

Here I Am To Worship
Crossroads October 14, 2007
 John 4:20-26

Have you ever driven down a street and suddenly seen something you have never noticed before? Strange how that happens. Just this morning we each came down stairs Sierra, our dog, was so happy to see us. How wonderful I thought – she has four new friends every morning! Thursday morning Jack was sharing an experience common among cruisers. Evidently it is not uncommon to lose track of what day of the week it is, the date, and sometimes the month. They call it cruise-heimers. At least they have an excuse. Just tell them, “hey, it’s their birthday”.

How many times have you read a passage in the Bible that you have read before and noticed something new. Strange how that happens. In our Bible reading this morning we are going to approach some familiar ground. We have spent a fair amount of time in John 4. It’s the story of Jesus meeting the woman at the well and verses 13-14 are where our mission statement was poured out for us. As we pass over this ground again, I trust we’ll be surprised – see something for the first time. In fact let’s ask God for that very thing...

...Let’s pray...

This morning we are going to focus on worship. God’s own words to us this morning are found in verses 20-26 of John 4. Jesus was on his way back to Galilee and had to go through Samaria. He was tired when he came to Jacob’s well and sat down. And that’s when the Samaritan woman came to draw water and after some conversation she says:

John 4:20 “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” **21** Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” **25** The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” **26** Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.” (NIV)

What did Jesus mean; “You Samaritans worship what you do not know...a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.”

What is worship and what is it all about?

Let's start by listening...

"Here I Am To Worship"

By singer/songwriter Tim Hughes

Light of the world,
You stepped down into darkness. Opened my eyes, let me see.
Beauty that made this heart adore you, Hope of a life spent with you

And here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days,
oh, so highly exalted. Glorious in heaven above. Humbly you came
to the earth you created All for love's sake became poor.

And here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely.
Altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.

I'll never know how much it cost To see my sin upon that cross
I'll never know how much it cost To see my sin upon that cross
And I'll never know how much it cost To see my sin upon that cross

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

This and the other many songs like it help us to worship God. Worship is glorifying God with our voices, hearts and actions. **The word worship means: to Revere, adore, praise, honor, respect and serve.** In worship we, bow down in reverence, express adoration with tender and contrite hearts, offer praise with joyful thanksgiving, we give homage, honor, respect and service to our King, and give ourselves in an act of worship as living sacrifices

(Romans 12). Worship songs help us to say what we might not say out loud. In them we recognize God as God and ourselves as God's loved and blessed children. Through them we are led to speak of the truly great things God has done, of God's everlasting mercy, to pour out our hearts in thanksgiving, gratitude and praise—coming face to face with God and the realization that this God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who has made and has kept the covenant promises in seeking our hearts and lives...is worthy of glory and all my praise and homage, worthy of all honor, thanks, reverence, and adoration (Rev 4:11). Worship songs are valuable they contain the elements of true worship – worship in spirit and truth..

Jesus said "you worship what you do not know". It seems to me to be an invitation to take a look at what and why we worship. The Samaritan's Bible was the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. It contained Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In a nutshell, they did not have the whole story where God, through David and the prophets, revealed the messiah as coming through Israel and King David's lineage and included all people of all nations. So they worshiped what they did not know. Not to mention they had a myriad of idols.

I believe we ALL make the Samaritan mistake when we say I worship Sunday mornings at Crossroads. Not that we come here in obedience of honoring the Sabbath...or to honor and praise and worship God with God's people...no this is what God wants...we err when we limit our worshiping to this day and this place and this time and this process.

We are witness to the birthing of a new order...the woman refers to times and places, Jesus lifts worship into a new sphere of Spirit and Truth. **What This means is truly new - a new way where people will worship God in all places and at all times...and this is what God seeks;** people who will worship in reverence and adoration in all places and at all times...not only once a week on Saturday or Sunday, at crossroads or any church through a particular liturgical order. We understand that all aspects of our lives are supposed to glorify God in constant awareness and constant worship.

Jesus answers the woman's the question of where true worship happens. There's another question jumping off the page – it is the question of how true worship happens.

((Light a candle – God seeks the flame not the candle)))

In Spirit. God is Spirit, not just a spirit among other spirits but pure spirit and accordingly delights in spiritual worship – **the offering of humble, contrite, grateful and adoring spirits.** For the Jews and the Samaritans, worship had become bound to the material world through sacrifices, rituals, temples, and festivals. The psalmists and prophets saw and understood that material things could at best be vehicles of true worship but could never belong to its essence (Psalm 51:16-17).

We now understand that this place and time and our order or liturgy is a vehicle that allows us to worship in spirit and truth. It's the candle that makes a flame possible. Many of us come from different church experiences. Some very different and this order while normal for some is strange to others. Jesus has made it clear that it is our hearts that God desires not our times, places and forms. **Sincere heart-devotion** whenever and wherever found, is indispensable if God's people would present worship that God can accept.

