

Genuine Worship

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[0 : 00] Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come here.

! The woman answered him, I have no husband.! Jesus said to her, you are right in saying, I have no husband. For you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband. What you said is true. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. 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 worship what you do not know.

We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

[1 : 04] For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. 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. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? It's estimated today that there are over 4,200 different religions in the world.

The estimated population of the world is 8 billion, of which 84% claim to be a follower of one of those 4,200 religions.

Unsurprisingly, each of these religions varies from one another. Some say that there are many gods. Some say that there is only one God. Some believe that God is responsible for creating the world, and some say that the world is God.

[2 : 11] Each of them says different things about life regarding its meaning and its purpose. Each of them has a different understanding of how you are to worship their deity, and how that should be conducted.

And unsurprisingly, they all say different things about the afterlife. For example, the Bible makes the claim in Hebrews 9,27 that man is destined to die once, and after that, the judgment.

However, many Eastern religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, teach reincarnation. That you die and that you're reborn as something or someone else based upon your religious observances and devotion.

So which is it? I think that's an important question to know. Do we die once, or do we die over and over again, experiencing all these different lives?

With so many different beliefs that contradict one another, how can we know which is right?

[3 : 27] Some have made the argument that they're all right. That as long as you are sincere in what you believe and in your worship and devotion to whatever that is, that that's all that matters despite the many contradictions that exist between these varying belief systems.

This position is called universalism. And it's growing in popularity in our culture, and it promotes tolerance as a virtue.

Those who would say that there is only one religion that is true, that there is only one path of salvation to God, would be deemed by the universalists to be closed-minded, unenlightened, and even bigoted.

But when we come to John chapter 4 and Jesus' interaction with a woman from Samaria, we see that Jesus was not a universalist.

Jesus was not a universalist. In fact, the purpose of His divine appointment with the Samaritan woman was to save her from her sin by revealing Himself to her as her Savior.

[4 : 48] And not just as a Savior, not as just one of many Saviors, but as the Savior. And in revealing that to her, He shatters the notion that her religious belief system and that her location

and her thought of the right manner of worship, along with all the rest of the Samaritan people, was wrong.

It was wrong. Again, it's been a couple weeks since we've last been in John chapter 4, so I want to recap briefly what has happened to this point.

Remember that Jesus has hiked for miles and hours in order to get to this well to meet this woman. That this was a divine appointment that she was totally unaware of.

That Jesus breaks cultural norms by speaking to her. Because again, remember at that time, Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. And especially men.

Men in this culture, especially rabbis, did not speak with women in public. But Jesus has spoken to her. And in so doing, He has revealed to this point her need to be saved from her sins.

[6 : 04] She's isolated herself from society. Having been married five times at this point, currently living with a man who was not her husband. That made her the object of scorn for many.

Those who knew her. Without telling Jesus anything of her past, she is shocked when Jesus exposes her sins.

She realizes that this stranger whom she has been speaking with is no mere man. Though she doesn't realize yet who He truly is, she realizes to this point that this man is at least some sort of prophet.

Someone knowledgeable. Someone special. According to our culture, what Jesus has said would be deemed to be rude.

He's pried deeply into her life. He's brought up painful experiences that she's been through. And now He's about to tell her that her religious beliefs, her assumptions about what should be considered true worship of God, were wrong.

[7 : 22] But as we will see, Jesus' purpose in initiating this conversation with this broken woman was not to further inflict pain upon her, but to heal her.

He will take this broken woman, this broken person, and He will make her a new creation. He will replace her heart of stone with a heart of flesh.

He will give her a new nature as a result of her trusting in Him as her Lord and as her Savior. She'd be completely transformed. She'd become a true worshiper of the one true God.

The word worship appears ten times in these six verses. And that shows that worship is really, at this point in the conversation, the main subject between Jesus and the Samaritan woman as she questions Him regarding what is genuine worship.

And so that leads us to the main idea for this morning's message, that genuine worship is a product of genuine salvation, which comes only after trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

[8 : 48] Genuine worship is a product of genuine salvation, which comes only after trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. That statement is the testimony of Scripture.

It's the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself. As we've already read this morning, on the eve of His crucifixion, if you remember, Jesus met with His disciples in the upper room, and there together they participated in the Last Supper, or the Lord's Supper.

After telling them that His death was imminent, and seeing their troubled faces, Jesus addressed them, and He said to them in John chapter 14, verses 1 through 6, Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am you may also be. And you know the place to where I am going. Thomas said to Him, Lord, we don't know where You're going.

