

Worship in Spirit and Truth
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 4:19-26
September 25th, 2011

Amen. Those are beautiful songs we've sung this morning, those words: *He looks and 10,000 angels rejoice. Just to see Him glance your way, the angels are thrilled with joy. In the miracles of miracles, we, the dust of the earth, so much less and lower than the angels, He delights in more than the angels.* Our salvation is one angels long to look into, according to 1 Peter 1:12. They long to understand what it is to receive grace, to be loved when unlovely. Our God is a great God, and our salvation is wondrous.

Turn with me in your Bibles to John 4. We'll continue to examine our Lord's encounter with the Samaritan woman. I want to mention two things first before we jump into the text. Number one: Today the business meeting, as Ted mentioned, is after the service, and we do have a meal after the business meeting. It's always a real blessing, you know. I was joking with Steven earlier that you talk about distinctives that define denominations, and Baptists, you can talk about the autonomy of the local church below God directly and nothing over it. There are other distinctives, but probably the most important distinctive that separates Baptists from other denominations is we really know how to cook and eat. So anyway, you're welcome to join us today, and that'll be a blessing.

It's interesting the Lord described – that song we sang earlier: How terrible and awful is the place... Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly drew us in, the Lord spreading a feast for His people. It's an amazing image.

I had two announcements, didn't I? The food distracted me. The second announcement is that Friday evening we begin our follow-up classes to our Sewanee Day Outreach, and enclosed in your bulletin is a pamphlet: What Are God's Solutions to Life's Problems? It explains about our counseling approach and also expository preaching, something about kind of the picture of our church. One distinctive of our church really is the sufficiency of Scripture, that we believe that God's Word has the answers to all of life. So we've built our ministry upon that pillar, and you see that in a couple of ways. One way is our Biblical counseling ministry, and so one of the ways we can touch other people like we saw last week when we looked at Jesus, was He touched the Samaritan woman at a point of her need, her common need, and so we can do that as well, and this is what really is behind this whole outreach.

You're all invited to come. If you can't come, you may want to serve by coming and helping out in the nursery, or if you want to come and be part of the class, invite people that you know to come. We're hoping to have new people here, and we want to be really looking for opportunities to encourage them, and love on them, and help them see just the wonder and joy of loving Christ. So that's next Friday, and begins four Fridays in a row. The schedule is in the brochure.

Okay, John 4. We're going to continue to examine our Lord's encounter with the Samaritan woman. Last time, I began by asking you the question: What makes the Good News good? What is it that makes the Gospel truly wonderful news? And we saw that this metaphor that Jesus uses for what He has to offer – and really, that's what we offer is what He has to offer – is living water. He said that to come to Him is to come to have living water, and that metaphor is so rich in a dry and arid land like Israel and the surrounding areas. What a glorious picture that how to come to know God is to come to really have your needs met, not light trivial needs like we tend to focus on, but the real driving need of the heart. That's what He's saying, so that when we offer the Gospel, we are bringing the most wonderful news that you can have satisfaction to the deepest needs of your heart. That's what it means to come to know Jesus Christ, and He's made it available. He has spread the feast. He is inviting you to come in, and that's what we see Jesus offering this most unlikely recipient, a woman of Samaria and an adulteress at that, He's offering her nothing less than ultimate fulfillment. That's the focus, really, of Verses 1-18.

We come this morning to Verses 19-26, this continuation of their discussion, but a new part of the discussion, a new subject comes to the fore, and the subject is worship. So when we take the Gospel to unbelievers, we're going to see that we're really also not just taking them living water. We are doing that, but we're recruiting worshipers. We're calling them to do what they were created to do, which is to worship God. It's helpful when you remember that. It kind of helps you to not major on the wrong things. People have great needs, but sometimes in evangelizing, I know I've done this before and you see this a lot in sort of the way the culture cultivates the idea that we almost apologize for God, but people evangelize by saying, "I'm not that different than you are," or, "Hey, I'm just like you and it's not that hard to become a Christian. Just try Jesus," or whatever. When you see it rightly, they have a great need in their heart, and their great need is to worship a great God. We're lifting up the Lord, but we are inviting them to come and worship. We're inviting lost, thirsty, parched, barren souls to drink from the fountain of true worship.

