

The Lord's Message: Worship: God Desires Relationship

Date: September 3, 2023

Where: Tilghman United Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: John 4:1-15

We are going to begin a four-part sermon series on Worship using John 4, the story of Jesus at the well, talking with the woman from Samaria. In this series we will find that worship starts with God desiring a relationship with us. Next, God knows us and still He loves us. The third Sunday, we should worship God in Spirit and in Truth. The last Sunday, our worship of God is greater when we are gathered together.

Let us pray.

At the beginning of this chapter, we learned that the ministry of Jesus is spreading faster than the ministry of John the Baptist. The reason for this is given in verse 2, that Jesus allowed His disciples to do the baptizing. Jesus allowed His disciples to participate in the ministry. God wants all of us involved in the ministry. Evangelism is not just the responsibility of the pastor or the leaders of the church. Jesus said in the Great Commission, **Matthew 28:18-20**, that all the power to evangelize is given to all the believers, not just the pastor or church leaders. Jesus put this in action at the beginning of His ministry and it is still in action today. This is why the Gospel Message has spread all over the world.

Now, the Pharisees had thought that they had gotten rid of John the Baptist when King Herod put him in prison. Along comes Jesus' ministry that is even greater than John's. Jesus knew that the Pharisees would not be very pleased with His ministry, because they thought that it would oppose theirs.

So, Jesus makes the decision to leave Judea and head for the hills of Galilee, far from the watchful eyes of the Pharisees. In between Judea and Galilee lies the area of Samaria. The journey would take 3 days on foot. So, there would often be stops for food and water.

In verse 5, one of those stops was at the town of Sychar or Shechem. We are also told that this is the place Jacob buys from the sons of Hamor in **Genesis 33:18-20**. Jacob worships God and gives thanks for God's faithfulness. Jacob, we are told, builds an altar to the Lord.

Jesus comes to this town because He is tired and thirsty. We often forget that Jesus is fully divine, but also fully human. Jesus has been walking along way. Jesus is tired from the journey. Jesus is thirsty. It is, after all, around Noon. The time when the Sun is very hot and beating down on anyone that does not have shade.

At this time of the day, no one comes to the well for water. One would come in the early morning. Lo and behold, here a Samaritan woman comes in the heat of the day to draw water. In verse 7, Jesus asks her for a drink. The Samaritan woman is taken aback and replies in verse 9. Jesus has just broken down two cultural barriers to have a relationship with this woman. First, a man talking to a woman that he is not married or betrothed to or is not his daughter, and second, Jesus, a Jew, talking to a Samaritan woman.

The first understanding to worship is that God desires to have a relationship with us. It does not matter to God whether you are male or female. It does not matter to God what your race is. It does not matter to God what your occupation is. It does not even matter to God whether you are a sinner. God desires to have a relationship with us. This was why God created us in the likeness of Himself, **Genesis 1:27**. Through out the Bible we find, over and over again, that God desires to have a relationship with humanity. God called Moses out of a burning bush to have a relationship with him. God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let God's people go so that God could have a relationship with them. God called Abram to leave his idols and his country and go to the land that God would show him. God called Isaiah to be his prophet. God called all the prophets to tell the people that what they are doing is wrong, because God wanted a relationship with them. Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, so that Jesus could have a relationship with them. Jesus healed many, including Mary Magdalene, in order that they would know the power of God and desire to have a relationship with God as much as God wanted a relationship with them.

Jesus asked the woman to be in relationship with Him by telling her in verse 10. The woman does not understand what Jesus is saying. She is focusing on the physical aspects instead of the spiritual aspects of what Jesus is offering. She asks him, "how are you going to give me living water? You do not have anything to draw this water out of the well with. By the way, where can you get this living water? And are you greater than our forefather, Jacob, who dug and drank from this well, as did his sons and livestock?"

Notice Jesus never answers her questions, but instead takes her deeper spiritually. Jesus does this over and over again. Nicodemus comes to Jesus wanting to know whether Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Instead, Jesus says to him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." Jesus does this over and over again. When the men come to stone the woman caught in adultery, they asked him "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" Jesus kneels down and writes in the dirt with his finger. They kept questioning Him. He stands up and says, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw the stone at her." Jesus kneels down again. One by one all the men dropped their stones and depart until Jesus is with the woman. He says to her, "Go and sin no more."

Jesus never answers the woman but takes her deeper spiritually in verse 13. He is the living water. If you accept the relationship that He offers, then you will never thirst for anything else in this life. You will be completely fulfilled by God.

The woman may still be thinking of water, not the relationship that Jesus is offering. The reason that I say this is her response “Give me this water, so that I will not have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Sadly today, maybe here in this congregation, there are still many people that will not accept the relationship that God offers through believing in Jesus as His Son.

When you do accept God’s offer of a relationship by believing in Jesus as His Son, your life will be radically changed, better than you could ever imagine. The advantages of having a relationship with God are many. I have this quote from the Ananias Foundation, “We experience peace. Knowing we are loved, have a purpose, are free of fear, provided for, forgiven, given guidance, and protected has a huge impact on our inner peace. We are given eternal life. We are promised life with Him in heaven just for believing in Him.” I would add that God is going to walk with you through all the trials and temptations in this life.

The beginning of true worship begins with our relationship with God. We can only worship God when we have a relationship with Him. The living water meant nothing to the woman, because she did not have a relationship with God. Later on, we will find out that she does accept the relationship that God offers through His Son, Jesus. This changes her whole life.

Let us grow in our understanding of worship. In the book, “Exploring Worship” by Bob Sorge, he gives us 10 understandings of worship. Listen to these and decide for yourselves if you agree or disagree or you have additions.

1. Worship is conversation between God and humans, a dialogue that should go on constantly in the life of a Christian.
2. Worship is giving to God and involves a lifetime of giving to Him the sacrifice He asks for: total selves.
3. Worship is our affirmative response to the self-revelation of the triune God. For the Christian, each act of life is an act of worship when it is done in love that responds to the Father’s love.
4. Worship was the outcome of the fellowship of love between the Creator and humans and is the highest point humans can reach in response to the love of God.
5. Worship is one’s heart expression of love, adoration, and praise to God with an attitude and acknowledgement of His supremacy and Lordship.

6. Worship is an act by the redeemed, the creature, toward God, His Creator, whereby one's will, intellect, and emotions gratefully respond in reverence, honor, and devotion to the revelation of God's person expressed in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit illuminates God's written word to one's heart.
7. Worship is the ability of magnify God with our whole being – body, soul, and spirit.
8. Worship is fundamentally God's Spirit within us contacting the Spirit in the Godhead.
9. Worship is extravagant love and extreme obedience.
10. Real worship defies definition; it can only be experienced.

Worship begins with God desires a relationship with you and me, and us accepting this offer by believing in Jesus Christ as His Son. Amen.