[9 : 56] How can we know the way? And Jesus said to Him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Me. You see there, Jesus makes an extremely exclusive statement. He said, I am the way, the truth, the life.

In other words, He's saying, I am not just a way and a truth among many others that lead to eternal life. What He's saying was, I am the way because I am the truth because I am the life.

In John 10, 9, Jesus said, I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved. Elsewhere in Acts 4, 12, it says that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2, 5, there is one God, one mediator between God and man, that man, Christ Jesus. Jesus says that there are only two paths that a person can take to, can be upon, I should say, in life.

[11 : 13] One leads to life, the other leads to death. He says that He is the entryway to that path that leads to life. He says that, in fact, He is the path that leads to eternal salvation.

He asserted that He is the only way, the only truth, and the only life. As followers of Jesus Christ, we will encounter questions and concerns from people whom we share the gospel with.

Questions like this. How could God be so narrow-minded? I thought that God was a God of love. And behind such questions and statements truly lurks an attitude that believes that it doesn't really matter what you believe in as long as you sincerely believe in it.

Now listen, the Pharisees sincerely believed that their religious devotion to the law would save them.

But remember, Jesus repeatedly told them that it wouldn't. In fact, He said it so forcefully in such a way that it greatly offended them to the point where they wanted nothing to do with Him and conspired to crucify Him.

[12 : 35] If all roads lead to heaven and if sincere belief in worshiping whatever you want can save you, then there would have been no purpose for Jesus' coming in the first place.

And He wouldn't have arranged this divine appointment with this woman. Neither would He have confronted the Pharisees in their beliefs. He'd never have gone to the cross.

He'd never had commanded us to go and make disciples teaching them to observe all that He taught us. If universalism is true.

But Jesus wasn't a universalist. And He's told us that what we believe matters and how we worship matters.

So the first truth that Jesus tells us here about genuine worship is that genuine worship of God is not produced by external conformity to religious rituals and observances.

[13 : 40] Genuine worship of God is not produced by external conformity to religious rituals and observances. Verses 20-22. Having had her sin exposed by Jesus in verses 16-18 and realizing now that this man was special, having known things about her in a supernatural way, the Samaritan woman asked Jesus a question in verse 20.

She said, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Now, it's not totally clear whether this question served as an evasive tactic by the Samaritan woman in order to refocus the conversation away from her personal transgressions, or if this was a question that she asked because it was a question that she had truly wrestled with for some time.

The more I've thought about it, the more I think that it was the latter. But either could be true, and they could be true simultaneously, I think, as well. The issue is this.

In order to understand where this question is coming from, we've got to go back in time and understand the history between the Jews and the Samaritans. So, 750 years before Christ met this woman, before this conversation took place, the nation of Israel, if you remember, was split into two.

You had the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom, as a consequence of their sin, was eventually taken over by the Assyrian Empire.

[15 : 16] The Assyrians deported many of them from their land, relocating them to Assyria and repopulating the northern kingdom with Assyrians. But they couldn't take every Jew of the northern kingdom captive, so many remained there during this time of captivity.

And so, those who were left behind eventually began to intermarry with the Assyrians who were there. And so, thereby, they produced a race of people that was partially Jewish, and partially Assyrian.

Now, for the Orthodox Jews of the southern kingdom, this was the most, or one of the most unforgivable sins that anyone could commit.

This was a practice that the Old Testament forbidden, and so, in the eyes of the pure-blooded Jews who remained in the southern kingdom of Judah, those in the northern kingdom of Israel, they deemed them to be a mixed race whom they did not perceive to be truly Jewish anymore.

Racism and prejudice take many forms, don't they? And so, the Jews of the southern kingdom looked down upon and despised those of the northern kingdom.

[16:40] Eventually, the same kind of defeat that had resulted in the captivity of the northern kingdom also befell those in the south. It was 70 years before the Babylonians allowed any of those Jews whom they had captured in the south to return to Jerusalem, and so, in 450 B.C., when the Jews of the southern kingdom began to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, they were able to go back.

One of the first things they wanted to do was rebuild the temple that had been destroyed, and so, as they went about doing that, the Jews from the north came down and said, hey, we want to lend a hand.

We would like to help you rebuild our temple. Well, to the Jews of the south, the Jews of the north were no longer truly a part of the Jewish nation, and so, they refused any of their help.

And so, the Jews of the north, the Samaritans, went back in anger, and you know what they decided to do? We'll build our own temple, and we'll create our own rival religion.