The title of the message is: *Our Need for True Worship*. We're going to read from Verse 15 to Verse 26 to help set the context a little bit, but we're focusing on Verses 19-26 of John 4.

John 4:15-26

15 The woman *said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He *said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus *said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman *said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus *said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in 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 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." 25 The woman *said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." 26 Jesus *said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we come to Your word and we just acknowledge again our own emptiness, our barrenness, and our need for You to give us more living water. We know that through Christ and through the Spirit, we have that fountain inside of us, but we need You to cause it to bubble up this morning, and, Father, for Your glory to be made known to those who have not yet come to drink, that even today they might drink of the fountain of living water, we pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today we're going to look at our need for true worship. That's the title of the message. Next time, we're going to continue to try to look at this passage at the nature of true worship. Today it's our need for true worship. We're going to consider that subject under four points:

- 1) The Context of True Worship
- 2) We Were Created for True Worship
- 3) We've Been Cut Off From True Worship
- 4) The Coming of True Worship

So there are four C's here.

1) The Context of True Worship:

The first thing we need to consider is: Why this discussion of true worship in precisely this context? I noted we saw last week how Jesus pursues this lost soul, how the great hunter of our souls pursues this barren woman who needs His grace. He comes to her, and when she is at the well, He asks her to give Him water, but in the course of the conversation, He says in effect to her, "You are the one who is thirsty. Your soul is parched, and dry, and barren, and if only you knew who it is who talks to you right now, you would ask Him and He would give you living water." He's in a sense saying, "I am able to quench your true, ultimate thirst."

He seeks to lead her to this living water, and so to help her get there, He tries to show her the error of her ways. He asks her or makes a request, "Go get your husband," which we just read. Jesus knew this woman. He knew her past. He saw her heart just as John told us, remember? In John 2, it says, "Jesus didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, for He knew what was in the heart of man." He knows. He looks at this woman, and He sees her heart, and He sees her need, and so He asks that question, makes that request, "Go get your husband," because He's trying to expose to her the emptiness of her own pursuit. The way that she sought to meet this need is completely counterproductive and really rather than satisfy, it's death. She has been seeking to fill, to satisfy this thirst in all the wrong ways, like a person adrift on the ocean out of fresh water, dying of thirst, parched and dry. The worst thing that you can do is to drink sea water. At first it seems to satisfy, but it leaves you, because of the salt content, thirstier than when you first drank. He's saying, "Your life has been that." He's trying to show her that. He sees her heart.

He knows her heart idolatry, that what she lives for is the romantic love of another man. That's what she lives for. Now, God made that, but it's not to be the center of your life. Nothing is to be at the center except God Himself. He sees and He has exposed that her heart's idolatry, the idol she worships, is romantic love, the love of man. It will never satisfy, and He's saying to her in a sense by leading her to that point, that uncomfortable point where she acknowledges as He opens up her past to her, "You've had five husbands, and the man you live with now is not your

husband,” He’s exposed the emptiness of her pursuit. He’s done this so that He can fill her with His living water. Gracious and gentle Savior, loving Shepherd, is trying to get her to push her head down into the living water, but she doesn’t cooperate. She runs. Verse 19 is her flight:

John 4:19 ~ The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

“You just told me my past. You’re exactly right about my past. You’re a prophet. Rather than deal with my sin and confess my sin, let’s move on to a more relevant topic. Let’s talk about worship and the relative benefits of Jerusalem over Mount Gerizim. Since I have a prophet here, that’s what I need to know most.” She’s running. But Jesus follows her into the bush, as it were. A hunter following after His quarry, He allows her to run into the bush. He follows her there because she’s running exactly where He wants her to go, because the real issue is worship. Her problem is that she has been worshiping the wrong God. She has been worshiping at the idol of human love, and so she unwittingly has backed herself into a trap.

That’s why He allows her to redirect the conversation like that. “You want to talk about this worship? Okay, we’ll go that way, right to your heart.” Not just worship, but the subject of true worship is what He points out. The Father is looking for true worshipers who worship in Spirit and truth. Her whole problem is that she has worshiped, but she has not been involved in true worship. That’s the problem with every human being. We come into this world, conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, needing desperately to worship, but we always worship the wrong things.

