and ran over to me. They said, “Daddy, we’ve discovered what God made rocks out of.”

I said, “What?”

They said, “Dust.”

Well, at least they did not discover anything about the driveway or the side of the house!

It is interesting that, from these two verses in Psalms, we discover that God wants worshipers who will discover:

- His character, and
- His creation!

Now the primary source of truth to propel our worship is the written Word. John, chapter 17, verse 17b, declares,

. . . Thy word is truth.

So if our worship is correct, it will be in accord with the principles and admonitions of the Word of God.

Some time ago, a man came to me after a morning service. He and his family had visited for the first time, after having been in a liberal setting for years. His question broke my heart. He asked, “Do you do that every Sunday?”

I said, “What do you mean?”

He said, “You know, you got up there and opened your Bible and then, explained what it meant. Does that happen every Sunday, or was this an exception?”

Ladies and gentlemen, when we explore the Word, we will experience worship. But, if the Word is ignored, worship is impossible.

Now, turn to Colossians, chapter 3, verse 16. This verse ties spirit and truth together into one beautiful phrase.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, . . .

(truth)

. . . with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts . . .

(spirit)

. . . to God.

That is the perfect blend – emotion, regulated by understanding; enthusiasm, directed by the Word of God.

Results of worship in spirit and in truth

What are the results of worship in spirit and in truth?

- God will be revered – our priority is offering Him our sacrifice of praise.
- Our perspective will be re-focused.
- Our sin will be rebuked – we talk about the church being edified – edification has nothing to do with feeling better, it has everything to do with living better!
- Our spirit will be refreshed.
- Our work will be re-vitalized.

There is one more:

- Worship reaches the world.

Go back to John, chapter 4.

The Samaritan woman was taught how to worship in spirit; the disciples are about to be taught how to worship through serving. So, it is no surprise that this chapter includes not only the most well known treatise on worship, but also a well known discussion on ministry.

Look at John, chapter 4, verses 31 through 33.

In the meanwhile the disciples were requesting Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” But He said to them, “I have food to eat that your do not know about.” The disciples therefore were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?”

Imagine their frustration! “Okay, who left Him some lunch without telling us?!”

Then, in verse 34,

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

In other words, there is something nourishing and satisfying about serving God.

Continue to verses 35 and 36.

Do you not say, “There are yet four months and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.

Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

Now, harvest fields are not necessarily white. What did Jesus mean?

I think Morton's suggestion is the most probable. He himself was sitting at this very spot where Jacob's well is. As He sat, He saw some Samaritan men come out from the village and start to climb the hill toward the well. They came in little groups and they were all wearing the customary robes with their white turbans wrapped about their heads. As He sat there and watched, He could see their white heads bobbing along as they approached the well. It may well be that, just at this moment, the people started to flock out to Jesus in response to the woman's story. As they streamed out in their white turbans, came across the field, and started up the hill, perhaps, at that moment, Jesus said, "Look at the fields! See them now! They are white to the harvest."

In a treacherous area where boats frequently capsized on the rocks in bad weather, a harbor town was known for its faithful rescue team. Whenever the bell sounded, a group of men rowed quickly to the scene of the disaster, risking their lives to remove sailors from sinking vessels or to pluck them from heaving waves. After a few years, the town collected money to build a rescue station near the shore to store all of their equipment, thus making their rescue work easier. Also, special training was offered to others who wanted to become rescuers. The operation became efficient, saving hundreds of lives from the raging waters.

But, as time went by, comforts and conveniences were added to the building – cupboards full of food, a dining room, a lounge with stuffed chairs and recliners, and also sleeping quarters. The lovely building became a club where townspeople loved to eat, meet, play games, and socialize. The bell still sounded when a wreck occurred, but only a handful of people responded. Later, no one even bothered to answer the rescue call, for they did not wish to leave the comfortable club.

Could that be the parable of the church?! How easy it is to forget that worship leads to work; adoration of God initiates action for God.

William Barclay wrote, "Christianity is built on the twin pillars of discovery and communication."

We first discover Christ; we then share our discovery with others.

And so they came. John records in verse 40,

So when the Samaritans came to Him, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days.

For the moment, the town of Sychar was the field where Jesus and the disciples reaped a full harvest.

Where is your field? It is an office, a factory, a place of business, a school, a hospital, a classroom. And in that field, two things can occur – they are the same two things discovered in John, chapter 4 – worship and service.

I found it interesting that, in John, chapter 4, there are two "waitings" going on:

- The Father is waiting to be worshiped.
- The harvest is waiting to be reaped.

So we, who believe, worship, and that worship propels our work that we, for God's glory, may reap a harvest. May we be a part of a rescue station, not a club! May our thirst for God increase, until Jesus comes or calls us home.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/2/1994 by Stephen Davey.

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