

Worship In Spirit And In Truth

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[0 : 00] So great to be back this morning to worship with you all. I missed you guys last week. And it's, as Steve was saying, and we're just, and he preached about actually last week, we're just like groomsmen or all the servants of God watching on as Christ is united to his church, his bride.

So that's why it's okay for me to not be here and the church goes on because the church doesn't belong to me. It belongs to God, right? And so I was sad, but I'm eager because I'm also one of his sheep and this is the group that I've covenanted with.

It's the church. I'm excited and there's joy for me as I worship with you. And as we turn to this passage, I want you to think for a moment with me about your greatest unfulfilled desire.

Just think about it for a moment, what it might be. Maybe it's a dream job that appears far-fetched at the moment or a big breakthrough in your career. Maybe it's a spouse.

You really longed for a spouse, a husband or a wife, to spend the rest of your life with. Maybe it's just getting really rich and you fantasize about all the things you might be able to do with that much money.

[1 : 19] Or maybe you're just a little more hedonistic. You'd rather live, eat good food, drink, and be merry. Or maybe you're one of those simple folks who just want to enjoy a stress-free life with your loved ones.

Whatever that may be, what if I told you right now that I can tell you exactly how you can attain those things? Then I can guarantee you that the number of attendees at our church services would swell astronomically.

Because desire is a powerful motivator. People do things that they seek. And who would be foolish to refuse such an offer? And you'd think that in this passage, Jesus here taps into the desires of the Samaritan woman in a similar way.

But he doesn't stop there. He doesn't offer her what she seeks. But he peers into her very soul and peels back the layers of self-protection that she had propped up against other people to hide her sin and shame.

And then by doing so, Jesus exposes the woman's deepest, most fundamental need and desire.

And that, namely, is eternal life. And so it says, this passage teaches that we can enjoy eternal life through the spirit and truth of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 36] That's the main point of this passage. And I'm going to talk first about the promise of eternal life. And then secondly, the condition for the eternal life that Jesus tells us about. So this unusual encounter occurs in Samaria in a town called Sychar.

Verse 1, he tells us that Jesus learned that the Pharisees took notice of Jesus' increasing popularity. Now that's an ominous sign because the Pharisees are already watching John the Baptist because he was so popular and well-regarded by the people.

And so they saw him as a threat to their own authority and popularity. And they're noticing now that Jesus is attracting even more people than John the Baptist. So they feel threatened.

And so Jesus perceiving this and recognizing that his hour, the hour of his death is not yet, doesn't want to prematurely end his ministry. So he moves away from that place.

He had already had a conflict with the Pharisees and the religious rulers in chapter 2 at the temple complex. So he leaves Judea and departs again for Galilee, he says in verses 3 and 4.

[3 : 40] And in order to do that, he had to pass through Samaria. That's the normal route that you go through. And it says in verse 6 that Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well.

It was about the sixth hour. And that's not an extraneous detail because Jews count their hours beginning with, not at midnight, but beginning with sunrise.

So if you count from sunrise, this is probably approximately noon, which is the hottest part of the day. So Jesus, understandably, is wary from his journey. He's tired and he's thirsty as he sits under the heat of the sun.

And then, so he stops because he's thirsty and he rests at the well. And this woman is there. So read verses 7 to 9 with me. A woman from Samaria came to draw water and Jesus said to her, Give me a drink.

For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

[4 : 50] For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. A woman from Samaria. That's a significant detail because as it tells us in verse 9, Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

That's a slightly erroneous translation. It doesn't actually mean that the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans because as you see in verse 8, the Jesus' disciples are dealing with Samaritans.

They're going into a Samaritan city and they're buying food.

So it's not saying that the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans, but the word that means have dealing with is more commonly translated as to use together with. So it's referring to using the same utensils, using the same vessels.

So here it better be translated as Jews do not use the same cups or vessels with Samaritans because they believe that that caused ritual impurity. So they didn't want to do that. And in order to understand this animosity, hostility between Jews and Samaritans, we have to delve a little bit into the history of Israel.

And I'll be brief in this, but Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. And the northern kingdom was invaded by the Assyrian kingdom.

[5 : 58] And they defeated Israel and then they exiled all Jews basically of any kind of substance or means or importance to their country, their kingdom. And after having exiled them, they settled, resettled the land with their own people, with foreigners.

This was about 722 BC. Second Kings talks about this in chapters 17 and 18. And so because of that, after these foreigners came in, the Jews that remained, they're intermarried with them and produced what would be basically a syncretized religion, a syncretistic religion, not a true Judaism, not a true faith in God, but a syncretized, it's an intermixed religion.