I mean, one thing that is just consistent is that people will worship, but we worship wrongly. In Jeremiah 2:13, God speaking through the prophet says, “My people have committed two sins.” Look at the image He uses:

Jeremiah 2:13 ~ “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns that can hold no water.

The first sin is forsaking God, the fountain of living waters. “You need to be drinking from Me,” He says, “but you’ve gone over and dug cisterns, broken cisterns. To satisfy your thirst, you’ve dug holes in the ground and they’re not even sufficient to hold water, and there you are drinking out of a mud puddle instead of drinking out of the fountain.” That’s talking about the idolatry of Judah before the Babylonian captivity. They were looking to other gods. In western civilization, you

don't find many people, although you find more and more now who might actually bow down to a real idol, but our hearts are idol factories. As Calvin said, "We all fashion gods of our own making, not molten images but mental images."

This woman has been seeking to satisfy her insatiable thirst at the altar of human romantic love, and Jesus is calling her to turn away from her idol and turn to the Living God. In the seamless connection between the discussion of living water and the discussion of true worship, shows us something very important about true worship, that is that true worship is our greatest need, and the one thing that satisfies the soul. That's why He allows her to go that way is because that is exactly the way that you drink living water is to worship the Living God. That is what we're thirsty for.

I defined living water last time. We looked at what it told us about it in the previous section, which is that it results in no thirst. If you drink of this water, you'll never thirst again. If you drink of the living water that Jesus has, you'll never thirst again. If you drink of this water, it becomes a well springing up to eternal life. We inferred a definition of living water. Living water is true knowledge of and communion with God. It's another way of saying what you experience when you worship. When you truly worship, you come to know God, and you experience the wonder of His presence, and you commune with Him. That's Living Water. Nothing satisfies the heart like true worship.

I said earlier your greatest need every moment you live is to worship God. That's something just to ponder. At any moment, no matter what circumstance I find myself in, my greatest need at that moment is to worship God. I don't mean go off and go to church. I don't mean go off and just be by yourself. I mean at that moment, no matter what's happening around you, people are talking to you, but worship Him then. That's what we need. We're created for worship. We long to worship, and the word so makes this point from beginning to end. The Old Testament makes this point as the way it unfolds the revelation of God's covenant in the Old Testament that we're always to be worshipping God.

There are so many ways we can look at it, but just one way from Leviticus, the dietary laws in Leviticus 23 I think. Anyway, I may be wrong on that one. It's Leviticus 19 or 23. Somewhere in there are the dietary laws. Remember, there are all these instructions about what they could eat and what they could not eat. If it has a cloven hoof but doesn't chew the cud, you can't eat it ...etc. There are all these things. And so they could eat cow, they could eat sheep, but they couldn't eat

pork. They couldn't eat shellfish, and if they happened to touch those or eat those, they were unclean for a period of time and they had to go through ritual cleansings.

What was that saying? What was that about, because in the New Testament, those dietary laws are completely removed. Praise the Lord, they're removed. Shrimp and lobster are okay. Remember, look at Acts 10 at the apostle Peter when he is told by the Lord, "Take, kill, and eat," and he says, "No, Lord. I should never do that." No Lord? Three times he's told, "Take, kill, and eat," thus the Lord declared all foods clean. Why wasn't it that way in the Old Covenant? It was teaching them. God, as He progressively reveals His Word, He's baby talking. He's helping us understand, and the dietary laws were to say to them, what is it that we do every day? We eat. We have to eat several times a day. Sometimes do you ever find yourself when you're eating one meal, thinking about briefly what you're going to eat later? It's just so easy to think about, isn't it? It's because God made us that way. He made us to need to eat. It's not like you eat once like a camel and you can eat again in two weeks. You don't have this big hump that stores up the nutrition. No, God made us to eat regularly.

He was saying to them, "When you think about what you're eating, worship Me." Do you see that? I can't eat this because I belong to Yahweh. I can't eat this. This is His provision. He's saying, "Worship Me. All of life is about worship. All of life is to be lived in the presence of God." He was teaching them that. But it doesn't really become a reality in the fullness until Jesus comes, and now He makes clear that the one thing that we need to be about is worshipping God. That's why the Scripture says, "In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Always giving thanks for all things (Ephesians 5:20). Why? Always giving thanks, because you always need to be praising God.