So, the Samaritan woman's question centers around her confusion over whose location and whose method of worship was right. Is it the Jews, or is it us, the Samaritans?

[18:09] When you share the gospel with people, questions like that will come up. And when you declare that Jesus is the only way and the only truth and the only life, people won't always respond well to that.

Last week, as we're watching this American Gospel series, we saw a brief clip of Penn Jillette, of Penn and Teller, you know, the famous magicians, illusionists.

he is an atheist and pretty bold about it. But he shared a story about a time after one of his shows that as he was meeting and greeting with people who had come in attendance, he saw a man and noticed a man over in the distance who seemed very nervous but seemed very eager, like there was something really important that he wanted to share with him.

And so, finally, when it came turn, it came time for this man to be able to have access to Penn Jillette, he presented him with a Gideon's Bible, New Testament and the Psalms, right?

And he handed it to him and he proceeded to share the Gospel with him. I know that you're an atheist but I really want to share this news with you and he said, this man was so sincere in what he had to say to me, I could tell that this was something of great importance to him.

[19:30] And though he did not come to faith in Christ and though he remains to be an atheist, his point to everyone was this in this video, in this clip. You know, if you truly believe that is what he's saying, ask Christians, how much do you have to hate someone?

If you believe that they're going to spend their eternity in hell, how much do you have to hate someone to not warn them about that? He's very moved by this person's witness.

When you go to the doctor and you're sick and you're ailing, you want to know what's wrong with you, don't you?

I want to know what's wrong and I want to know if it can be healed. I want to know how I can be made well. Say, for example, you have cancer but you don't know it yet.

That's a pretty heavy diagnosis to receive and the process of treating cancer can be excruciatingly difficult to undergo. That's hard news to hear.

[20:38] I don't think anybody would consider that to be good news at all. But if you had cancer and the doctor knew it, wouldn't you want him to tell you? If the doctor said, you know what, I want to be nice and this is really not good news for this person to hear.

I'd rather not share it. You know, we'd view that doctor as being a horrible and a terrible doctor, wouldn't we? It's not good news for people to hear about the reality of hell and that salvation is only through Jesus Christ but we must share it because in doing so, truly, that is the kind thing to do. talking about sin, talking about hell, talking about the exclusivity of Christ's claims. These are things that not a whole lot of people want to hear but it's the truth and there's great truth in it, the good news that Jesus Christ has come and that if you put your faith in Him, His life, His death, His resurrection, you will have eternal life.

You will be saved now and forevermore as a result of His grace. In 1 Peter, Peter, the disciple of Jesus and an apostle writes to Christians who are facing persecution for their faith in Christ and because they've been giving this testimony of the gospel that people didn't want to hear but listen to the encouragement that he gives them in chapter 3, verse 15.

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them nor be troubled but in your hearts honor Christ Jesus as Lord, honor Jesus Christ as Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a

reason for the hope that you have in you, that hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.

[22 : 46] As Christians, we don't always do this with gentleness and respect, do we? I know that I always, haven't always.

Me and a friend of mine in my church in Leavenworth, he was a seminary student, I was the pastor there, we had a goal that we were going to go door to door in a local apartment complex that wasn't far from our church and that we were going to share the gospel with everybody there.

Not a bad goal, but I'll never forget one of the first conversations that I had. I don't know what had happened that Sunday. I don't know, the donuts must have been extra special that morning at church.

I don't know what happened, but something had gotten into me and one of the first people whose door that we answered and we began to share the gospel with him is a little bit hostile and you know what I did?

I got hostile right back with him and so we had a loud conversation right there at the front of his door and honestly, I felt like I wanted. I had made some good points that angered him and he shut the door in our faces and I got a pat on the back from my friend.

[23 : 55] Wow, that was great. You made some really good points but afterwards, that conversation has bugged me a lot. I felt like that wasn't a conversation that was conducted in gentleness and respect and as a matter of fact, I think it became more about winning an argument than it became about caring for a lost person who I wanted to share the good news of Jesus Christ with.

We've got to be careful. We want to share the good news of Jesus Christ but listen, we are having these conversations not for the purpose of winning an argument because we truly, genuinely care for the person that we're having the conversation with and let me tell you that they'll know.

They can tell and if you show that you care, they will want to listen to what you have to say and I think one, I've heard it said this way and I think it's great. People don't care how much you have to say to them until they know how much you truly care about them.

