

“True Worship”
John 4:20-24
(Preached at Trinity, April 4, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, Jesus entered Samaria by Divine appointment. There was a sinful Samaritan woman who had been ordained to eternal life. Jesus made His way into Samaria and arrived at Jacob's well at precisely the right moment to intercept the adulterous Samaritan woman.
2. The Samaritan woman regularly made the journey to the well to draw water for her household needs. It was a first century drudgery that she could not avoid. Arriving at the well she was surprised to find a Jewish man sitting by the well and even more surprised when He asked her for a drink and engaged her in conversation.
John 4:9 NAU - "Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"
3. Jesus shared with her her great need of the Living Water that only He could supply but understanding such spiritual truths was beyond her comprehension.
John 4:10-11 NAU - "Jesus answered and said to her, "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." ¹¹ She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"
4. Just as Nicodemus in the previous chapter, she was only capable of thinking in terms of physical, temporal realities. She was blind to the corruption of her sin and of her need for a Savior. Jesus turns to the issue of her sin. Jesus demonstrated that He knows all about her – all of her secret sins.
John 4:16 NAU - "Go, call your husband and come here."
5. The woman persisted in skirting the issue of her sin
 - A. She immediately pretended her sin didn't exist
"I have no husband." As if to say, "Husband, what husband? I don't have a husband."
 - B. Then she turned to "religious talk," as if to change the subject away from her sin. Human beings are religious by nature. Men use religion to avoid dealing truly with their sin in Biblical repentance and faith in Christ.
 - a. She reflected a misinformed incomplete understanding of Christ
John 4:19 NAU - "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."
 - b. She engaged in religious conversation void of the essential truth
John 4:20 NAU - "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

- c. The Samaritans were religious, but it was a man-made religion. As descendants of the northern kingdom, they had long-ago abandoned the true worship of God. They determined how God would be approached. They determined the location of the temple and the way to worship God. It was as religion of human imagination. Religion will never bring a solution to our sin. We need God's solution of a redeemer. This is the meaning of our Lord's words:
John 4:22 NAU - "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."
- d. All of the covenants, all of the oracles, all of God's dealings with Israel had the single purpose of pointing to Christ – salvation of from the Jews.
6. Jesus then makes a profound statement about the nature of worship
John 4:23-24 NAU - "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. ²⁴ "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
7. Jesus signified that a change is occurring - "But an hour is coming, and now is"
- A. Jesus was ushering in His Kingdom
1. The preaching of Jesus maintained a focus on the arrival of His Kingdom
Mark 1:14-15 NAU - "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
 2. It was the Kingdom promised to the fathers. Jesus sent forth His disciples to announce the arrival of the Kingdom
Matthew 10:5-7 NAU - "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; ⁶ but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"
 3. The citizens of this Kingdom worship the King
 The Magi came seeking to worship Him
Matthew 2:1-2 NAU - "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."
- B. This is the nature of the New Covenant
Jeremiah 31:33-34 NAU - "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."
1. It is a holy Kingdom and its citizens are a holy people. They have an intimate knowledge of the King and love His Law.

2. It is a Kingdom of worshippers
1 Peter 2:9 NAS - "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"
 8. Jesus makes some statements about the nature of this worship.
 "the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
 He declares that true worship must be in spirit and in truth.
 - a. True worship is spiritual
 - b. True worship must be centered upon truth
 - c. For the father seeks such to be His worshippers.
- I. True worship is spiritual
- A. It is not confined to a particular place.
 1. The Jewish worship was confined to Jerusalem. Sacrifices were confined to the Temple. The mercy seat was confined to a particular place. This was by God's design and command. But the Temple was about to be destroyed. The shadow was now shining forth in all its brightness.
 2. The Samaritans also insisted upon a particular place – Mount Gerizim This was by human origin without the command of God.
 3. Old Covenant worship looked forward to Christ
John 4:22 NAU - "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."
 Jesus was telling this Samaritan woman that the Jews held the key to salvation. What He was saying was Jewish worship in Jerusalem was proper because of what it pointed to. All of the promises pointed to Christ. It wasn't the Temple that made it accepted. The Temple would soon be destroyed. The true sacrifice would be offered up by God's true Temple – Jesus Christ.
 4. God's worship in the New Covenant is not confined to a particular place – The focus is upon Christ. Where His people gather for worship it is holy. True worshippers come from every tribe and nation.
 1689 LBC 22:6 – *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day* – "Neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the Gospel, tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed; but God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth."

