

Messiah: The Living Water, Part 2

Scripture: John 4:16-26

Code: 43-21

I always feel like I need to give a bit of an explanation to those that are visitors with us. We do what we would call sequential Bible exposition, which means we just keep moving through books of the Bible. And we find ourselves now in the gospel of John. So you might to take a Bible. If you have your own, that's great. I know most of you do. But there are some in the pews for you if you don't. Find the book of John, look at chapter 4, and we are looking in some depth at an account that John the apostle gives us of Jesus meeting with a Samaritan woman by a well. A very, very familiar and famous biblical story.

It's a rather prolonged story as narratives in the Scripture go, chapter 4, verse 1, running all the way down to verse 42. So we have to take it in segments. And we have to do that even though I'm not adding anything to it. You know, I resist sort of adding anything that isn't obviously there, or nearly obviously there. But even with just a basic consideration of this text, we're going to have to divide it into probably four messages before we get through the whole passage, so this is number two. There is so much instruction here.

Now keep in mind that the gospel of John has one purpose and that purpose is articulated at the end of the gospel in chapter 20 and verse 31. "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life in His name." This is, first of all, a polemical book, and that is to say it presents evidences that Jesus is the Son of God. Then it is an evangelistic book in that it calls for you to believe that and by believing that have eternal life in His name. That is John's purpose. And no matter where you are in the gospel of John, what chapter, what account, you're going to find the focus is going to be on the majesty and the glory and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is true here. His deity shines forth in the account of the woman at the well when He tells her...her entire history, her immoral history. This is a woman He has never met, nor has He met anybody in her family, nor does He know anybody in her past. And yet He knows her history. This is a revelation of His deity.

But, He is the Word, the eternal Word made flesh, so you see here also a revelation of His humanity, as we see in verse 6, when He sits down by the well because He's completely spent. The Greek word there is "He is totally exhausted." He is at the point of total exhaustion. As man, He was exhausted. As God, He was omniscient and that majesty of the combination of deity and humanity in Christ is the theme that we're going to see as we go through this incredible account of His life written by John.

Now at the heart of this discussion is verse 21 to 24, that little unit of truth is the subject of worship, worship. And this becomes the theme here in this account. Now I want to maybe talk to you about the word "worship" in a way you haven't thought about it before. Worship is synonymous with salvation. There are only two kinds of people in the world. There are people who worship God acceptably and people who don't. Those are the only two kinds there are. There are saved people and lost people, or as my grandfather used to say, there are the saints and the ain'ts, and that's it.

When we talk about worship then, we're talking about the essence of what it means to be saved, to confess Jesus as Lord, to submit to God and His revelation of Christ, to obey God who said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him." Salvation is an act of obedient worship. It is bowing the knee to God, the triune God, as we've been singing this morning. So one could say the purest definition of worship is salvation. One, in fact, cannot worship unless one is truly saved, because you cannot bow the knee to God in any way until you have bowed the knee to God in the command to obey the gospel of His Son. So worship is about salvation. This then, while the discussion is on the theme of worship because that's how the woman introduces it, is really a profound insight into the nature of true salvation being worship.

And so again I say, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the people who worship God acceptably, and the people who do not. The people who worship God acceptably are believers—Christians—possessing eternal life on their way to heaven where they will worship Him acceptably and perfectly forever and ever. The people who do not worship Him now will be crystalized into permanency in hell in a condition where they will be unable to worship Him forever. Those are the only two possibilities. So this is a very, very decisive section of holy Scripture.

I don't need to tell you how important worship is. I really don't need to tell you that it starts with confessing Jesus as Lord. That's where worship begins, you know that. But I do want you to understand something else from this passage, if I may press that home, and that is how Jesus led this woman to be a worshiper. How Jesus led this woman to salvation. In fact, her salvation is so manifestly evident that immediately she is the human witness that brings people in her village to salvation. The transformation of her life is so evident that she becomes the means, the human instrument the Lord uses to bring others to the knowledge of Himself.