Jesus truly cared about this woman whom he's met at the well. He's presented her with bad news but now he's leading her to the realization that forgiveness, mercy, joy, peace, salvation, restored fellowship with God are things that can be provided to her but only through him and so he answers her question in verses 21 through 22 by responding, woman, believe in me.

The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews. So here Jesus affirms two truths about genuine worship that first, you can be sincere in your worship but if it's misplaced it means nothing.

[25 : 40] It counts for nothing. With these words Jesus revealed that the Samaritan woman was not a true believer but was really an agnostic.

The word agnostic comes from the Greek word agnosis which means without knowledge. Jesus revealed that the Samaritans were worshiping without knowledge but that such was not the case at the time for the Jews who worshiped based on their true knowledge of God through his self-revelation of himself to them in the pages of their scripture.

The Jews, if you remember, were God's chosen people to whom God chose to give his word. They were to serve as a light to the Gentile nations. Jesus was a Jew. Jesus was that light who is the Savior of the world.

So salvation has come from God to the world through the nation of Israel. And everything in the sacrificial system that God established for them in the Old Testament pointed to Jesus Christ. The lambs that were slaughtered and the blood that was shed and used to cover their doorposts of their houses during Passover that spared them from the wrath of God as the angel of death passed over their homes through Egypt.

[27 : 05] And later that blood that was shed and sprinkled on the mercy seat, the covering of the Ark of the Covenant was foreshadowing the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on the cross.

His blood covers our sins and the Bible says makes us white as snow. 700 years before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the prophet Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote about what God's Lamb would do in Isaiah 53 in verses 4 through 5.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, spintened by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His wounds we are healed. And so what Jesus is doing here is He's telling the Samaritan woman that if her worship was to count, if it was to be genuine, that she must know Him as Lord and as Savior.

Jesus did not say that it did not matter whether one worshipped the Samaritan way or the Jewish way. On the contrary, one of those ways He said was wrong and only one of those ways did He say was right.

[28 : 36] You know, the thing is we're all created to worship, aren't we? And we all end up worshipping something. And for those of us who are sports fans and we've had the sports world canceled, right?

March Madness, NBA, hockey, you name it, baseball's on postponed, you really see that a lot of people are more upset about that than they are anything else. This is something that hits close home to me because I find that one of the things that I've got to be careful about is that my worship of my favorite teams doesn't take away from my worship of the Lord, right?

I shouldn't be more excited that the Chiefs won the Super Bowl than somebody who comes to faith in Jesus Christ. So I've got to be careful, especially when I'm around you because I know you'll keep me accountable.

But we all will worship something. What you worship matters. But the only worship that counts is worship of the one true and only God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus, who is the Christ.

So the second truth we see here is that genuine worship of God is produced by an internal transformation. transformation. It's produced by an internal transformation. Verses 23 and 24.

[30 : 00] Jesus continues on, He says, but the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.

God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth. So here Jesus says that a time would come when the location and the method of worship of genuine worshipers would change.

He says that this change will involve worship that is done in spirit and in truth. To this point in redemptive history, the temple in Jerusalem was the epicenter of worship to God.

This is where the sacrifices were offered, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, where the high priest served. But when Jesus was crucified, the location and methods of our worship changed forever.

when Jesus breathed His last on the cross and when He gave up His spirit, the Bible says that the earth shook and that the veil of the temple that separated the holy of holies that was said to be the earthly dwelling place of God's presence that separated Him from the presence of everyone else who dwelled in the land from those who worked in the temple, that that veil was completely torn in two.

[31 : 22] In that place, only the high priest was permitted to enter and then only once a year as He made atonement for the sins of the people. That veil was 60 feet long and about four inches thick.

And so tearing it from top to bottom, make no doubt about it, was a supernatural act. Matthew 27 verses 50 through 51 records that action.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and He yielded up His spirit and behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

You think people are panicking about the coronavirus now, just wait until they see our Lord return in the future. I couldn't imagine the panic that took place during this time.

When Jesus died, the veil was torn. When that happened, God was signifying that He had moved out of that place, never again to dwell in a temple made with human hands.

[32 : 33] The veil of the temple was a constant reminder that sin renders humanity unfit to be in the presence of God. The fact that the sin offering was offered annually along with many other forms of sacrifices illustrated that sin could not be permanently erased by the blood of sacrificial animals.

Jesus Christ, through His sacrificial death, the Lamb of God, removed that barrier between God and man and now, as a result of that, we may approach God the Father with confidence and boldness.

The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and today, a Muslim mosque sits on top of where it used to be located.

