

“Let Our Worship be True!”

John 4:7-26

Intro. – How many here today can confidently say their refrigerators are clean? Now by clean, I’m speaking concerning the outside. I can remember when our kids were growing up, Mary would hang anything and everything on the refrigerator. Our refrigerator doors looked just like a lot of yours... Bible School papers, school papers, crayon drawings, pictures, and other mementoes of our kids decorated not only the doors, but both sides as well. Why is it these “mementoes” mean so much that we turn our refrigerators into Chia Pets?

Let me illustrate this by making reference to “gifts of love”. You know what I mean. While Adam and Marah were growing up they both said and did things that were absolutely a scream. Mary and I kept “records” (box for each). Here are a few examples of what I mean: One night we were sitting at supper. Mary and I got word that Adam was being pestered by another kid. I asked, “Is this kid treating you all right?” “Yea, he’s being mean in a nice way.” Marah asked her mother one night, “Does Grandma Nichols have any kids?”... Things like this are what I’d like to refer to as “gifts of love.”

Illus. – Suzzane Nichols, no relation, had her toddler shopping one day when a heavily tattooed man strolled by. Suzzane said daughter’s eyes grew wide as she said, “I’ll bet his mom took away all his markers!”

What makes these “gifts of love” so great? Communication of love is dependent upon the intent of the giver. The product of our kids’ labor is valued not so much because of its quality but because of its aim, its intent.

Let me illustrate it this way. If I gave Mary a ’57 Studebaker Golden Hawk or a ’65 GTO for her birthday, do you think she’d be thrilled? Hardly! Mary knows I’m the car guy and she’s not the car gal! My point? -- no matter how nice the gift, if the recipient even faintly suspects you are really doing this for yourself, the gift loses its credibility – i.e. its ability to communicate genuine love.

With all this in mind, let me ask what is the main intent/reason people *go to church*? Sadly, many people in the U.S. *go to church* for one reason: what they get out of it.

Illus. – George Barna *What Americans Are Doing Today* wrote the following: “People belong to two or more churches (of different convictions) and many ‘belong’ to as many as five at the same time. They get all the mailing material and pick out the place which will *meet their needs &/or be a blessing to them...*”

Point: if you *go to church* for what you GET out of the music, youth program, Bible School lesson, sermon or what you can GET out of the worship assembly you have missed the point, you have missed the mark!

All of this brings me to our text and purpose. John 4 is one of the most significant passages on the matter of worship. In vv 20-24 the term *worship* is used no less than eight times. Jesus responds to the inquiry of this Samaritan woman concerning true worship by saying, “*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*”

Purpose: to see that true worship of God focuses on giving to Him and not getting from Him

I DEFINING WORSHIP

- just what is worship? Ask 12 people and you’ll get 12 different answers.

A. Honor Given

1. “Worship is honor given to a superior being”

a. honor is a simple enough term to understand – respect, regard, recognize, uphold, homage

b. Romans 13:7 “*Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*”

c. Illus. – Jim Dickson was giving instructions to his communication-skills class in delivering a public speech. “Avoid using slang words and expressions,” he told them. “I’ll grade you down if I hear any *dudes, babes, cools, likes, or you knows.*” From the back of the room a voice responded, “*Bummer!*”

2. In Bible *worship* is used indiscriminately to refer to homage given to idols, material things, or to the true God. Note: *worship* in itself is not a holy word, it only describes honor being given.

B. Kissing the Hand

1. The NT word for “worship” is προσκυνεω (proskuneo) bow

2. It simply means “to kiss toward, kiss the hand or prostrate one’s self.”
3. Thus the idea of worship is to prostrate one’s self before a superior being with awe, respect, honor.
 - Illus. – as sung in a song by Aretha Franklin back 60’s suggests, we ought to be all about giving honor and r-e-s-p-e-c-t to God!
4. In Christian context, we bow before God in respect and honor—we give Him the glory because of Who He is – Creator and Redeemer!