As we look at this, yes we want to see the glory of Christ. But we also want to see how He evangelized this woman. What are the components and what is the sequence as He comes to this very, very indifferent, outcast, immoral woman who has no thought about Him, doesn't know anything about Him, doesn't care anything about Him, doesn't know who He is, has never heard Him teach, has never seen a miracle, or heard about a miracle? She is completely indifferent. She is not like Nicodemus. Nicodemus was not religiously, spiritually indifferent. He was a teacher, *the* teacher in Israel, Old Testament scholar, knew he didn't have eternal life, knew he wasn't in the kingdom, knew he wasn't right with God because all Pharisaic hypocrites know they're hypocrites. And in the darkness of night, he comes to Jesus with his heart crying out for the truth. This is not this woman. This woman has no spiritual interest at the beginning.

Now what's important about that is this. As you live your Christian life in the world, it may be that somebody will walk up to you and say, "Hey, by the way, could you tell me how to become a Christian?" But I doubt that you could remember too many times when that has happened. Most of the time you have to take the initiative. And that's exactly what Jesus does here. You're in the world, you're going to be looking into the faces of the people who are at the moment disinterested in what you want them to become completely interested in, and so you will follow a pattern that our Lord establishes here and you will see how effective it can be by His grace.

So let's go back into the story. Jesus is heading north. He is leaving Judea. He has been baptizing there and preaching, His ministries overlapping with John the Baptist. Jesus is ready to leave because it's getting too hot down there. The leaders of Israel are hatching plots. They're planning

already to eliminate Him. He doesn't want to be pushed into a situation that's premature. He knows the timing of God is perfect. He knows when His hour is supposed to come. So He vacates Judea where He has been preaching the kingdom, preaching repentance, baptizing people in the same way that John did to prepare them for the coming of the kingdom.

So He leaves. He heads north by necessity. He goes through Samaria--one could say geographical necessity--the coastal route was longer, the across the Jordan and up Perea route was longer. The shortest route was through Samaria, a lot of Jews wouldn't go that way because they wouldn't walk on cursed ground and associate with cursed people, which they viewed the Samaritans as being, because they had literally abandoned their Judaism and intermarried with the idol worshipers after the northern kingdom had been taken into captivity...722.

So they were hated and despised. We know all that by the Jews for being half breeds who abandoned their Judaism and intermarried with idolaters. So many Jews wouldn't go through Samaria. Those kinds of things didn't bother Jesus. He wasn't a racist. He didn't have any ethnic animosity. He saw them as a mission field and He knew He had an appointment with a woman by a well. So necessity from a geographic standpoint may have been the case. But necessity from a divine standpoint was absolutely the case. And so as He heads there--twenty miles or so walking that morning and a challenging walk to be sure. Not a flat walk, but a very rigorous one. He finally reaches this location where Jacob's well is by the town of Sychar. The well is about a mile and a half, a mile or a half a mile away.

He sits down, verse 6, He's weary and a woman of Samaria comes. I told you last time, women went to get water. They usually went at dusk. This happens to be noon. Why is she coming at noon? Why doesn't she go when all the other women go, at dusk? The answer may be that everybody in town knew her and they knew the kind of woman she was, and she didn't want to get in the situation which she tried to avoid most of the time, and that is the scorn that would be heaped upon her as an immoral woman who had had multiple husbands and was currently living in adultery. So maybe she came to avoid that.

There are also some scholars who think there were wells closer to Sychar, and she went to this one which was further away, which would again be another reason she went here to avoid the near local encounter with folks. Whatever may have been her motivations, God had her right where she was supposed to be.

Jesus is sitting there and He is completely exhausted. The word "wearied" means that. And He says to her, "Give Me a drink." And if you were wondering why He didn't ask one of His disciples who were traveling with Him to give Him a drink, He explains in verse 8, "His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food." It didn't bother them to be in a Samaritan area, didn't bother them to interact with Samaritans. It didn't bother them to eat Samaritan food. This is not a biblical prescription that God had ordained. In fact, this was the mission field, not the enemy. And while they were gone, perfect setting, in the isolation of just the two of them together, Jesus says to the woman, "Give Me a drink," "give Me a drink."