And for all those reasons, sacrifices can no longer be made there anymore. And truly, they don't need to be because Christ has proved them all to be obsolete.

The location of the temple and the method of worship has changed, as Paul reminded the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6, 19-20. He says, Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

[33 : 54] You are not your own. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body. So, Jesus adds that genuine believers worship in spirit and in truth. What does that mean? Well, we're the temple now, right?

We're the residing place of God's Spirit. Well, I think that His instruction has been misunderstood. While, yes, the Holy Spirit lives in believers, and our worship is genuine as a result of that having happened, I believe that Jesus is calling for here.

What He is calling for here is a worship that comes from the depths of our own spirits, from the depths of our own souls, a worship that comes from the very core of our being.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, provides us with an example of what that looks like when she's saying a song of praise to God in learning that she would be the mother of the Messiah in Luke 1, 46.

She says, my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior. So right there we have an example of true worship.

[35 : 08] We are also to worship in truth, which means that our worship must reflect and be consistent with what Scripture teaches.

And so I hope that I'm not disappointing you, but never will the day come as long as I'm here, and I'm sure as many of you are here, where we will be playing ACDC's Highway to Hell on Easter morning as others have done in the past.

A song does not capture the truth of Scripture. When people, though, see us worship, just think for a moment.

when people who've never been to Highland Park Baptist Church come in and they worship with us, what are the takeaways that they have from their time of worship with us?

When they enter into this place, do they see people who are truly worshipping in spirit and in truth?

Do they see people who are worshipping from the depths of their souls crying out to God in thankfulness for all that He is and for all that He's done?

[36 : 24] Do they see people who understand their sins that put Christ on the cross and are mournful over them yet rejoice in the fact that they've truly been saved and cleansed of their sins?

Now listen, we can convey that without dancing around in the pews and that is not what I'm asking for, but gosh, when people come and worship with us, I think every once in a while they should see tears flowing from our eyes.

They should hear our voices cracking because we are acknowledging the wonderful and great love of God that He's had for us and we're acknowledging our sin and our depravity and our unworthiness but the hope that we have eternally that our Lord reigns.

Do they experience that? Or do, when they come in here, do they experience a lot of people who look like a bunch of limp spaghetti noodles?

You know, I guess this is where I'm at on Sunday. This is what I do. Man, I hope that isn't the case. And I think that Jesus says it here very clearly.

[37 : 46] True worship, genuine worship, worship that is heartfelt is impactful, it's observable, and it should be the way that we worship our Lord.

And then finally, genuine worship of God is centered on Jesus Christ. Verse 25, the woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he is called Christ.

When he comes, he will tell us all things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. And in the Greek, it's awesome that that last word he isn't present.

What Jesus says to her is that I who speak to you am. I who speak to you am.

Here Jesus reveals to her that she has been speaking with God himself. God, Yahweh, I am.

[38 : 56] God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, the man who just a few minutes earlier had made a simple request for a drink of water, now claimed to be the long-awaited Messiah.

And now she knew it and she believed it. You see, we can and should share Jesus with people, but we must understand that though we can share, only Jesus can save them.

We don't save anybody, we share. God takes care of the rest. So in the church of Jesus Christ, all that we do and all that we say must be about Him.

He is the object of genuine worship, and only those who know Him savingly can worship Him in spirit and in truth. So we've seen that salvation comes only to those who recognize their desperate need for spiritual life that they do not have.

That living water will be received only by those who recognize that they are spiritually thirsty. That salvation only comes to those who confess and repent of their sin and desire forgiveness.

[40 : 12] That salvation comes only to those who embrace Jesus Christ as their Messiah and as their sin bearer. I want to close by making one last observation about all of this.

that not just any kind of worship of God will do. Jeremiah, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, told the people of God that their worship had become dead, that it was outward, external formalism, that they were simply going through the motions, they were simply reciting prayers, singing hymns, but the problem was that their heart wasn't in any of it.

Let me tell you that God does not desire that kind of worship. That's dead religion. That's not authentic faith. We're to come to Him with hearts filled with a sense of awe, reverence, and adoration for who He is and what He's done.

And so the worship that we offer is to be like our sacrifice of praise to Him and honoring and glorifying His name. I think D.A.

Carson said it well in summarizing this text. He said, the heart of genuine worship is the working out in every aspect of our lives, the confession that Jesus is Lord.

[41 : 40] So that's my invitation to you this morning. In every aspect of your life, the message that you declare to those around you must be, Jesus is Lord.

. Thank you.