So from this, because of this, Jews saw Samaritans not only as political rebels, people who basically paid allegiance to the Assyrian kingdom, but also as racial half-breeds because they are not pure Jews.

And then thirdly, also as religious outcasts because they were not holding to the true religion of the Jews. So there is religious, political, and racial tension, hostility, animosity.

I mean, that tension that existed between them, you know, makes the divisiveness of the current presidential election like, you know, child's play, right?

[7 : 15] This is a serious animosity. And the Samaritans only accepted the Pentateuch, which is the first five books of the Bible as scripture. And so that led to different ideas about how worship should happen.

And the chief among the differences was where worship should take place. And the Jews believed that the temple in Jerusalem was the place where they ought to worship. But because the Samaritans didn't accept the portions of scripture that talked about that, they believed that they were supposed to worship God on Mount Gerizim.

And that there, they erected their own rival temple around 400 BC. And then that temple, just about two centuries later, was destroyed by a Jewish ruler.

So there's a lot of conflict and tension going on. And so she's shocked that it's remarkable that Jesus is asking the Samaritan woman for a drink.

And in order to do so, he would also have to share the same vessel, same cup. And not only is Jesus asking for a drink from a Samaritan, he's also asking for a drink from a Samaritan woman.

[8 : 22] Within a generation of Jesus' life, Jewish leaders would codify a law in the Mishnah that reflected long-standing popular sentiment and prejudice towards Samaritan woman in particular.

And in fact, it says this, it's a quote, the daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle and therefore in a perpetual state of ceremonial uncleanness. So this is what they believed.

Jesus has no regard for the sexism of his day. Right? And this Samaritan woman who had apparently grown accustomed to being ignored and overlooked and disrespected is shocked that

Jesus would approach her and speak to her and ask her for a drink.

But she doesn't realize that instead of being ceremonially defiled by contact with Samaritans, Jesus purifies everything he touches, everyone he comes into contact with. But at this point, she doesn't know this, so she's probably really thinking to herself, man, this man must be really parched.

He must be desperately thirsty, really dying of thirst. If he's asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. Yet, in the next response of Jesus, we see that he reverse this situation and to show her not that she, he's not the one that really needs a drink, but rather she's the one that desperately needs a drink of a different kind.

[9 : 42] So verse 10, Jesus says to her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

The woman was at first shocked that Jesus would approach her, speak to her. Now she's confused, right? So she replies in verses 11 to 12, Sir, you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep.

Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. So her logic is basically this, even the great patriarch Jacob had to dig his own well in order to provide water for himself and his family.

And who are you, basically, to be able to provide this living water when you have nothing to draw water with? So the confusion might be a little bit difficult to understand for us because right away when we hear living water, we think of spiritual living water.

But living water, the same phrase, is used to refer to fresh running water in the language of these people. So she's probably thinking like fresh running water, so that's why she's confused.

[10 : 54] And so Jesus explains, tries to explain this to her. And it's typical in the Gospel of John to have these double meanings, right, of a deeper spiritual meaning that underlies the physical meaning, the concrete meaning at the top.

So the water that Jesus has in mind, of course, is not physical water. So he responds in verses 13 to 14. Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. And the background for this living water is the Old Testament.

In Jeremiah 2.13, God had declared to an idolatrous people, his own people who had been idolatrous. My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

So God says that he himself is the fountain of living water. He is the source of life. He is the source of this living water, just an ending supply of fresh running water for his people.

[12 : 10] But instead of him, his people have forsaken him and they've turned to cisterns, the stagnant water of cisterns. And not just a cistern, but a broken cistern that can't even hold water.

That's the idols of the nations that Israelites were going after. And that language of living water is picked up by the other prophets and it really comes to a climax in Isaiah 55 where God invites his people, come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters that your soul may live.

That's the living water that he has in view that wells up into eternal life. It's not water to parch our thirst, it's to slake our thirst, but it's water for the withered and dried soul.

But the Samaritan woman still misunderstands Jesus. And she thinks that he's offering her some kind of miracle water that's going to permanently satisfy her physical thirst.

So she says in verse 15, Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. And it's understandable, right? I mean, if you could find such water, I would want some too.

[13 : 21] I'd never have to drink again, never have to look for a water fountain again, never have to give up your water at the airport again, and you never have to drink again, right? So she wants it. But this is, this is a problem because what Jesus is offering is so much better than that miracle of physical water.