When something good happens, thank Him. When something you think is bad happens, thank Him. Worship Him not for the bad thing itself, but that He's sovereign over it, that though somebody else might have meant it for evil, God means it for good, and it's what I need in that circumstance more than anything. The Lord is saying He doesn't give these commands because He needs our thanks. He just doesn't need anything from you or me. He has done it so that we can be filled with the fullness that He is. He's saying, "Ty, you need to thank Me. I don't need your thanks. I was fine before there ever was a world." God didn't create you or me because He was lonely. God didn't create you or me because He needs to be worshiped. No, He needs nothing. He created us to overflow the fullness of His goodness on us. He's independent. He does not need anything.

We desperately need to worship at every moment. We need true worship. It's the one thing that will satisfy. It's the one thing that will reorient and settle our hearts. It is worship that will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee (Isaiah 26).

Now, what I meant by the context of true worship is what was the context that the subject of true worship came up in? When you look at it carefully, it is the completion, really, of the discussion of living water. You're thirsty. What do you need? You need to worship. Whenever you start feeling thirsty, whenever you start feeling depressed, whenever you start feeling angry, whenever you start feeling any kind of need, what do you need? You need worship. You need to stop right now and worship. I need to find a way right now to turn my heart to Christ. So that's the context of true worship.

2) We Were Created for True Worship:

We were created for the purpose of worshiping God, true worship, the worship of the One true God. I mean, think about that. That's what you were made for. That is the primary reason you and I exist. Jonathan and I were doing some yard work yesterday, and we went and got some gas for my blower, and we got the oil mix that goes with it. The blower I have, you have to use a gas oil mix in it. I learned that from the manufacturer's instructions. Occasionally I read those things. But you know why I read them more than I used to? Because I didn't and I broke some things by not reading. You run gasoline in that, it won't last long. You won't have a blower for very long. You take things and you operate them according to the manufacturer's instructions.

God has made us, not we ourselves. We belong to Him, and He says, "You were made for worship." That is what He has made us for. He has made us for that, but people have forgotten. They don't realize that their greatest need is to worship the one true God. They don't believe that, in fact. Unbelievers, the last thing they want to do is to worship the one true God. No man seeks God. Nobody does. But they long for it, and in reality, when we take the Gospel to them, though they are resistant to the message, if God opens their heart, we are offering them the one thing they long for. It is Good News we take, the best news. We need to remember that, because sometimes it doesn't feel like it when you're taking it to an unbeliever, does it? But you're taking them the very best News they could ever receive, the invitation to the feast of true worship, and there's nothing that satisfies the heart like worshiping God.

Now, let me explain how you see this reality. It's interesting about man – step back from this for a moment and look at how there's something in our wiring, our hardwiring. We love to see greatness. We love to see beauty. We love to see excellence or heroism, and we love to applaud it, to celebrate it. We love to share in the celebration of those things. Isn't it true? We love to see something great happen, somebody do something incredible, and then to talk about it. It's interesting to me that actually I find that the talking about it often is better than the event itself. Have you ever noticed that?

I mean, there are some wonderful comedians like Bill Cosby and others that have been gifted and that do pretty clean comedy, some Christian guys who do really clean comedy, but I find that when you hear a guy do a great joke or something, it's wonderful, I mean, when somebody delivers it really well, but it seems to get even better when you share it. "Let me tell you about it." And if you were both there, because you're not as good at doing it maybe as Tim Hawkins or Bill Cosby are, but as you share it, you both know it, and you fill in the gaps, and you celebrate it, and it seems better in remembrance than it really was. And then you go back and look at the video, and you think, "Well, that was good, but it wasn't as good as we do it." What is that? It's in our wiring.

God has made us to look at greatness, and beauty, and cleverness, whatever it is, and to celebrate it. I mean, it thrills our souls. I get so excited talking about sometimes seemingly mundane things. Let me give you an example. Not too long ago, they made a movie about the horse Secretariat. I remember when Secretariat won the Triple Crown. It was the first time in my life I had seen the Triple Crown winner. We used to watch the races when they would come on TV, the Kentucky Derby, and the Preakness, and the Belmont, and I remember when that was happening I was just 9, so I wasn't super into it, and I didn't know all the ins and outs that I've learned since then.