And with that, we come to the first point. In understanding how our Lord evangelizes an indifferent and ignorant outcast begins with unexpected condescension, unexpected condescension; making a connection, making a connection. It's a beautiful connection to make because He obligates Himself to her. He puts Himself in a position to have her do something for Him which then obligates Him to

him (her). It's really a beautiful gesture.

It's shocking though, on the other hand, and the shock of it is that she is a Samaritan woman. It lets us know that for sure. He's passing through Samaria, verse 4; He's coming to a city of Samaria, verse 5; He's talking to a woman of Samaria, verse 6. She is again referred to as a Samaritan woman in verse 9. We can't escape the fact that she's a Samaritan. This is important because, as John tells us in the little parenthetical statement at the end of verse 9, Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

So when He speaks to this Samaritan woman, it is a shocking condescension. It is an unexpected condescension. And she responds to it by acknowledging that. She says to Him in verse 9, "How is it that You being a Jew asks me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" Our Lord, as I said, paid absolutely no attention to the traditions, to the hostilities of a nation of Jonahs who had their references. He saw this as a mission opportunity, regardless of who she was. And after all, He was the Savior of the world.

So it starts out, as we saw last time, with unexpected condescension. And then it moves to unsolicited mercy offered. And the reason I referred to it that way is because she's not asking for anything. But He's going to offer her something. This is just a magnificent insight. "Jesus answered and said to her," in verse 10, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you give me a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." She's not asking for anything. She's not making a request. He made the request. He initiated it--is what we have to do most of the time in evangelism. And then He takes her to this offer from God. "If you knew the gift of God," and He acknowledges that she can't know, she can't understand. And this is very abrupt and out of nowhere. "But if you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you give Me a drink," that is the one who can dispense that very gift, you would have asked Him. meaning Himself, and He would have given you living water.

I just want to remind you of one word here and that's the word "asked." Connect that with the word "gift," right? This is what sets the gospel of Christianity apart from every other religion in the world. Every other religion in the world says do this and God will accept you. Do that and God will accept you. Do this morally. Do this ceremonially. Do this ritually. Do this, do this. Better yourself and God will accept you. Christianity says ask, ask. That's all the sinner can do. All the sinner can do is ask. All the sinner can do, like Luke 18, the publican, is fall on his face and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." All he can do is ask. Cry out for the living water.

So He says to her, "You have no idea of what I'm offering you, but it is a gift from God that constitutes living water." That means water that gives life, and water was the life-giving thing, wasn't it? Of course in that part of the world in ancient days, the need for water was profound and constant. And He's saying, "I'm able to give it to you, all you have to do is ask." She has no idea what He's talking about.

At first this sounds a little...well, it sounds a lot odd. What in the world is this guy talking about? Who is He? She knows He's a Jew, probably because of the tassels on His robe. And she's struck by the fact that He doesn't understand the Jewish/Samaritan protocol; they're not supposed to be communicating. And here He is making her strange offers about gifts from God and living water and telling her that He's the source of that. And she thinks this is absurd. And so she reacts in what is sarcastic, I think, in verses 11 and 12. "She said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the

well is deep.” Best estimate is about a hundred feet. Where then do you get that living water? I think she thinks He’s maybe a little delusional, and maybe heat stroke. Who is this man, and what in the world is He talking about?

And then her scorn is elevated in verse 12 when she says, “You’re not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” You can go back to Genesis when he dug those wells and remember that account. “Who do You think You are? What are You talking about, offering living water as a gift from God? You don’t even have anything to draw water with. And where do You get this water? Are You superior to Jacob who gave us this well that has been here since then?”

Yeah, I think there’s a note of confusion there, but I think it’s more mockery. And Jesus responds to her scorn with mercy, with patience and goes from what I call an unsolicited mercy to an unparalleled blessing. Look at verse 13. “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst, but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.’”

Now it’s just getting really outrageous. He’s going to give me water that gives life, but He’s going to give me water that gives eternal life? Eternal life?

But, you know, this is exactly what the evangelist must do, find a point of contact. Move from the point of contact to the gift of God which is eternal life, the gift of God which is living water, bubbling up as we saw last week, everlastingly. This is what we...this is where we start our evangelism with the offer of the mercies of God and the unparalleled blessing of God that is promised to sinners.

