

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “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. What you have said is true.” The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “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 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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 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.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

John 4:16–26

True worship is about eternal matters, not temporary matters (v19-21)

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John 4:16-20

As we recall after telling the Samaritan woman about the kind of living water he has to offer, Jesus has lovingly calls out this woman’s sin. He loves her too much to leave her in her sin.

After a partial truthful answer, Jesus reveals that he’s read her mail. He knows her whole life history and situation. He’s willing to bring up her sin, her brokenness, the things she wants to leave in the dark. As one pastor said, “he presses on her ulcer”.

She responds in v19 and says that she perceives he is a prophet
-she immediately goes into the greatest point of divide that the Samaritans and Jews have. Who are the true worshipers of God? What’s the answer to this religious debate? Who’s right?

Some have said that she is here deflecting away from the topic of her sin. There may be a piece of that present. (Who doesn’t try to do this when it’s about us). But it seems from her subsequent actions that she is repenting and has a true and genuine question: What is true worship? Who are true worshipers?

The world at this time is wildly polarized. There’s us and them. People aren’t always the most rational: And her question is, Jesus, who’s right? (sound familiar?)

Look again at her question:

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”

John 4:20

So what’s going on here?

-“the Samaritans were a racially mixed group of partly Jewish and partly Gentile ancestry, who were disdained by Jews and non-Jews.” (ESV Study Bible)

-in 722 BC, the king of Assyria brought in foreigners to settle in Samaria and many intermarried with the Jews.

Now, the Samaritans only believed in the first five books of the Bible. The Jews on the other hand, held all 39 books that today constitute our OT to be inspired.

-This led the Samaritans to believe that Mt. Gezirim near Shechem was the holy place where they should worship. Shechem is where both Abraham and Jacob established altars.

-The Jews on the other hand, have the Scriptures where God instructed a temple to be built in Jerusalem.

Her question is who's right?

-Perhaps the question seems unimportant to us. But still today, billions of people believe some **places** are holier than others. Many Jews still go to the Holy Land of Israel. Muslims are required to do a Hajj pilgrimage to sacred sites. Some misguided and some nominal Christians think they can gain favor from God by going to places where saints have been.

And the temple in Jerusalem is still standing. Jesus has pointed out her sin.

What should she now do? Go to Jerusalem? Stay here? How shall she now worship?

Jesus answers her

Jesus said to her, "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.

John 4:21-22

Jesus says, "Woman, soon your question won't even matter."

-truly, the most important thing is not **location**: this mountain or that mountain.

-there is a rapidly approaching hour that will render this temporal debate, as pressing as it is, obsolete and ultimately unimportant.

Jesus does answer her question. "You don't know what you worship. We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."

-The Holy Scriptures are true and instruct us. Jerusalem is the right place, but he doesn't wax on because it's not solely about Jerusalem. Soon that won't matter.

-He maintains that salvation is from the Jews while opening it up to this Samaritan woman.

The woman's temporary concern over a contentious question was her first barrier to understanding what true worship is.

Application: What contentious, temporal questions might block you from true worship with God's people? Political, relational, circumstantial.

-listen, one politician may be better than other politician. And neither of them is the Messiah.

Can you worship alongside someone whom you disagree with politically?

-does relational drama with a brother or sister in Christ inhibit you from worshipping?

-is there anything of a temporary nature that is blocking you?

Worship isn't about a temporary circumstances. Financial hardships. Church drama. Relational hurts. It's about recognizing in the midst of our circumstances what is and will be eternally true! There's coming a day where all drama will be over with.

If you were to be with Christ tomorrow, what would you feel foolish for quarreling over?

Notice, too in v21, Jesus says, "you will worship the Father."

-here he is speaking in the plural. You, Samaritans will worship the Father!

-we worship the Father! Because he has adopted us into his family through the work of his Son

-how beautiful that Jesus says this woman who has been seen as a half-breed her whole life, you will worship God as Father!

This truth hints at what Jesus makes plain in v23.

True worship is always a response (v23)

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.
John 4:23

Jesus in v21 said the hour is coming and now declares the hour is indeed here, when worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

Jesus is declaring there is a coming time and the coming time is now that makes all old questions about ceremonial worship and location obsolete. He says when the hour comes, then something will happen: true worshippers will worship the Father.

The key to understanding what Jesus means is to know what “the hour” refers to in the Gospel of John. “... ‘hour’ when unqualified always points in John’s Gospel to the hour of Jesus’ cross, resurrection and exaltation, or to events related to Jesus’ passion and exaltation.”¹
-DA Carson

An hour comes and then true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth.

This means worship is a response to that truth.