One of the things you learn about Secretariat is this horse was bred between a mother and a father, one that was really fast and one that was really strong and had endurance. One was really fleet-footed, and the owner that bought it said, "I think that's going to be a winner. There's going to be a unique blend of strength and speed," though many people doubted that it would be able to really run. And in fact, Secretariat was such a great horse that it won the first two races of the Triple Crown, the Kentucky Derby, and the Preakness, in near record times, and beating a really good horse. The horse that finished second in the first two races was really a great horse, and if not for Secretariat, might have been a Triple Crown winner itself.

The Belmont Stakes is the last race and the longest. The first is just over a mile. The second one is a little shorter. Preakness is like a mile and a quarter or a mile and an eighth, or something like that. So the last race is a mile and a half, and everybody was convinced that because Secretariat would usually slow and then pick up speed and finish, but there would be a burst of activity closing the gap coming from behind, and then just running away at the end, they felt like he wouldn't be able to go a mile and a half, and that was the speculation among the pundits. "He won't be able to run the mile and a half. He's going to come up short on the Triple Crown, because he's not got the endurance."

Well, Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes by like 32 lengths, the largest margin in the history of horseracing, and what was amazing about it was they thought he would get slower, that at some point he would slow down. They measure the time of a mile and a half where each quarter they have a time, and Secretariat ran out to a lead the first quarter. He didn't run from behind. He ran out to a lead, and each quarter mile got faster successively. The first quarter was a record for the first quarter. The second quarter mile was faster than the first quarter mile. The third quarter mile was faster than the second quarter mile. The fourth quarter mile was faster than the third quarter mile. The other horses are in the rear view mirror. They're not even in the rear view mirror. They're out of the picture. The horse has nothing to run against, but he keeps running. The fifth quarter mile is faster still. The sixth and final quarter mile to finish the mile and a half was the fastest quarter mile ever run on that race course. He set a record that will probably stand for ever, and won by 32 lengths.

You watch that and you say, "Man, that horse was made to run." What an amazing animal. I mean, what is it that makes a thoroughbred racehorse run like that when there are no other horses around? He loved to run. That's because God made him to run.

It reminds me of Eric Liddell, the man, the great missionary who, in the 1924 Olympics, remember he wouldn't run on Sunday? He was a short-track racer. He ran the 100, and he was Britain's hope to win the 100 meters. It may have been 100 yards back then. I don't remember, but it was the 100. He wouldn't run on Sunday in the qualifier, so he was disqualified and he ran the 400. He had never run the 400 in a major competition, and everyone thought he would fade. Eric Liddell didn't run on Sunday because he felt like as a strict Sabbatarian, a Reformed believer, that it would dishonor God to run on Sunday. Out of conscience and concern for the Lord's glory, he resisted even the Prince of Wales pressuring him directly. *I must do what God has called me to do.*

Before the 400 meter final when everyone thought he was going to fade, Jackson Shultz, the American who was also running not in that race but in other races, came up to him and gave him a piece of paper that said, “In the Good Book, it says, ‘He who honors Me, I will honor.’” Eric held that piece of paper in his hand and he ran the race of his life. He not only didn’t slow down and fade away, but he broke the world record for the 400.

Earlier in the movie, if you’ve seen the movie Chariots of Fire (and if you haven’t it’s a great movie), he’s talking to his sister Jennie about both of their desires to go to the mission field, and Eric Liddell died at the hands of the Japanese in a Japanese prison camp as a missionary to China. He died for the Gospel, 20 some years in China. Now, he’s talking to her, and she’s saying, “Eric, we need to forget about this running thing. It’s distracting you, and he says (I’m almost tempted to try to do a Scottish impersonation, but I’m not going to do that. You supply it in your own mind, okay?) He said to his sister, “The Lord is calling you. He’s made you a missionary,” and he says, “Aye, Jennie, but he’s also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure.”