We worship God in Spirit – in our hearts and souls – the rest is simply the means to that end

((a broken glass))

In Truth. What is it to worship God in truth? As I see it there are two inseparable parts. The first part of this truth is the truth that every one of us arrives here with a sinful heart, a broken life and compromised soul in need of God's grace, forgiveness, mercy, love, and filling...we are laid bare before God. Truthful worship is coming before the Lord our God with honesty and sincerity, contrite, with nothing hidden or held back, without fear of rejection, completely dependant on God's promise of mercy, Grace, and forgiveness in Jesus.

Many people can't get there. It's too vulnerable, too risky. I have found it easier and safer to hide my fears and failures rather than lay them before God. God must chuckle with a tear in his eye when I hold up my life and soul - trying to hide the pieces.

God seeks the truth. Our lives are often in tough shape and that's exactly how we come before God in truth – we come dependant, needing God to be God of our hearts, souls and lives and allowing Christ to have his full work in us.

The second part of the truth equation: Have you ever seen Jesus himself as the truth he connects to true worship and the true worshiper? John 1:14 and 14:6 both identify Jesus as the truth. "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth"; "I am the way to God, the truth of God, and the life of God. No one comes to the father except through me." (1 John 5:20; John 6:51). Jesus is the truth through which we gain entrance to the holy of holies and the presence of God the Father and we worship (Hebrews 10:19-25).

Now we come to the heart of the matter...the heart of worship.

God speaks of his "sons" and "daughters" as "everyone who is called by my name, **whom I created for my glory**, whom I formed and made (Isaiah 43:6-7). And Paul uses similar language when he says, "we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed **to live for the praise of his glory**" (Ephesians 1:12). Exodus 20:5 and Isaiah 48:11 God says "I the Lord your God am a jealous God" "I will not yield my glory to another".

Worship then, is a direct expression of our ultimate purpose for living, “to glorify God and to fully enjoy him forever” (Westminster Higher Catechism). Worship defines us. It tells us who we are and why we are here. We have been created to glorify God.

What this does is guarantee that our lives have significance. Here’s the reasoning – In eternity, before the creation of the universe and humanity, there was perfect love and fellowship among the trinity (John 17:5, 24). God did not create us because he was lonely or because he needed fellowship with other people. God did not need to create human life at all. When we come face to face with that idea we could conclude that our lives have no significance at all. But scripture tells us we were created for God’s glory – indicating our being is important to God.

If we are truly important to God for all eternity, what greater measure of importance or significance could we want than glorifying our creator? Psalm 16:11 God tells us, “In your presence there is fullness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures forevermore”. Worship blends into living where our relationships, interests and activities become an extension of our spiritual lives and worship and God is glorified.

When we begin to take hold of the reason we have been made and why we are here and when we start to act in ways that fulfill that purpose, then we begin to experience an intensity of Joy in the Lord we have never known before. A coming together of live and spirit. AND as we glorify God and enjoy him, he rejoices in us. Isaiah 62 :5 “as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you”. And in Zephaniah 3:17-18 God “will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love, he will exult over you with loud singing as on the day of festival.”

Acceptable worship happens whenever and wherever we offer praise, honor, adoration, and reverence to God with honest, humble, contrite, grateful, rejoicing and adoring spirits through Jesus.

When we get to that place of submission and humility we are worshipping the one true, living God whether we are here, in our cars, on the beach, on deck, at the breakfast table...Jesus said the place doesn’t matter – it’s the heart of spirit and truth.

Now we are free to walk with and worship God at all times and in all places – if we were to think even a little about this it would sound an awful lot like the Genesis story. Walking with God in the cool of the day. Isn’t that what God has sought to restore through Jesus?

This does not mean we are all free to fill up our Sunday mornings with golf, football games, Bike rides, fishing, scuba diving and all that. We are still held accountable to honor God and set aside a day as his. We all must acknowledge our natures and recognize that if we pull up the anchor of Worship on Sunday morning – the things we fill that time

with will become as idols before God as in fact is a risk every day. We need this assembly to remind us of why we were created – to glorify God in all we do.

It is clear from the beginning that God wanted his people to be in corporate worship. In Exodus 7:16 God demanded to Pharaoh “let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert”. He instructed his people to build a temple for his people to assemble to hear his voice and worship him.

But, we don't remain in assembly forever. That's why it is important to understand why Jesus brought a new order of worship wherever and whenever in spirit and truth...So, instead of God being defined and limited to this place and time it becomes another of the many moments of worship in our days. One where we gather in grace, bring hearts of true worship as God seeks, in Spirit and in Truth.