But she really has a high degree of incredulity at this point. The whole thing doesn’t make sense. But she goes along with it in verse 15. “And the woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.’” I think that’s sarcastic. I think she’s playing the game with Him. “Okay, give me the water. There’s only one well here; You can’t even get into that well. But go ahead, give me the water that will cause me never to thirst again and never have to come back here.” She plays the role for the moment.

And she likely turned at that point to take her water and go back to the village, wondering about this somewhat delusional stranger making such strange claims. And then in verse 16 we come to the next element in this encounter. “He said to her, ‘Go call your husband and come here.’” That’s a bold command and that’s a very strong command. And Jesus always spoke with a great amount of authority, perhaps authority the likes of which no one has ever possessed but Him. This is a command. Go call your husband and come here--which means that she was probably on the way. And He commands her to go call her husband and bring him back. “To which she responds correctly, ‘I have no husband.’” That brings us to the fourth component in His personal evangelism. First there was that condescension to talk to her about something that God had for her that was wonderful, living water, to extend that to the fact that it was eternal life, unparalleled promise. But there’s something else that has to be talked about. And so the fourth point is an unhesitating conviction...an unhesitating conviction sought. “Yes,” unexpected condescension offered, unsolicited mercy granted, unparalleled promise given, but--stop right there. If you had a person at that point pray a prayer, you might well have a false convert, because there’s something that hasn’t been dealt with and that’s sin. If you evangelize purely on the basis of all the gifts of God, everybody signs up, everybody signs up.

So you come to this necessary conviction, and this will change her entire perception of Jesus and confront her sin in a very direct way. And I would say at this point what you all know, it is critically essential and necessary to bring the sinner to face the guilt of sin and feel the weight of divine judgment, to be measured against the holy Law of God, to be told of the consequence of that sin because faith must be accompanied by...What?...repentance. She's an adulterous woman and she knew the Old Testament law of adultery.

Samaritans accepted the Pentateuch. Most historians think they accepted only the Pentateuch, but that's enough. Exodus 20, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and there's plenty in the Pentateuch about the penalty for adultery was death, death. It's wonderful to present to the sinner all the glories of the gospel, all the blessings, the gift of God, the living water, the eternal life. But it's not enough to stop there, not enough to present the positive truth of soul-satisfying blessing from God. If all you do is that and then ask for a response, you're going to get a false conversion, and then you're going to get somebody who is deceived about their true condition.

Well, like all sinners, she doesn't want to tell the whole truth, so she says, "I have no husband." Well, that was right and Jesus acknowledged that. He said at the end of verse 18, "You have truly said." I mean, it's not the whole truth but she didn't have a husband. When she said that, there was a mega shift in the conversation. No more talk of blessing, no more talk of mercies, no more talk of satisfaction, everything changes now. She will not be able to take a drop of living water. This initially indifferent, ignorant, careless sinner must be brought to conviction and repentance over her wretched condition. Since she's unwilling to tell the whole truth, Jesus tells it for her.

Back to verse 17. "Jesus said to her, 'You have correctly said,'" and He says it again at the end of verse 18, "You have said truly." I mean, it's a nice gesture. He's affirming what little honesty there is in her. "You have correctly said I have no husband, however, you just left something out, you've had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband."

We know divorce was very common among the Jews in Israel. It was also equally common, maybe more so, among the Samaritans. And so we can assume that this woman lived this kind of life where she was an adulteress on repeated occasions and consequently led to repeated divorces and now she's following the same pattern, living with a man who is not her husband. She's an adulteress living in an immoral relationship.

And by the way, I just want to make a footnote here because this comes up in conversations. Jesus says, "The one you now have is not your husband." She had a man in her life living with her but he was not her husband. So I need to remind you that living together doesn't make a marriage? Living together doesn't make a marriage. Living together is idolatry--adultery without marriage. Marriage is...marriage is always restricted to a covenant, a binding, formal, social, official, public covenant.