Doing what God has made you to do is so fulfilling, and what God has made us to do above everything else is to worship. So when we see greatness in human beings, there’s an appropriate response of, “Well done! Wasn’t that amazing?” and celebrating that. And if that is joyful, if that is delightful, if it’s wondrous to look at the excellence of somebody like Michael Johnson, or even the horse Secretariat, or Eric Liddell, or Winston Churchill, or whatever great hero in history, if it’s joyful to look at them and how well they ran, how well they did what they have done, how much greater is it to look at the One who created them and who sustains them? It’s like rejoicing in the ray of light that comes in the window. How much more resplendent must it be to dwell with the Son and to see the One from which all those things emanate?

That’s what it will be like to be in the presence of the Living God. We will see His greatness. We will delight in His glory. We will marvel at His majesty. We will be raptured by His beauty. We will be amazed at His works, and we will celebrate them, and celebrate them, and celebrate them together, and we will be overjoyed. That’s why it says, “In Your presence, O Lord, there is fullness of joy. At Your right hand, there are pleasures forever more.” We who were made to recognize greatness, when we see Him unveiled face to face, we will see greatness. We were created for worship. We’ve considered the context of worship, the fact that we were created for worship.

3) We've Been Cut Off from True Worship:

Next, our problem is we've been cut off from true worship. That's this woman's problem. She is created for worship, but she has been cut off from worship, from true worship. She is worshiping, but she's not worshiping truly. She's worshiping at the idol probably mostly just of her immorality and probably isn't daring to go up and take part in the sacrifices which she's asking about. "The sacrifices that we're doing on Mount Gerizim, isn't that the place that we should worship?" She's probably not even participating in that, but she is still worshiping, because man must worship.

In the Brothers Karamazov, Dostoevsky says this:

So long as man remains free, he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship.

Think about that. Look at the hero worship that is a part of our culture and part of every age, people propping up heroes so that at some level they're fulfilling that desire to worship, to think someone else has made it, and celebrate *them* rather than the One true God that we really need to celebrate. I mean, why do people go so crazy over rock stars, actors, and actresses? I mean, really, if you knew them, you would know they're just like you and me.

I had a friend in high school who I remember saying one time – some girl was talking about I don't know if it was the Bay City Rollers or something. Those of you who are about my age may remember a name like that, and all the girls were all excited about them, and this friend of mine said, "Hey, all those guys put their pants on one leg at a time just like I do." It didn't impress the girls at all, but I thought that was a pretty good line. There's no reason, no *real* reason, that we should worship, except that we're created to worship. There's nothing in this universe that we ought to worship except save the One true God, but man is so wired to worship, that if he won't worship God, he still will worship.

Look with me at Romans 1. This really illustrates the problem, this great need, this unquenchable, insatiable desire for God that coexists right alongside this aversion to God that sin has produced. We're hungry and thirsty for God, yet hating God. That's the dilemma that fallen men are in. You see it in Romans 1:18.

Romans 1:18 ~ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Do you see this? Man is hungry for living water. Living water, we said earlier, is worship, but it's also true knowledge of and communion with God. They are dying of thirst. What do they need? They need true knowledge of and communion with God. The Lord has been speaking and giving knowledge of Himself from the very beginning. He's never stopped. That's what it's saying here. He's revealing Himself and revealing Himself. He's offering Himself in natural revelation, in the created order, but what does man do? Look at Verse 21:

Romans 1:21 ~ For even though they knew God (they have an apprehension of God), they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

God reveals Himself, but rather than worship God, what does man do? I like the way John Piper says it in his book: *We're made to reflect the glory of God, to see His glory, to reflect it back to Him in worship.* In fact, a good definition of worship that Piper uses, and why we mentioned Piper is: *Worship is gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of His worth.* So the radiance of God's worthiness, the radiance of his glory, shines down. *We're made to see that, to celebrate it, and to praise Him, and in the praising, to find our fulfillment, to find our emptiness swallowed up by His fullness as we praise Him.* So God shines His light. His light radiates down. We're to reflect it back in worship, but what Piper says is: *Rather than reflect back to God in worship the radiance of His worth, fallen man turns around and worships the dark contours of his own shadow.* The shadow is cast because God's light and glory are shining, but we worship the shadow that we cast.