She's settling here for water that will merely quench her physical thirst when Jesus is offering something that's far greater. And so often, that's how we respond to God's grace, his offer that he gives us.

And C.S. Lewis puts it this way in his famous essay, The Weight of Glory. If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it

would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak.

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.

We are far too easily pleased. The problem of the Smyrton Movement, our problem, is not that our desire for joy and pleasure is too strong.

[14 : 46] That's not why we neglect God. We neglect him because and seek satisfaction and other things because our desire for joy and pleasure is too weak.

We are far too easily pleased. When God offers us supreme joy, he offers us supreme satisfaction, life to the full, abundant life, instead we settle for lesser joys, lesser pleasures, lesser satisfaction, a lesser life.

And I asked you in the beginning to think about what your greatest unfulfilled desire might be. And if that's anything other than perfect, uninterrupted communion with our God, then we're settling for something less than what he intends for us.

So let's not settle for water when living water is offered to us or for wealth that we can't keep beyond death when eternal treasures are offered to us. Let's not settle for love and prestige of this world, of men, when eternal love and esteem of our heavenly Father is offered to us.

So Christ offers us eternal life. This is the promise of eternal life. My first point, but what must we do to attain eternal life?

[16 : 04] And that's what Jesus now turns to, the condition for the eternal life. Look with me verses 16 to 18. So Jesus sees that the woman has still misunderstood him yet again.

So Jesus changes course and now he peels back the layers of this woman's life to expose the sin and the past that she's hiding in order to expose her true need and heal her shame.

So look at verse 16. He tells her abruptly, go, call your husband and come here. And the woman responds in a kind of curt, defensive manner.

She says in verse 17, I have no husband. Well, she's evading Jesus' command here because her statement that she has no husband is formally true but it really doesn't reveal half the truth because she's been married five times.

She's had five husbands. So Jesus responds in verses 17 to 18, you are right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband.

[17 : 08] What you have said is true. Jesus gets right to the heart of the woman need because we learn here not only was this woman a Samaritan but she was also promiscuous.

The claim that she has no husband is not true. She's been married to five husbands which means either she got divorced or the husband's passed away. There's probably a mix of both in there and so she is seen by her community people as a woman with failed marriages five times and not only that she's not cohabiting with another man who is not even her husband which is condemned throughout the Old Testament.

So Jesus gently pushes back the curtain to reveal this and this is the real reason we find now that she came to the well alone because it was typical of the time for the woman to come together in groups to the well to keep company and for safety but she comes in isolation she comes alone and this was the reason why she came at the sixth hour at the hottest part of the day noon when typically women would come to draw water in the morning or in the later afternoon in the cool of the day she comes at the hottest part of the day to avoid being seen avoid in isolation in shame and other women in the community no doubt saw her as a threat to their own marriages because here's this woman who's now living with a man who's not her husband and all the other husbands and as the women look on their own husbands they see her as a threat because they see that she's available they see that she's promiscuous so she is shunned she's a pariah an outcast and I think John intentionally juxtaposes the encounter of Jesus with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman because Nicodemus was learned he was influential respected and theologically orthodox right he knew all the right answers the Samaritan was unschooled without any influence despised and theologically heterodox Nicodemus was a man a Jew and a ruler and a ruler among them the Samaritan was a woman she was a Samaritan and a moral outcast and they both needed Jesus they both received Jesus' gracious invitation they both were objects of God's love and mercy and Jesus' insight into this woman's life so touches her to the very core later in verse 29 she tells people come see a man who told me all that

I ever did can this be the Christ but at this point she's not won over yet right because with her past and present sins all of a sudden exposed before this stranger that she just met she abruptly changes subject and she brings up the point of theological contention between Jews and Samaritans perhaps that's just a way of evading this and trying to reestablish some kind of distance between her and Jesus or maybe that's her way of trying to show that she does have some religious sensibilities she knows what's going on and so she asks this question in verses 19 and 20 sir I perceive that you are a prophet our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you say that in Jerusalem is a place where people ought to worship now but Jesus doesn't let her derail this conversation and she he does answer her question he does disabuse her of her false notions because the salvation is from the Jews right because the

[21 : 13] Samaritans rejected the rest of God's revelation in the Old Testament they did not have a proper view of God did not know God as they ought to while the Jews did however imperfect their worship was however misguided their worship was Jews did know who God was so he says in verses 21 and 22 woman believe me the hour is coming when neither on 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 notice that he prefaces that statement by first saying that there's a new age that is coming when this debate about the proper locale for worship will not matter anymore the Jews who had a privileged status before God up to this point that will no longer be the case the worship will be open that will be given before all nations for all peoples and so Jesus says the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the father and he continues verse 23 and 24 read with me the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such people to worship him