Well, this changes everything because our Lord has just told her her history and they've never met. Back in chapter 2, verses 22 to 25, you remember John said nobody needed to tell Him what was in the heart of man because He knew what was in the heart of man? His omniscience to the thoughts of people. Well, it also goes to their history. He knows everything there is to know, and He knows her history, the history of her iniquity. Her sinful life has been exposed, she can't hide, there's nowhere to go. And her response is an amazing and wonderful response. It's in verse 19, "The woman said to

Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.'" Now He's no longer a delusional stranger; He's a prophet.

When the word "perceive" is used in the original language, it's *theoreo*, which means "to come to the knowledge of." It's used in John chapter 6 of beholding the Son in a knowing way. She came to know and believe that He is at least a prophet, because He can't know this unless God is telling Him. He knew her sin. "You are a prophet."

Now that she knows He's a prophet, she feels the conviction. That's very evident. And she wants more. "You're a prophet; You speak for God"--and she wants more. So she poses a question. Verse 20, "Our fathers worship in this mountain and You people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship," and you fill in the rest. Where do I go to worship? That's the question, "Where do I go to worship?" Her soul is bowing slowly. Her soul is bowing slowly and she knows that being right with God is a matter of worship. She doesn't know where.

In evangelism, there is condescension, there is the offer of mercy, an unparalleled blessing and eternal life. There is the necessary confrontation and conviction of sin to bring the sinner to repentance. And this must be addressed, unacceptable worship must be abandoned, unacceptable worship must be abandoned.

And what He says to the woman in this passage is that the way you viewed worship must be abandoned. Let me give you the whole picture. She's saying, "Where do I go? Do I go to Mount Gerizim where the Samaritans have their temple? Do I go to Jerusalem where the Jews have their temple? Where do I go?" And Jesus says, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in 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 an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth." There is that monumental text, the most definitive text in the gospels on the matter of worship and it starts with a denunciation of the external forms of worship--unacceptable worship must be abandoned. She needs to know that.

Now Samaritan worship on Mount Gerizim was a corrupted form of Judaism. It had been established by an apostate Jewish priest who married the daughter of Sanballat who was the enemy of Nehemiah in the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. It was a false religion. It had...it had Jewish elements to it, including the Pentateuch, and then it was all mixed up with the pagans who came in after the 722 captivity and intermarried with the remaining Jews in the northern kingdom.

So she goes back to her religion, back to her forefathers. "Our fathers worship in this mountain." But the compelling thing I want you to see is she knew she needed to bow before God. She knew she needed to go to God and bow her knee and acknowledge Him and she didn't know where to go. All she knew was external religion, because that's all sinners ever know. That's all they ever know. She is stunned by Jesus' knowledge of her iniquitous pattern of life. Her conscience is pained. Her soul is pierced. She is unmasked as an adulterous covenant breaker. She is a stranger to righteousness. The weight of guilt which she spent a lot of her time trying to avoid has now come down in full force on her head. The reality breaks on her once indifferent mind that she needs to be right with God. And maybe that's the path to living water and eternal life. She had to go to God.

Where does she go? She wants to repent, but where does she go? She wants to make her life right, but where does she go? Does she go to Samaritans' temple on Mount Gerizim and offer a sacrifice, have a priest offer a sacrifice? Does she go to Jerusalem and have a priest there offer a sacrifice? What does she do? How does she find peace? How does she get forgiveness? Sinners naturally see religion as external. Where do I go? What church do I go? What place? What ritual? What ceremony? Because that's all they know because their hearts have never been changed. They don't know the internal life of God.

So she looks through her past leaders on this mountain Gerizim--temple that had been built long ago was still standing there and services were conducted there. "Is that where I go? Or maybe I should go to Jerusalem," she says, "because that's the place where You say--You Jews--say men ought to worship.

But I love her question. "I need to worship. I need to bow before God." But in so doing she needed also to abandon her misconceptions about religion, and that's what Jesus addresses in verse 21 and following. And He says it simply, "Woman, believe Me." And there's the thing you want to underline: "Believe Me." That's the key, "Believe Me." You must believe what I tell you.