That's what it's saying here in Verse 22:

Romans 1:22 ~ Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

Romans 1:25 ~ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

There is no choice whether you will worship or not. That's not an option for man. You will worship. The only option is whom or what will you worship? You say, "Well, there are lots of atheists." You know, that's an interesting point. There are really not many atheists. About 10% usually is the maximum you ever get on surveys. Why is that? It's because people are created to worship. They know there's something greater, but they just don't want to worship the One true God, and usually they manufacture idols. But even the atheist worships. They can't help it. I mean, the atheist worships science or the cosmos or aliens. That's what they're doing now. A lot of this is alien worship. There's got to be something greater out there. "Not God. No. We're too smart for that. We just believe there are all kinds of aliens out there. We're so sophisticated." There's no evidence of aliens. If there comes up any evidence of aliens at some point, watch it carefully. It's probably some kind of satanic deception.

There's a story that I read in a book a few years ago, not really a story, but it's a fact. They created the mushroom patch. Have you heard of the mushroom patch? I think it's in New Mexico or Arizona. I think it's New Mexico where there's this tremendous collection of satellite-receiving circles and stuff, like big satellite dishes. The area these things cover is bigger than Washington, DC. They're all aimed up into the heavens. Do you know what they're looking for? They're listening for some sound from the aliens. *Surely they're out there. They're speaking to us.* So since 1980, for 30 years, they've been listening. I haven't heard the latest sum total, so I'm a little behind, but 15 years into it, 1995, I read in a book that the sum total of all the radio data that they had received, if you added up the volume of it, 15 years with all these things listening, and listening, and listening, do you know what it came up to? All that added together would be the sound of one snowflake hitting the ground.

Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. "Surely we can hear someone speaking," and yet God is speaking every day, every day, every day, calling them to believe. Man must worship, but they're cut off from true worship because sin has so disoriented us. It's alienated our affections. We hate that which we long for, and so there has to be a rebirth, just like Jesus was saying in John 3. "You have to be born from above, born of the Spirit." Back to John 4, it's illustrating what it means to be born of the Spirit. When you're born of the Spirit, you've now become a true worshiper. God gives you a new heart. He gives you an ability to commune

with Him, and you can be restored to true worship, but the problem is the unbelievers that we talk to, and those in this room who have not trusted Christ, your problem is you've been cut off from that which you desperately need. Sin has alienated you, and your problem is too great to overcome in and of your own resources. There's no human solution. Were it up to us, there would be no hope, but that's the glory of what Jesus is sharing with this disillusioned, disheartened woman of Samaria. He's telling her not just about the fact that she was created for true worship, or that she's been cut off from true worship, but He is announcing the coming of true worship, which is the last point this morning, the fourth point.

4) The Coming of True Worship:

John 4:21 ~ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

John 4:23 ~ But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth;

The key phrase here is ***...an hour is coming...*** It's repeated there twice, and then the added phrase in Verse 23 the second time: ***...and now is...*** In fact, both times ***...an hour is coming...*** is in the present tense, the ongoing continuous. An hour is coming even now. But to make it more clear, He adds the second time: ***...and now is...*** An hour is coming and now is when true worship will be realized, when man will have the opportunity to come into the presence of the Living God and truly worship, when there will be a heart change. This phrase ***...an hour is coming...*** is actually used seven different times in the book of John. It's used twice here, and then in John 5:25 and John 5:28. It's the same phrase: ***An hour is coming...*** In John 16, it's used three times: Verse 2, Verse 25, and Verse 32. ***An hour is coming...*** Then you have additional times where the Lord speaks about His hour. He says, "My hour has not yet come."

What's the hour that He's talking about? When you look at the teaching of the Gospels carefully, you see that Jesus' hour is a way of describing the central event in all of history which is the cross and the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ seen from the panorama of redemptive history as one hour when Christ defeats sin and death on the cross, when He bears the weight of the sins of everyone who would ever believe on His own shoulders, and is made sin for us. He who knew no sin was made sin. When He pays the debt in full and triumphs over the principalities and powers that had held this darkness in their grasp, He rests it away

from them by removing the certificate of debt, the ownership that they had, by paying the sin debt. That's the cross. The resurrection is the triumph declared, made clear and visible. It was impossible that He should be held in death's power, for the One who's entered into death is Himself sinless, and death only can hold one who has sinned. It could not hold Him, and so now humanity has vanquished death. In the Person of Christ, humanity has vanquished sin and vanquished death. His exaltation to the right hand of God, sending down the Spirit, all of that is this hour. True worship is now realized.