God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth as those of you who have been with us since the beginning of our series the gospel of John know by now whenever he says the hour that's kind of cue for the hour of Jesus death because when the word is used in an unqualified way in the gospel of John it always refers to Jesus' death resurrection and ascension that complex of events that leads to Christ's exaltation and the nations coming to him so that's what he's talking about and this oxymoron here that the hour is coming and is now here already powerfully demonstrates that this new age has decisively dawned but waits to be consummated because the reason for that is because Jesus is the one who brings about this new age and Jesus is already here it's as if if you take an hourglass and it's been turned over and set down decisively and the sand has begun to trickle down and it's only a matter of time before the hour comes in fullness right indeed the hour is already in a very real sense here so the hour is coming and is now here it's present in Jesus and in this new age the true worshippers will not be Jews or Samaritans but the true worshippers will be all those who worship the father in spirit and truth and the reason that he gives for that is that

God is spirit what does that mean it means that I mean it doesn't mean that God is one of the many spirits it means it's talking about his nature unlike us whose flesh God is spirit which means that God is not confined to time space continuum he's not confined like we are it also means that he doesn't change or decay as we do because he's spirit he's not flesh it means that God is powerful not weak like flesh because he is spirit because according to the Bible spirit is a stronger reality than materiality and that's sometimes we don't think about it that way we think things you can see feel and touch that's more real to us than spiritual things but the Bible turns that view upside down in Isaiah 31 he says God says to this to his people woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong but do not look to the holy one of Israel or consult the Lord and then he says the reason for that is the

Egyptians are man and not God and their horses are flesh and not spirit and when the Lord stretches out his hand the helper will stumble and he was helped will fall and they will all perish together the spiritual reality is more real than material reality and the spirit is more permanent and powerful than flesh God is spirit and that's why true worshippers must worship in spirit and truth and what does that mean what's spirit and truth and that should really have the definite article before the word spirit it should say in the spirit the definite article isn't there in the original text in the Greek but that's usually the case even when the noun is definite if the noun is an object of a preposition and especially if it's an abstract noun like truth and spirit so it's by grammatical rule it's the usual way

you should translate this is to say in the spirit and the truth not in spirit and truth and you see this confirmed in

John chapter 3 verse 5 of the ESV same bible he says unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God same word the article is not there either but the translators here render that correctly they put the before the spirit so what that means then what Jesus is referring to here is the holy spirit the spirit the spirit of God the very presence of God he is the one that mediates our worship he is the one through whom we must worship in the spirit of God but not just in spirit but the true worshipers also worship the father in truth this also refers to a specific definite truth the truth and in the context of the gospel of John this is very clear because in John 6 Jesus says that he is the true bread in chapter 10 he says that he is the true shepherd chapter 10 and 14 he says that he is the true son and in chapter 11 he says he is the true resurrection and the life in fact

[27 : 08] John 15 he says he is the true vine given this context in the gospel of John truth can be nothing other than Jesus Christ himself the message he embodies the power that he imparts as the son of God and he makes this explicit in John chapter 14 verse 6 he says I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me so to worship in the truth is to approach and worship the father by the means of Christ according to the revelation of Christ through Christ that's what it means for us to worship God in spirit and truth because Jesus who replaces the old temple as we saw in chapter 2 is now the new focal point of worship he is the one through whom we worship and that's why when Jesus tells this to the

Samaritan woman she says in verse 25 I I I know that Messiah is coming he was called Christ when he comes he will tell us all things she has enough knowledge of the messianic expectations Jewish messianic expectations know that this kind of change cosmic change this kind of new age could only come when the Messiah comes when the promised Christ comes so that's why she says this to him and Jesus says something really remarkable he turns to her I who speak to you am he I who speak to you am he Jesus embodies and imparts to us the very truth of God the saving purposes of God and that's in the gospel of Jesus Christ that we proclaim week in and week out because when humanity sinned against God by doubting his promises and violating and obscured the truth of

God and a dark fog dawned it descended upon the earth upon the world and we became cloaked in ignorance but God sends the son who is the light of the world John says he enlightens us so that we can see in the darkness he comes as the truth to point us in the right direction to show us the way to God and he does this ultimately in a climactic way on the cross when he dies for our sins because we cannot make our own way to God we cannot find our own way to God but Christ shows us the way when he dies and makes that way paves that path by paying the penalty of our sins and bringing us lifting us with him to have fellowship with the father that's why if you believe it the lowliest among us can have communion with the most high God that's why if we believe it the most sinful among us like this