"An hour is coming"--and He says it again in verse 23--"an hour is coming and now already is when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." Not long after this, a few decades, 70 A.D. comes. The Romans come at the end of the Jewish rebellion that started in 66 and the Romans come and they destroy Jerusalem and they crush the temple and don't leave one stone upon another and there's no more temple worship. And then the Roman powers go up into the area of Samaria. They arrive at Mount Gerizim and historical accounts tell us they took out their swords and they slaughtered thousands of Samaritans on Mount Gerizim and brought an end to that worship as well. Jesus is giving the prophecy of what's coming and coming very fast, and it already now is in the sense that the New Covenant is almost in place. It's not long until it be ratified in His death on the cross. Our Lord's answer is a very crucial, crucial answer. Listen carefully to what I say.

True worship doesn't demand a place. It's not about a place, it's not about a rite, it's not about a ritual, it's not about a ceremony of any kind. True worship is always about loving God, honoring God, obeying God, serving God from the heart, from the heart. So He says, "Not here, not in this mountain, not in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know." This is a critique, a simple and brief critique of Samaritan religion, which was limited as I said to the Pentateuch, and then the mixed in pagan, idolatrous elements of religion from those with whom they intermarried.

"You don't even know what to worship. At least we Jews worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." That is, the Scripture was given to the Jews, the Messiah comes through Israel, that's all He means by that. It's not for the Jews only, but it's from the Jews. But He's saying we have the right data, we have the Scriptures, the oracles of God (Romans 3, Paul says). We have the truth. We know the truth. That's not a commendation of Jewish religion, by the way, because it was apostate and Jesus denounced it repeatedly.

But nonetheless God had deposited the truth with them, and through them would come Messiah. So we have that on you. You don't even know what you're doing. We at least have the revelation of God

about worship. But in either case, whether in your ignorance or our apostasy, it doesn't matter because the hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth because there won't be a temple here or there, in neither place.

Do you understand what happened at the death of Jesus Christ when the veil, sorting out the holy place from the Holy of Holies, was torn and ripped, shredded from top to bottom? Do you understand that that was the symbol of the end of the entire Old Testament system of external, ceremonial, symbolic worship? Do you understand at that moment it was over and our Lord is affirming this, and what He's saying is this, there are no more temples, there are no more places of worship where God is to be sought and found? There's no more priesthood. There's no more altars. There's no more sacrifices. There's no more vestments. There are no more incense, candles, all that goes with it. Whether it is the ill-informed worship of the Samaritans or the apostate worship of the Jews, it all disappears, it all passes away. No more mountains, no more temples, no more priests, no more sacrifices, no more altars, no more vestments, no more feasts, no more Sabbaths, none of it--all that is ripped apart, disappeared. And the punctuation point was made in 70 A.D. I mean, it had always been that God wanted heart worship, that's why Amos said, "Stop your songs, your hearts aren't right. I hate your feasts. I hate your Sabbaths. I hate what you're doing." Malachi said the same thing, "All you ever bring Me is lame animals." Isaiah 1 said the same thing: your whole head is sick from top to bottom. It's always been about the heart, but all those symbols that once pointed them in the direction of heart worship are gone, are gone.

Now every place is a sanctuary and every believer is a priest, right? You know, some people don't get that. We still have a form in Christendom in the Roman Catholic system of Christianized Judaism where you have priests who wear distinctive clothes as they did in Judaism, who function on altars in a kind of temple sanctuary on earth, where you have ornate buildings where candles burn and incense is offered. One writer says, "These men robed in gorgeous vestments within a roped off sanctuary stand before a bloodless altar with a background of burning candles, crosses and smoking incense and conduct worship for the people who watch." Tragic substitute for the spiritual worship our Lord calls for here.

Christ ushered in a new era of worship, doesn't focus on externals or on symbols, but on what is internal and what is real and what is genuine. All you need to worship is the truth in the Scripture and a heart that loves God anywhere and everywhere. Such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. He wants worshipers who worship in spirit and in truth. He is a spirit, verse 24. And those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

By the way, we worship the Father, we worship the Father. Twice in verse 23 refer to meaning God, the true God, God Himself, but it's not limited to Him. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The very term "Father" ties Him into Christ as Son. He's not a Father if He doesn't have the Son. So we worship the God who is Father and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, as so often is repeated in the New Testament. We worship the God who is also the Holy Spirit--God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the true God. And we start with truth, right? We start with the truth about God; God is the Trinity.

