

The Worship God Desires

John 4:20-30

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Introduction: Have you ever told someone that you were a Christian or a member of a specific church only to be peppered with questions about what you think about a variety of things? I recently preached a gospel message at Juvenile Hall and then opened it up for questions. First question was, “What do you think will happen on December 21st? Will the world actually end?”

My message had been about the God / Man person named Jesus Christ and the need to trust Him to get you to heaven and not your own goodness or religion. The questions I got were not about that at all. I have preached my heart out at times about Jesus only to have someone ask me if I thought a certain Greek word came from a Hebrew or Caldean word because they sounded sort of the same. The compelling question was about words and meanings in their mind and not about Jesus Christ, God the Son in human form.

This does not just happen to us followers of Jesus. The same thing happened repeatedly to Jesus. People wanted to talk about anything BUT “who Jesus was and is.” The event we will read about today takes place outside the city gate of a Samaritan city. Jesus had deliberately taken the road through Samaria on His way back to Galilee. This was uncommon for a Jew. He does so in order to speak to and reveal Himself to a certain troubled woman He meets at the well. The woman was surprised on two accounts and said,

John 4:9 "How is it that **you, a Jew**, ask for a drink from me, **a woman** of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Jesus, ignoring the question offers to satisfy the spiritual thirst of her inner self.

John 4:14 ¹⁴whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

But she is only able to think about physical needs of her outer self.

John 4:15 "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Jesus offers to explain if she will just go and call her husband. His purpose in so doing was clearly to show this woman....and us here today.....that Jesus Christ knows everything about your life and thoughts. A good part of our culture, religion and morality depends on us keeping the workings of our inner man from one another. But the inner person of the spirit is what God most cares about. He scrutinizes it at its deepest level.

That is where the real us lives. Not this washed and groomed person, but the one that believes we are all alone with our thoughts and ambitions. God knows us all fully...

Hebrews 4:12-13 ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Let's read how this meeting concludes.

John 4:20-30 ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." ²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

This passage reveals some important things about Jesus that every human should know.

- God is only known and worshiped in our inner man [20-24]
- God knows every detail of our lives and thoughts [25-27]
- Christ Himself and not religion is the gospel and the attraction [28-30]

God is only known and worshiped in our inner man [20-24]

John 4:20-24 ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship: The woman's response to the realization that Jesus knows the secrets of her life is to simply change the subject. "Let's talk about religion," she says. I have always wanted to ask a Jew this question. "Where is the one

geographical spot in my world where we should go to find God? Does God live on our mountain or on your mountain. Is God a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or.....

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father: With these words Jesus sweeps away her preoccupation with the physical or outward appearance. The idea that a church is somehow the place where we meet God for worship is also shattered. The Church is huge in the plan of God but is not the only approved place of worship. It is the living, visible family of Christ in any given place on the Earth. As such it is dear to Christ who "loved her and gave Himself up for her!"

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews: On the other hand, "all roads do not lead to God!" Sincerity alone is not sufficient if you are sincerely wrong about who God is and how He is to be known. The Samaritans had chosen not to embrace most of the Scripture. Like many people today they do not accept the Scripture for what Christ said it was...His Word and revealed will to men. People like the Golden Rule...most of the time. We like the "do not steal or lie" parts of the Bible particularly when they are commanding someone other than ourselves.

The point here is that Jesus comments on the fact that they had picked their own Scriptures to believe. They had reverence for what they wanted to revere and not for the entire Word of the Living God. This is why he said that they worshiped in ignorance.

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: This is not some far distant time that Jesus refers to. We could possibly think that based on His first mention of it, but here he says that the hour is "now here." It clearly has to do with Him...with the appearing of God the Son in Human form. He transcends all cultural, religious and racial barriers by making a way directly back to God through the Cross.

What then are true worshipers? They are contrasted with "false worshipers," as those who believe worship is external and physical. "Outward"... so to speak, through liturgies, buildings, spoken or written prayers, certain dress or even certain types of music.

Will worship the Father in spirit and truth: True worshipers are not doing something. They are in love with and adoring God. Their worship goes on in the inner man...unseen to all but God Himself.

The Father is seeking such people to worship him: Religion, ritual and self righteousness can never lead back to God. Because they are all about what we do for God. Salvation is exclusively about what God has done for us. God is seeking men and women who know this truth. He is seeking men and women who know the spiritual nature of God and approach Him in their inner self with trust and submission.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth: God is spiritual while we are both physical and spiritual. It is categorically not true that our

physical being is evil and our spiritual side is good. Jesus and the Apostles both warned us against such an idea.

The truth is that our entire being is fallen. Our minds do not think clearly, our hearts deceive us and our bodies seek to rule us.