Now, in the Old Covenant, there were moments of true worship, but the moments of true worship for David, and Isaiah, and Moses, and every other true believer in the Old Covenant were rooted in looking ahead to the hour, the promise of the coming hour, but once Jesus comes, there's a whole new level of experience available. I mean, think about what happened. When Jesus died, the victory was won then. It's so important to realize that. The victory wasn't won on Sunday. It was won on Friday. At the moment He died, that's when the victory was won. You see this in Colossians 2:11-14. He triumphed over them in the cross, not the empty tomb. No, He triumphed over them in the cross. When you read Matthew's account of the death of Christ in Matthew 27, when was it that the veil was torn? It was when Jesus breathed His last.

Remember the veil in the temple that separated the holy of holies, the place where the presence of God dwelt from the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies that only one man one time a year could enter into, the high priest. After he had been carefully washed and set apart to that moment, he, on the Day of Atonement, would take the blood behind the veil and pour it on the mercy seat to atone for sins for one more year. So perilous was the journey for a sinful man to do that, that they wove bells into his garment so they could hear him that he's still alive, and they would wrap a rope around his foot, because if he was to die back there because of his sin, nobody else could go back there or they would die too. Can you imagine? That's pretty serious the high priest getting ready to go in. "I've got bells on, and I've got a rope around my foot. I'm about to go into the presence of the Holy God."

No one else could ever go to that level of meeting, but when Jesus died, the veil was torn from top to bottom. God said, "Now the way is open. Now you can come in. He has done it. Now you can come in and see My glory. Now you can come in and partake of My greatness and My majesty. You can see it. I want you to come in and enjoy the bounty of the feast of My presence." The old system, the tabernacle, the temple, the ceremonial law is now obsolete. It's been fulfilled.

Christ has brought us into the very presence of God, and so true worship today is remembering and going through Christ to God, and experiencing His presence by His Spirit. We're going to talk about what worshiping in Spirit and truth is, Lord willing, next week. But we see the Lord as we go through Christ in His Word, as we look at Jesus. We see what God is like, and the more that we see what God is like, the more our hearts are thrilled. When we look how great men have done great things – Eric Little, other heroes, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill – and we look at what they've done, we're right to respect it, and to applaud it, and our hearts are moved by it, but when we really look at what God has done in Christ – we talk about Secretariat or Michael Johnson, the Olympic winner from 1996 who broke the world record, never did a man run like Jesus.

He didn't turn to the right or to the left. He came into this world on His Father's mission, and He ran His race with endurance exactly as the Father had laid it out. He never once faltered. Talk about a warrior like Churchill or Dwight Eisenhower, yet never was there a warrior like Jesus. Never was any one man so assaulted, so attacked every day of His life, the legions of hell arrayed against the One-man, the man Christ Jesus, trying to get Him to turn from the mission, trying to get Him to be battle-weary, battle-worn, to turn back, to say, "No, it's too much," but Jesus kept on, and kept on, and kept on until He had finally not only withstood their attacks, but He stood with His foot upon the head of the serpent, and smashed it at Calvary.

The more that we understand of that reality, the more we will delight in His glory, and every other pleasure will be lost and caught up into the pleasure of seeing One so majestic, One so mighty, One so lovely. That is true worship, and that is what satisfies the soul. In every circumstance of our lives, no matter what's happening, the one thing we need to do is to find Christ and to worship Him. And the more that we do that, the more satisfied we are, the more we reflect His glory, the more people around us are going to want what we have. They'll see the joy in our eyes. May God help us to be people like that who understand and who regularly, more and more continually, experience true worship.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we thank You for loving sinful people and delight in the greatness of who You are to redeem us, to fit us for Your presence, and to lavish Your love upon us, to invite us to Your feast, and to take joy in each one of us so unworthy, so small and insignificant, and yet so amazingly and wondrously loved. Lord, we wonder why we were made to hear Your voice. Lord, we praise You. We pray that

You would help us to enter into that feast more and more and more every day, and to anticipate the ultimate experience of that feast when the veil is removed, this life, this physical world is behind us, and we see the glory of who You are face to face. Father, help us. Hasten that day. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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