

<b>Series:</b> Heart of Worship	<b>Reference:</b> John 4:7-24	<b>Title:</b> Humble, Honest, Intentional	<b>Date:</b> 10.03.2021
<b>Website Writeup:</b> Today we peek into a conversation between Jesus & the Samaritan woman at the well to allow Jesus to teach us what true worshippers are as He did her.			

### **COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES**

This is our last sermon of our series focusing on the heart of worship, addressing the need to love God & others while daily living out an attitude of grateful worship. The way we live reveals what we value most. God calls for worship of our entire being, what we do in life reflects our worship of Christ. Worship is all-encompassing gratitude, overflowing to others.

Today we'll touch on the story of the Samaritan woman the well in John 4 which we studied a few months back, but we'll approach it differently today. Jesus's ministry had taken him into Samaria en route to Galilee. The intentional short route given normally a Jew would take the circuitous way around to avoid any contact with Samaritans. Not only would a rabbi not associate with a Samaritan, but he'd never speak to a woman. Yet, Jesus engages her, an outcast & somewhat immoral Samaritan woman with a thirst only He can fill.

The history of the Samaritans dated back to the Assyrian Empire coming to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in approximately 721bc. This resulted in exiling a great number of Hebrew people to different countries & importing a number of Assyrians into Israel. Those people intermarried with the remaining Hebrew people, and as a result, the Samaritan people were born.

When the Babylonians invaded in approximately 600bc, the reign of the Assyrians ended. This allowed many Hebrew people to begin returning to the Northern Kingdom. During the reign of Artaxerxes, a Jewish cupbearer by the name of Nehemiah desired to return to Jerusalem to repair the Temple walls. After his arrival, he attempted to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem, but was opposed by the inhabitants of Samaria (Nehemiah 4:1-2). Amidst varying struggles, the conflict continued for centuries & was very intense by the time of Jesus.

When Jesus comes to Samaria, He stops at a well which had been dug by the Hebrew patriarch Jacob. Jesus rests, while some of his disciples head back into town for supplies. While He waits, a Samaritan woman approaches Jesus seeking water. The story's filled with all types of imagery which speaks to the importance of worship.

It's found in your pew Bibles on p726. Turn & read along with me in John 4:7-24...  
*When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew & I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a*

drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God & who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him & he would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup>“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with & the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well & drank from it himself, as did also his sons & his livestock?”

<sup>13</sup>Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty & have to keep coming here to draw water.” <sup>16</sup>He told her, “Go, call your husband & come back.” <sup>17</sup>“I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup>The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

<sup>19</sup>“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” <sup>21</sup>“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>Yet a time is coming & has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit & in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit & in truth.”

This woman was many things, but let’s focus on the fact that she was a Samaritan. From this interaction, I want to point out today that **the Holy Spirit will guide us into worship when we’re humble, honest & intentional.**

Perhaps the most important piece to this conversation relates to Jesus’s promise of living water. He uses the term ‘living water’ which she’d know He couldn’t get there. That well was a cistern which caught rain water. Living water had two meanings. Firstly, running water like a stream. Secondly, a term associated with the Holy Spirit. He’s playing on words, using the situation to address her dissatisfaction & thirst. So this conversation is really about how she tries to satisfy her souls thirst in unhealthy & misguided ways. The woman came looking for water which would sustain her for a period of time, but Jesus wanted to supply her with water which would never leave her lacking (4:14).

In His conversation with the woman, Jesus speaks to her honestly about her personal situation. He calls her to **accept that life, with its choices & pursuits, impacts our ability to worship.** Those choices & pursuits come in two different forms.

Firstly, they come in our personal pursuit of desire, which in & of itself isn’t bad, except **when desire is misplaced & usurps Jesus’ direction & lordship.** When emotions & desire are elevated to that which we think will fulfill rather than Jesus.

When self-denial of errant or overwhelming desire becomes a bad word instead of the mature path to spiritual formation. Desire becomes perverted when we allow it to control, whether out of pride, or like this woman, maybe just tiredness, escape, or self-preservation. A woman seeking security in men & not in God's greater desire for her.

Secondly, and maybe more importantly, our choices & pursuits impact worship in **the bifurcation or division of truth**. The picking & choosing of what I want to believe from God's Word & leaving the rest. The pride of elevating the human intellect above God's direction & wisdom. Think of it as making a cake. If you had all the ingredients laid out, but only chose to use a part or half of them, your cake may be edible, but it wouldn't be something people would want to eat. God's Word must be ingested from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 & everything in-between. Not that we understand it all, but that we pursue understanding, slow-baking over a lifetime. That it's authoritative as God's direct communication to humanity.