How important is that? Well, let me give you an illustration. I was reading this week in some material on Mormonism, and I pulled out things that Mormons believe about God. So let me tell you what I drew. These essentially are from their own writings. God the father was once a finite mortal on another planet. After his death and resurrection he progressed to become the god of this planet. God

is an exalted man as we can become exalted men. God has a tangible body of flesh and bones. The father, the son, and the holy spirit are distinctly different beings who can only be in one place at a time.

God the father is under the jurisdiction of a higher god who also has multiple gods above him. God lives on his own planet near the star Kolob. There is a heavenly mother as well as a heavenly father. They are our heavenly parents. We humans were born as spirit beings to heavenly father and heavenly mother in a pre-mortal state and raised from infant spirits to adult spirits prior to our mortal birth on earth. Jesus and Lucifer are brothers. They, along with millions of other spirit children, were born to our heavenly father and our heavenly mother. Heavenly father as a resurrected physical being had sexual relationships with Mary, literally to procreate Jesus. Man has the ability to become a god and rule his own planet, produce spirit children as the heavenly father did. Sex is an eternal privilege for good Mormons who attain godhood in order for them to procreate their own spirit children to populate their own world, their own planet as god did. Polygamy will be the norm in the celestial kingdom.

Would you say that's worshipping the Father? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is the Triune God--the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Terrifying deception; only an illustration, only an illustration of the many, many misrepresentations of the true God. The Father seeks true worshipers. That means they worship Him in truth. They worship Him according to who He really is as revealed in Scripture. And just to remind you, God is not a man. He's not a mortal. He is spirit and those who worship Him worship Him in spirit and in truth, from the heart and according to the truth. Not in places, not by ceremonies or symbols, or shadows or forms or externals, and certainly not in lies and misrepresentations. We worship Him in the truth. The truth about Him is everything. I read you from the Psalm earlier, where it gives His attributes. All of Scripture is God's self-disclosure. So according to the Word of God, we worship Him.

For many years people have suggested that worship is some activity other than preaching. And I've been asked with such long sermons how much time do your people have to worship? And my response has always been without long sermons they don't know how to worship. Your worship is informed by your understanding of the revelation. Your worship only goes up as high as it goes down, because the deeper you go into the truth about God, the higher you go in worship. Superficial knowledge of God leads to superficial worship. And then people need to be manipulated.

Worship, by the way, is not music. Worship is loving God. Worship is honoring God. Worship is knowing God for who He is, adoring Him, obeying Him, proclaiming Him as a way of life. Music is one way we express that adoration.

So Jesus tells the woman--back to the story--that her worship doesn't require a place, it doesn't require a priest, it doesn't require a ritual, it doesn't require a ceremony, it doesn't require an offering. Just believe me, God wants you to worship according to the truth from the heart, bow to the true God in your heart. Bow your heart. We would say, confess Jesus as Lord.

One final feature then, this is the wonderful, wonderful conclusion. The woman in verse 25 says, "I know Messiah's coming." She knew because the Messiah is mentioned in the Pentateuch: Genesis 3:15 refers to Him, but more particularly, perhaps, she was thinking Deuteronomy 18:15 to 18, the prophet that would come. And surely the Samaritans had hung on to much of the Messianic theology that was sort of deep into Judaism before the division of the kingdoms and the captivity.

She knows about Messiah. She knows Messiah is God's anointed One who will come to fill the earth with righteousness and truth. She says, "I know that Messiah is coming, He who is called Christ, and when that one comes He will declare all things to us." I want to know, I want to know. She wants the full truth. She wants the full truth. She wants to worship from the heart in truth. And she says, "I'm not going to have the full truth until He arrives," and then this is the most glorious moment. Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you AM." There's no "He" in the original; it's an I AM statement, the name of God. "I who speak to you AM." The One speaking to you is the I AM. This is the final point in the glorious culmination. The incarnate Christ is revealed--the unveiling of Christ. She is ready for the truth, and He is there to give it to her. I who speak to you, I AM.