1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Jeremiah 17:9 ⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Mark 7:20-23 ²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

God knows every detail of our lives and thoughts [25-27]

John 4:25-27 ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." ²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"

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.": She is still kicking the can down the road. I know some Bible verses. I know that the Messiah will come someday. He will know everything and will tell us all things....someday."

She picked up on the words "the hour is coming" but like many people today she missed the part where Jesus said, "and now is!" Her world like the Jewish one just to the south was awash in religion while being parched for the knowledge of God Himself. God came to what He created and they ignored Him. They preferred their mountain in Samaria or the one in Jerusalem over the living God they professed to worship there. This is the great tragedy of religion. It is always about what we do for God and misses what He has done for us.

Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he.": I am always amazed when people say that Jesus never claimed to be God, but that the disciples made Him into one after He died. Here this woman says that the Messiah will know all things. She knows that Messiah will be omniscient and that is an attribute of God alone. Jesus responds with "I who speak to you am he!"

Martha also nearly missed the reality of Christ while thinking about some distant future event. While her brother Lazarus lay in the tomb...

John 11:23-25 ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

Jesus also said:

John 5:25-27 ²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

John 10:30-33 ³⁰ I and the Father are one." ³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" ³³ The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

John 17:1-2 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?": The Disciples return and they too are amazed that a Jewish man is speaking to any woman, let alone to a Samaritan women. But, at least they had the good sense to just observe and not say anything stupid. Clearly they were all thinking these things but they were silent. This was a good call for them because what happens next is the turning point in the narrative.

The woman drops her jar.....hopefully she set it down because it was certainly terra cotta.....and she goes into the town without saying anything else to Jesus. She has not discovered Jesus. Jesus has discovered her! He came for her! He revealed Himself to Her.

Christ Himself is the gospel and the attraction....not religion [28-30]

John 4:28-30 ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people: As we observed last week the woman was coming alone to draw water at the heat of the day and not during the cool of the morning when all the town's women would typically draw.

We then discovered that she has had a series of unfulfilling relationships with men and that she is presently living with a man who is not her husband. She was, in that culture, not the most popular woman in town....at least among the other women.

So here comes this well known woman into the city in the middle of the day. People have stopped work for lunch [remember the disciples had just gone into the town to buy food]. She shows up while everyone is available and begins to invite the entire city to come out to see Jesus by saying...

"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did: Now look back at verse 25. This lady believes that when the Messiah comes he will be able to "tell us all things." This is why she begins to strongly speculate to the townsfolk...

Can this be the Christ? What is it that brought her to this point? The realization that God knows her in her inner person. And here is something even more important....The recognition that even with full knowledge Jesus does not condemn but offers her eternal life instead. Religion and morality had doomed her and condemned her....but here was a man who told her all that she ever did while offering her "living water that gives Eternal life."

CONCLUSION: What can we conclude from this event? Several things for sure:

Jesus knows all things. He knows where you will be at noon tomorrow. You may think you know but He actually knows....because He knows all things!

Jesus knows that the outward things of this world cannot satisfy the inward longings of our heart. This lady had an unsatisfied heart. She was thirsting for what the heart craves. She failed to find it with five different husbands. Christ knows the longings of your heart. Every honest man will admit before God that there are things of the heart that are unfulfilled. Most humans are pursuing outward things in the hope that they will satisfy their inner needs. They simply never do! This is why we should offer Christ and not religion or morality.

Jesus knows all our failures and sins and died for us anyway. This is most remarkable to this woman. She is thinking, if this man knows me this completely then surely he is Messiah and being Messiah [God] He will surely condemn me for my sin.

But Jesus does not condemn her. Instead He does what He still does today. He offers life to sinners. He seeks sinners and saves sinners.

Luke 15:1-2 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

Mark 2:17 ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Why does this matter to you? Because most of us spend our lives hiding from the God who already knows everything we have ever done. Not only that but He knows everything we will ever do in the future. In so doing we hide from the only one who can satisfy our inner man. He saves and satisfies based on His goodness and not on our merit. He has loved you, having always known you fully since before the earth began.

Jesus taught that the greater the sins forgiven the greater the sinners love for Christ. On one occasion while eating with a self-righteous, religious leader, a sinful woman...much like the one in our story came into the house uninvited and began to weep at the feet of Jesus and wipe off her tears with her hair. Simon...always the outwardly perfect man thinks to himself....

Luke 7:39-47 "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven- for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Go to Christ boldly as a sinner. Don't be foolish...He already knows everything and still offers forgiveness and satisfaction for the longings of your soul. He alone will satisfy your inner man. How you appear outwardly will never, ever do that.

Have mercy on the broken sinners, believer! They are seeking water and bread for the heart in the world where it can never be found. Preach the Gospel to yourselves now. Do not let yourself forget what Paul knew and wrote to Titus.....

Titus 3:3-7 ³we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ HE....SAVED.....US, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.