Although our will & desire bristle at God's directives at times, we must remember two things. When God says 'do this' He means do that which brings wholeness & life. When He says 'don't do that' He says don't do that which harms & brings death. My wife's currently reading through the Bible. She's amazed how God outlines in Deuteronomy 27 & 28, in both positive & negative senses, all the things which would happen to the Israelites in the future if they chose to do certain things. If they choose to obey God, they'll enjoy fruitfulness & blessing. If not, destruction awaits. Both lists are long. But, the Israelites often chose disobedience, and the negative came to pass as God said!

The mature Christian understands, we can't blame God for our circumstances & choices if we don't listen. Obedience translating to a pursuit of holiness & purity, reflective of true worship. We can only blame ourselves. God warns & guides. When we deny His direction we take life into our own hands. Due to our sinful nature, emotion & desire don't serve us well as guides for our soul. Something hard to get across in a sound-byte filled, instant-gratification society.

This woman's chosen to pursue something other than God in the hopes of fulfillment. It hasn't satisfied, and brought misery, which Jesus gently points out. Yet, He only uses that as a springboard to address that which should be her starting point: the worship of God in Spirit & Truth, the only thing which brings wholeness & satisfaction. **Her initial request of living water creates a bridge Jesus can draw her across, speaking to her heart about what's really needed: worship in Spirit & Truth which takes humility, honesty & intentionality, as we repent & turn to Christ in obedience.**

For this Samaritan woman, an impoverished interpretation of the law both fueled & impaired her worship. Believe it or not, her lack of orthodoxy in theological issues, stood in her way of true worship. We love to speak in heart & feeling language in the church these days, but we have to realize, Jesus was very much about our theology being in line with how God reveals Himself in the Scriptures. Exactly because, theology means *the study of the nature of God*. So, good theology is to seek & understand intimacy with the heart of God!

However, Samaritans had centered worship in a certain place, and limited the Scripture they'd accept only to the Torah/Pentateuch - the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the Bible. They rejected the Prophets & other writings of the remaining Old Testament. Realize, this woman brings up a theological argument as to where God should be worshiped. The Jews emphasized Mt. Moriah, the Samaritans, Mt. Gerizim.<sup>1</sup> And Jesus is setting her straight, not to harp on her mistake, but to bring her fully into what it means to worship Him.

Furthermore, as one commentator states, *“The Samaritans founded their claim on the historic fact that when Moses instructed the people concerning the entrance into the Promised Land, he commanded that they set up an altar on Mount Ebal & that the tribes should be divided, half on Ebal & half on Gerizim. As the Levites read the Law, the people responded antiphonally [chanting back & forth]. Those on Gerizim pronounced the blessings of God & those on Ebal, the curses of God on sin (Deut 27:1–28:68 & the very passage my wife was amazed at). The Jews held that since Solomon had been commissioned to build the temple in Jerusalem, the center of worship would be located there. The controversy was endless, and Jesus did not intend to allow himself to be drawn into a futile discussion.”*<sup>2</sup>

This dialogue sets the stage for Jesus's key teaching on true worship. According to Jesus, God's primary concern with worshippers is the intent of their hearts, not the location of their bodies (John 4:21–23). In fact, Jesus left the woman dumbfounded when He proclaimed, *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit & truth”* (John 4:24).

Richard Foster says, *“Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father. Its central reality is found in spirit & truth.’ It's kindled only when the Spirit of God touches human spirit. Forms & rituals don't produce worship, nor does the disuse of forms & rituals. We can use all the right techniques & methods, we can have the best possible liturgy, but we haven't worshiped the Lord until Spirit touches spirit.”*<sup>3</sup>

I spoke with a young woman this week who has a strong aversion to church. It's not because she doesn't believe in Christ, as a matter of fact she does. Rather it's because she grew up in a very legalistic church, putting too much weight on forms of worship rather than the heart of it. It's unfortunate that she now has a difficulty finding a church since little things trigger her so easily. *Leadership has to strive towards the art of worship which is to provide freedom within structure, bolstered & guided by good teaching & practice. In that structure are healthy boundaries & directives. But there can be a variety of connecting points with the Spirit of God through various forms.*

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<sup>1</sup> Utley, R. J. D. (1999). *Vol. Volume 4: The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John*. Study Guide Commentary Series (44). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>2</sup> Tenney, *John and Acts*, 55

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* [New York: HarperCollins, 1999], 158–59, Kindle

Imagine our life of worship like an expansive tract of land like a giant national park which we couldn't fully explore in this lifetime. That expanse fenced in to keep us from wandering off God's land & protect from the dangers beyond. Imagine all the different plants, fruit, places, rocks, sunsets & sunrises to be various forms of worship which connect us to the Divine. We tend to camp in one area where we're comfortable, but we can wander & explore all the other sights & experiences.