Samaritan woman can have communion with the most holy God we can enjoy the eternal life we can enjoy eternal life through the spirit and truth of Jesus Christ and that is the most beautiful and wonderful truth about Christian worship because Christian worship is Trinitarian we worship the father in the son through the Holy Spirit as a Scottish theologian James Torrance puts it this way he says Christian worship is the gift of participating through the spirit in the incarnate son's communion with the father so when we worship it's not just a kind of a distant detached transaction that we're being lifted up and wrapped up into the very life and love of the triune God that's what it means to worship in the spirit in the Holy Spirit in the truth of

Jesus Christ the son of God you could think of it this way in a more familiar terms right the father sends the father is by nature he's giving and he's loving and he sends to us his ultimate gift and and Christ his son is the deliverer he joyfully delivers this gift to us and the gift that we receive is the Holy Spirit the very presence of God and our job is to joyfully receive that to revel in that to relish that gift and then to respond out of that to God in the beautiful beauty of this worship to worship is to be part of this beautiful life of

[32 : 23] God the beauties the glories the perfections of God and that's why as most of you probably heard the Westminster Catechism famously states that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever right and John Piper famously alters this sentence to bring out in a more pointed way the point of the sentence he says the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying him

forever we glorify God by enjoying him we worship God by loving him we worship him by being united with him and united with the people that he redeemed worship is not a transaction it's a relationship it's more intimate and secure than the happiest marriage it's more ecstatic and thrilling than the most daring adventure that you could be on it's more beautiful and breathtaking than the most magnificent sights of nature because the subject of this worship the subject of this loving relationship is

God the glorious God so when we worship him when we gather together to worship but also when we worship him through our life and the way we live we're not begrudgingly paying our dues it's a privilege we get to be part of we get to worship God through the spirit and truth of Jesus Christ we get to enjoy the eternal life through the spirit and truth of Jesus Christ and if you have not yet placed your trust in Jesus Christ and you don't know what it means to have this eternal life then I urge you to consider the promise and the condition for eternal life that Jesus lays out here because as you see in verses 28 to 29 it records that the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people come see a man who told me all that I ever did can this be the Christ having come to the well to draw water she leaves the water jar behind to go home because she has a greater new hope in the living water that

Christ offered her if you knew if you knew that you could buy a \$10,000 lottery ticket that you know is going to win you \$10 trillion I mean who wouldn't do that right you would empty your savings account you would scrape everything you possibly can if necessary you would sell everything you own to buy that ticket why settle for just water why settle for life 80 years 90 years why settle for the fleeting pleasures of this world when eternal life is offered to us and sometimes we as Christians can fall to the trap of neglecting and failing to appreciate this beautiful promise of Christ and Christian author Jerry Bridges relays the story in one of his books of a southern plantation owner who freed a slave that he used to own and when he was dying he left him an inheritance of fifty thousand dollars which at that time was quite a bit of money maybe something more akin to like half a million dollars and when the man died the lawyer of the estate dutifully informed this former slave this liberated man and he told him that he has an inheritance from but weeks went by and this former slave never called for any of his inheritance so the lawyer called again saying you know you really have money you can draw you could use this money and he said on the phone sir do you think I can have fifty cents to buy a sack of cornmeal not having handled money most of his life he had not the slightest idea of the amount of money he was dealing with so he and sometimes we act like that ransom slave we have eternal life communion with the triune

God offered to us and we settle for meager portions we don't take advantage of the means of grace that God has given us we neglect his word we fail to commune with him in prayer we don't eagerly participate in the life of the local church instead of taking advantage of this eternal life and inheritance that Christ won for us he paid for it he ransomed us for it he freed us from sin and slavery to sin yet we go back to our chains to flirt with sin and pleasures of this world again as if far greater pleasures have not been offered to us brothers and sisters we get to enjoy eternal life it's coming but it's here through Christ let's never cease to worship him through the spirit and truth of [38 : 00] Jesus Christ let's pray together God we invite you to transform our affections our thoughts our desires so that we are able to live by the reality that you teach live in light of the eternal life granted to us through Jesus Christ oh your purpose is for us your saving purposes for us your plans for us they are so much more wonderful and delightful than anything we can imagine for ourselves Lord help us to believe that and to live in light of that to press into that daily for your glory and our good in Jesus name we pray amen