- B. True worship is not dependent upon the outward display of religion
1. The priestly garments were ordered by God
 2. The Temple decorations were exquisite according to God's authority and design
 3. God did not allow, however, decorations or practices of human invention. Nadab and Abihu were killed for inventing their own incense. God's incense was for Him alone.
Exodus. 30:37-38 NAU - "The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD. ³⁸ "Whoever shall make *any* like it, to use as perfume, shall be cut off from his people."
 4. New Covenant worship is simple—void of elements of human imagination. It is a spiritual worship wrought in the hearts of those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 5:18-19 NAU - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord"

II. True worship must be centered upon truth

- A. It must be true worship – What is true worship?
Many have difficulty defining worship
1. True worship is Trinitarian - directed to the Father, through the Son, by the leading and direction of the Holy Spirit
 2. True worship is made possible through the Son. As our Mediator, access to the Father is only possible through Jesus Christ.
John 14:6 NAS - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."
 3. True worship demands recognizing God's infinite greatness, majesty, and glory and bowing in homage and submission to Him. In Scripture, coming before God was never a casual or common affair. Coming before God always demanded bowing in humble submission.
 4. Preaching must be theologically accurate.
Our singing must be theologically accurate.
Our preaching must be theologically accurate. This is why expository preaching is important – it allows the Biblical text to direct the sermon.
 - a. True worship demands theological accuracy – In other words, true worship demands worshipping the true God; worshipping God as He is
 - b. We must worship according to the truth of God. God is a Spirit and as a most Holy Spirit He demands spiritual worship.
D. A. Carson – "God is spirit" means that God is invisible, divine as opposed to human, life-giving and unknowable to human beings unless he chooses to reveal himself."¹

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 225.

- c. William Hendriksen – “Worshiping *in spirit and truth* can only mean rendering such homage to God that the entire heart enters into the act, and in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in his Word. Such worship, therefore, will not only be spiritual instead of physical, inward instead of outward, but it will also be directed to the true God as set forth in Scripture and as displayed in the work of redemption.²
- 5. True worship demands the elements of worship that God commands – known as the Regulative Principle of Worship: prayer, the reading and exposition of the Word, songs, hymns, and spiritual songs, the observance of the ordinances.
1689 LBC 22:5 – *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day* – “The reading of the Scriptures, preaching and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, are all parts of religious worship of God”
- B. True worship demands true worshippers
"true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth"
 - 1. Those who look to Christ alone. It includes all who receive Christ in faith and repentance. It would include the Gentiles. It would include this sinful Samaritan woman.
 - 2. True worshippers are those who worship God in true sincerity – a true heart towards God. Only God can give such a heart. Since we are born spiritually dead it demands a transformation. At this point the Samaritan could not think beyond her carnal understanding –
"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain"
 - 3. Worship is an activity of the saints of God. Worship must never be ordered in such a manner as to focus on the interests of lost people.

² William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 1:167.

III. For the father seeks such to be His worshippers.

- A. In other words there is worship that God desires
1. He desires His people to come before Him in praise and adoration
 2. He desires His people to declare His greatness, to recognize His supremacy.
 3. He desires worship that has Him as the singular focus.
A. W. Pink – "True worship, spiritual worship, is quiet, reverential, occupying the worshipper with God Himself; and the effect is to leave him with a peaceful heart and a rejoicing spirit."³
- B. God does not desire:
1. Carnal worship invented in the imaginations of men.
1689 LBC 22:1 – *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day* – "The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."
 2. God does not desire dead worship without hearts enflamed with His glory.
 - a. Jesus warned of those in His day who only gave lip-service to their worship. True worship is worship free of hypocrisy.
Matthew 15:7-9 NAS - "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ⁸ 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. ⁹ 'But in vain do they worship Me"
 - b. Zeal alone is no sign of genuine worship. One of the greatest displays of religious zeal took place at the foot of Mount Sinai as they danced around the golden calf.
Exodus. 32:17-18 NAU - "Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp." ¹⁸ But he said, "It is not the sound of the cry of triumph, Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat; But the sound of singing I hear."

Conclusion:

1. True worship is God's holy people bowing before Him in submission, praise, and adoration. Such worship is good and pleasing in His sight. There is no greater blessing than to be one of God's worshippers.
2. Matthew Henry writes: "That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers; his *seeking* such worshippers implies his *making* them such. God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshippers."⁴

³ Arthur Walkington Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1923–1945), 209.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1937.