Such as going to a family members church which is more liturgical & uses only an organ & hymns. If you've ever experienced the morning service at Church of the Saviour in Wayne, under Ron Matthews leadership, you can't deny that it's great worship - but it's very different than here. My wife took a worship day this week at Longwood Gardens, sitting in nature, soaking up the sun, reading Scripture & praying. Kim & I worship when we backpack, maybe more so than any other time! Rob Shaeffer writes songs. And I have a rule of life I try to keep in order to foster a lifestyle of worship & intimacy with God included here...

### **RULE OF LIFE**

#### **Daily (Monday-Friday)**

- No computer or phone for the first 2 hours after waking of which includes a 1 hour quiet/prayer/worship time.
  - In that time recite both the Shema & the Lord's Prayer (printed on last page)
- Social media used only for work
- Be prayerful throughout the day for opportunities & people
- Listen to worship in the car, or on Alexa
- Walk (with Kim when possible)
- Read a chapter of something inspiring
- Walk nightly alone & pray at the bench on the trail.
- Nightly Examen asking, "Where did the Holy Spirit lead & meet me throughout my day?"
  - Recite the Shema again before going to sleep.

#### **Weekly**

- Monday Sabbath/Disconnect
- Corporate Worship
- Community Group
- Phone call with a good friend
- Men's Breakfast on Fridays

#### **Monthly**

- Spiritual direction with Bill Elander

#### **Bi-annually**

- Short Backpacking Trip, even if alone

#### **Annually**

- Longer Backpacking Trip
- Family Vacation
- Vineyard National/Regional Conference
- One other conference or spiritual retreat
- Men's Retreat

Some of you like using the Lectio Divina model which is an ancient practice of 'holy reading'. Some of you hate it, which is fine (video explanation of this practice from the American Bible Society can be found here: <https://youtu.be/ftoyZ4kvSgg>). We have a book in the back which outlines spiritually formative practices some have found helpful. Chuck seems to worship by learning more & more about archeology & history, and how they do nothing

but uphold the biblical narrative - he gets excited talking about it. The Christies worship through service.

We can't diminish the value of spiritual disciplines, but they need to be put in proper perspective, and as my wife likes to say, they need switching up to stay fresh. But we should be aware, there are more than a few imperatives the New Testament gives us, 1050 to be exact which play into a lifestyle of worship! From not giving up meeting together, since there's something to our worship that goes beyond the personal & can only be achieved in community with others. We're urged to practice the breaking of bread/communion together. As well as to be baptized if possible. To continually repent & confess to one another. To think on certain things & not others, or encourage one another, build each other up, and to pray for our enemies, etc.

Jesus's instruction to the woman about admitting her need (4:10), being honest about her situation (4:16–18), and accepting God's gift (4:21–25), and her willingness to tell others (4:39–42) all point to an all encompassing gratitude expressed in worship! If we're to worship as God intends, we must be willing to discipline ourselves to hear from God. There are many disciplines which aid in this process. Personal disciplines, such as prayer, Bible study, fasting, meditation, confession, service, giving, solitude, etc., all help to point us more effectively toward God in worship.

Sometimes the best way to set your mind to worship is to focus on the person of God. As we focus on the person of God, we're invited to consider the work of Jesus. When we consider the person of Jesus, we're drawn into what it means to be able to worship Him. Brooke Ligertwood wrote, *What a Beautiful Name*, to celebrate Jesus & His work to bring redemption. Here's her explanation of the song: <https://youtu.be/b6snOjooZDU>.

So, like this Samaritan woman, the Holy Spirit will guide us into worship when we're humble, honest & intentional. She listened, accepted what He said, which translated to transformation & led to immediate gratitude & overflow of the Gospel to others!

If we're to worship God in spirit & truth, then we must be willing to examine ourselves while considering His majesty. Sometimes worship will be a time of celebration, joy & mystery. Other times it will be times of repentance, sadness & even loss. However, when we worship God in spirit & truth, we're inviting God to examine us while trusting Him to care for us in our most vulnerable state. To worship in Spirit & Truth is to worship God through Christ & the complete Scriptures which speak of Him. Worshiping God from our hearts, and doing so with others as they learn to worship, will help us find a deeper understanding of how we were all built.

Your homework today is to write your own Rule of Life...What will you do daily, weekly, monthly & yearly to connect with & worship God? What will be your worship rhythm? Make it doable & life-giving, including both personal, as well as corporate action points.

## **The Shema Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

*<sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup>Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home & when you walk along the road, when you lie down & when you get up. <sup>8</sup>Tie them as symbols on your hands & bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup>Write them on the doorframes of your houses & on your gates.*

## **The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6:9-13**

<sup>9</sup>“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup>your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread.  
<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.’