Have you ever shown up at church and just felt unworthy?

Have you ever felt like you need to worship seriously so God will draw near to you?

If so, I have incredible news for you. Worship is not about what you bring God. It’s not about trying to make God love you more. Worship is a response to something that GOD has done.
-this is why we begin our worship with the call to worship: a reading from Holy Scripture

This also means for us, Christians, we are people of the cross.

-we sing primarily because we have been redeemed!

-we sing not first because our circumstances are pleasant, but because our sins are forgiven.

-we praise God from whom all blessings flow, chiefly the blessing of being washed, robed in Christ’s righteousness

It means because Christ’s hour has come, the hour we look forward to is not the hour of our judgement, but of our full redemption.

Transition: If worship is a response, then how shall we worship? What does true worship consist of?

True worship is spiritual and truthful worship (v23-24)

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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.
John 4:23-24

¹ Carson, D.A., The Gospel According to John. PNTC. 223

Jesus here tells us, true worship must be in spirit and truth.

Because God is spirit worship must be in spirit and truth

-this means not that God is a spirit, but that he doesn't consist of flesh. All things of the flesh are discoverable by our five senses, God transcends these and created these

-if he didn't reveal himself to us through his Word or Christ didn't come in the flesh, we would not know him. He is the invisible God who dwells in unapproachable light (Col 1:15, 1 Tim 6:16)

And so our worship cannot be according to the flesh- appealing only to our senses, only external, but worship must well up from within and be in spirit, from the soul, if you will.

True Worship must be in spirit and truth

Spiritual worship

-this is to say it's not simply according to the flesh. You can have a wild experience at any concert.

-so also, since it is spiritual and not external, we can worship in different styles. We can be alright and still worship God with lights on, or if a guitar string breaks. It may interrupt our worship momentarily, but it flows not from external things, but internal soul

-and so true, genuine worship DOES involve emotion flowing from the heart of a person

Truthful worship

-our worship must be according to the truth God has revealed about himself.

-God has told us what he is like and how to worship him

-think of one worship service the Israelites put on. They all decided on a great plan for how to worship God. They invested a lot of money in it. It seems to have gotten a whole crowd going. They created something for God, as a picture of God! They made a golden calf. They dedicated it to God, writing "Yahweh" on the calf.

-They were sincere. They drew people. What's the problem? The problem is God never told them to make a golden calf and bow down to it. The truth is they were sincerely wrong.

-this means our worship songs need to be not just sincere and melodic, but beautiful and true!

Indivisible

We need to beware of pitting these against each other.

If we worship in spirit and not truth, it's simply emotionalism or fanaticism. You may have a terrific experience, but you'll be left unchanged because the truth of God has not bared down on your soul.

If we worship in truth and not spirit, it's a dead orthodoxy. You prove that you actually haven't drunk deeply of the truth because this truth is LIVING water. It moves your heart to thankfulness. Do you show the gospel is the good news you profess?

True worship is about the greatest reality (v25-26)

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." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

John 4:25-26

The woman must be overwhelmed at this point.

-a Jewish man asked her for a drink of water

-he then offers her living water

-she gives in and wants it and he calls out her sin and messed up life

-she gives a half-truth and he reveals the whole truth

-she asks the religious question of the day and he says there's coming an hour that is now here where that doesn't really matter and she will worship God as Father in spirit and truth

exasperated, perhaps hopeful, she says, “I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will tell us all things.”

-she says, yeah maybe one day all these things will be sorted out

-perhaps she's been thinking in her head, could this prophet be more than a prophet

And Jesus looks at her and says, “I who speak to you am he.”

-in the original Greek, the word he is actually left out.

Jesus says, woman, I've offered you water. I know about your sin. The hour is here when you will worship the Father. The Messiah you speak of- I AM.

Jesus identifies himself with the name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush.

-we read of it this week in the reading plan. Whom shall I say sent me? I AM sent you.

All the great questions of humanity converge on the greatest reality who is standing present in front of this woman. The Word made flesh. Calling her to worship him.

We've talked a lot about musical worship and in the context of the Sunday gathering today. That's good and right, but because Jesus is reality, because he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Because there is no longer a holy location, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, we can worship in spirit and truth, we now give our whole lives as worship.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans spends 11 chapters on the most gut-wrenching, soul-exploding, mind-stretching exploration of what God in Jesus Christ has done. At the conclusion of the most rich theology he says therefore because of all Christ is and has done

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”
Romans 12:1

He is worthy. He is worthy of all the songs we could ever sing. He is worthy of more than our two sets of worship. Our lives are no longer our own, for we have been bought with a price. Therefore, let us glorify God in our bodies and with our whole lives!