C. Consuming Desire

1. Essentially, *true worship* is a consuming desire to GIVE – give honor and respect to God
 - Illus. – Warren Buffet (44 billion to Gates foundation) “There is more than one way to get to heaven, but this is a great way.” ...
2. Everyone in the world worships their gods – i.e. everyone has a consuming desire to GIVE to that one or thing which captivates their allegiance.
3. Illus. – Visiting preacher was filling in for popular preacher Henry Ward Beecher. A large audience had assembled to hear the famed preacher. At the appointed time, the visiting preacher rose to preach. Learning that Beecher was not to preach, several in the crowd began to make their way to the exits. The visiting preacher called out, “All who have come here today to worship Henry Ward Beecher may now withdraw from the building. All who have come to worship God, keep your seats!”
4. This is what our Lord meant when He said, “*worship in spirit and truth*” = defining worship!

II DEPICTING WORSHIP

- although our text doesn’t directly depict worship, our Lord does so elsewhere in His Word:
- A. The Fragrance of the Tabernacle’s Incense
 1. Exodus 30:34-38 – positioned before the Holy of Holies, altar incense = fragrant offering to God
 2. Note: this perfume, which actually was sweet smelling incense, was to be used only in the Tabernacle. Why? It was to be *holy*!
 3. The loveliest fragrance imaginable was to be exclusive, so exclusive that it would cost them their lives if they made it for any other reason.
 4. What then is the point?
 - a. here was a fragrance exclusively for God – smell that rose to His nose was unique to Him
 - b. clearly this was to depict *true worship* – separate holy acts that rise from our hearts to the very nostrils of God Himself.
 - B. The Fragrance of Mary’s Ointment
 1. John 12:1-3
 2. Mary of Bethany used that which was her glory (her hair – 1 Cor. 11:15), to wash dirty feet of X
 3. Mary didn’t use water, used costly, fragrant ointment = essence of worship = self-humbling and profuse in giving!
 4. As the fragrance rose from this ointment, this portrayed the essence of a worshipping heart!!
 5. True worship is better than welfare and religious activity:
 - a. Judas complained Mary’s act (John 12:5) “...*given to the poor*” – v 6 wasn’t concerned about poor
 - b. v 7 Christ said, “*leave her alone... for the poor you always have*”
 - c. i.e. it’s far better to worship the Lord than to give welfare – note: not saying not important to give and care for others... what we give to God is infinitely more important what give to man!

III DISTINGUISHING WORSHIP

- back in time of text and now – people confuse *ministry* with *worship*
 - Samaritan women knew wasn’t living life she should... so she brings up worship to divert subject matters from her husband(s) and one she was living with then
 - Christ responds, but not anything like she expected:
- A. That Which Descends is Ministry

1. We must carefully make distinction of *ministry* and *worship* to God.
2. Ministry is that which comes down from Father, through Son, in power of H.S. i.e. ministry is that which *God gives us* (abilities, opportunities etc.)
 - Illus. – Job or Ministry (read) ...
3. Ministry is good/necessary, but please don't mistake *ministry* as *worship*!

B. That Which Ascends is Worship

1. Worship is that which goes up from us to God, i.e. worship is that which we GIVE to God
 - Illus. – James Kennedy “*Most people think of the church as a drama with the (preacher) as the chief actor, God as the prompter, and the congregation as the critic. What is actually the case is that the congregation is the chief actor, the (preacher) is the prompter, and God is the critic.*”
 2. Obviously, woman at the well did not have this distinction down – frankly, nor do we!
 - today we tend to be too ministry oriented and not worship oriented enough – too much Martha in us and not enough Mary... i.e. too willing to hold to *good matters* to the exclusion of *best matters*...
- ministry is that which descends from God to us while worship is that which ascends from us to God = BOTH MUST BE KEPT IN BALANCE!

Conclusion: When Queen Victoria had just ascended her throne, she went, as was and is the custom of British royalty, to hear Handel's *Messiah* performed. She was instructed by royal advisors, that she must not rise when all others stood at the Hallelujah Chorus. Well, the Chorus came and everyone stood, but not Victoria as per the royal advisor's instructions.

But when the musicians and singers came to that part where it says, “King of kings and Lord and lords,” the young queen, in spite of royal custom, rose to her feet and bowed her head until the final “hallelujah!”

If you know anything about the life of Queen Victoria, you know this wasn't a spectacle, a production or an act. I use this to illustrate that *true worship* is never this either! Today there are so many “dog and pony shows” being promoted in the name of *worship*, while all the time the focus of such events is anything but giving to God!

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. Brethren and friend do you understand what this means? Do you know what *true worship* is and that such is what God not only deserves but desires? If you and I are going to give God *true worship* we must first know what it is and then wholly and completely do what it is!

Let our worship be true!