Twenty-three times in the gospel of John we read "I AM." Seven times He says "I AM" something: the Bread of Life, the Branch, the Way, the Truth, the Life--all references to His eternal Godhood. He reveals Himself to her.

This is how it works with the sinner. It starts when we condescend in love and compassion; when we offer the marvelous realities of mercy and blessing, the promises of eternal life, and then we move to confront the sin. And if the sinner will turn under the power of the Holy Spirit and repent of sin and reach out for the truth, it is at that point that Christ is disclosed to the sinner. He reveals Himself to her.

In response to her faith, in response to her repentance, this outcast, immoral, ignorant woman that our Lord sat down to talk with was completely disinterested and now she wants the truth about the life of God that is eternal, that her heart craves so desperately. She wants forgiveness for her wretched life. And in that moment when she believes and when she repents, He is revealed to her.

This is a divine work, isn't it? She knew nothing about Him at all when it started. Now she wants to know everything about Him that's available so she can be a true worshiper.

You say, "Well, how do you know she was really converted?" I think the conversation continued. By the way, it's just not recorded. But how do I know she was converted? Go down to verse 39, "From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified." There were many of the people who believed in Him because of her testimony. "He told me all the things that I had done." He has to be from God. And as she believed, they believed. When the Samaritans came to Jesus they asked Him to stay with them and He stayed there two days--two days of seminary, two days of theology, two days of unveiling divine revelation so they could fully understand the gospel. As a result, many more believed because of His word. And they were saying to the woman, it's no longer because of you that we believe, but we have heard for ourselves and know that this is the one who is the Savior of the world. The key word "world," that salvation had come not just to Israel, but to outcasts.

You know, I don't want to overdo this, or turn it into some kind of an analogy, but I would simply say this: when you've taken the steps, and obviously we can't know people's history like Jesus did, but when you've taken the steps to make the condescending conversation begin, initiated it, and when you've taken the steps to unfold, and unpack the beauties of the promise of the satisfying gifts that God gives to those who come to Him, and when you've confronted sin, and when you've warned the people that they have to turn from false worship to true worship, if you've done all of that, then you can leave it to God to unveil the truth concerning Himself. That's the divine work. That's what heaven has to do.

Like Lydia--Remember the lady Lydia?--the Lord opened her heart. The vision of Christ, seeing Christ is the divine work, the divine work. Admittedly most of the time you may engage yourself in a conversation like that. You may walk away with no knowledge of the result. Certainly that's happened to me many, many times. But that's not your job. Only God can unveil the truth concerning His Son. Jesus said that. Jesus said, "The only people who are going to know Me are the ones to whom I disclose Myself." But it's our job to take them to that point so that the Lord can do that revelation in His sovereign purpose.

Father, we thank You for our time together this morning as we have tried to condense this amazing account into some principles that we can use and apply in our lives. We know we haven't even come close to capturing the wonder of all of this. We're so feeble in handling these vast, profound encounters with the Son of God on the pages of this gospel. Our failing and weak efforts notwithstanding, Lord, we still can see the picture. And we ask, Lord, that You might give us the privilege to sit down in our own lives with people who don't know You and start with the glories and the promises, the soul-satisfying gifts of gospel grace, and capture the interest and the desire of the sinner, and then lead that sinner to recognition of sin in the hope that they would abandon all false forms of worship. And when those are abandoned, and they seek true worship, You would from heaven open their eyes and open their hearts and reveal Your Son. That's our prayer. Use us to that end, we pray.

Father, we ask now that You would grant the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ to the hearts of those who are here who have been in darkness. We ask that they would see who have never seen before, that they would hear who have never heard, that they would understand who have never understood, and that by Your mighty regenerating power through the Holy Spirit, You would awaken them and let them see Christ in all His glory. Bring salvation, not just for our sake, O Lord, but for Yours, and for Your eternal glory that we may forever praise You. Thank You that we've been able to worship today, thank You for all the true worshipers. May we be faithful to be worshipers in every aspect of our lives, giving You honor, bowing the knee before You, and would You use us, Lord, to be the instrument by which others will bow as well? We give You praise and thanksgiving in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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