

True Worship, Part 7

John 4:20-24

2010

Again, if you will, I'd like to ask you to open your Bible this morning to the fourth chapter of John. The gospel of John 4:20-14, our text. This is our seventh message in looking at the subject of worship through the window of this passage. And I believe the Lord has yet some things to teach us.

I really didn't know when we first began how long this would go on, and I admit to you that I'm in the process of learning. And as the Lord continues to open my heart and mind to things week by week and day by day, I just feel pressed to extend the series until I have a sense of having accomplished that which He sees for us.

Jesus here is in conversation with the woman of Samaria, the woman that He met at the well. And in the middle of their conversation, the matter of worship comes up. She desires to worship God rightly. She has had her sin exposed. The Lord has unmasked her many adulteries. And I believe that in the perception that He is a prophet from God, and later on that He even may be the Messiah, she feels a great sense of sinfulness and desires to worship God, desires to come before God and set her life right.

And the question that comes into her mind is where does she go to do that? As a Samaritan, she has worshipped God on Mount Gerizim. As a Jew, they worship God in Jerusalem. And because she wants to do it right, she seeks an answer as to which is the proper place. And so she speaks in verse 20.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Now this morning we are going to come to the real heart teaching of this passage. All the other six weeks is really a prologue to this because this is the heart of the text. In verse 21, Jesus says the time is going to come when it won't be at Gerizim and it won't be at Jerusalem. And we've already discussed that, the abolishing of the ceremonial system and the fact that we're called upon to worship God everywhere and at all times, and so forth, and particularly in the assembly of His redeemed people.

But then in verse 22, the Lord becomes very specific in defining the nature of worship. And that's what I want you to begin to see this morning, the nature of worship, the essence, what worship really

is at its very heart.

William Temple, years ago, defined worship this way. "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God."

It is all of us in response to all of Him. It is all that we are, reacting rightly to all that He is. Now we've talked about the importance of worship, haven't we? We've said that the Father seeks true worshippers, verse 23. And that makes worship very important. That is the end of God's redemptive plan. God seeks people to worship Him. That's why you're saved, to worship God. That's why it's the most important. More important than service, more important than ministry is worship. And we've tried to see the importance of worship as God sees it. Worship is not what we receive, but it is what we give.

Evelyn Underhill, writing in 1928 to a Conference of Clergy in the Church of England said this. "We are drifting toward a religion which, consciously or unconsciously, keeps its eye on humanity, rather than deity." It's a great statement. "We are drifting toward a religion which, consciously or unconsciously, keeps its eye on humanity, rather than deity." That was stated in 1928, and in 1982 I think it's pretty much true.

Even the church of Jesus Christ, even the evangelical church finds itself prone to be man-centered. We are such a consumptive society, such a pragmatic society, such a man-centered society that we tend to turn everything on ourselves. We talk of men. We talk of the needs of men, the problems of men. We think and talk about our own needs and our own problems. We talk about the programs of men, the methods of men, the efforts of men, the sermons of men, the songs of men, the books of men, the churches of men, the organizations of men. And somehow in all of that talk, we very often lose sight of the fact that we are to be conscious of God far more than of men. And so we talked about how important it is that we worship as a way of life.

We talked about the source of worship, didn't we? And we said the source of worship is salvation. The seeking of the Father in verse 23 is efficacious. In other words, He seeks and redeems those He seeks. And He seeks and redeems them to worship, so that when you were redeemed you became a worshipper.

As one writer said, "You awakened from your moral slumber in the morning of your regeneration to begin to worship God." And that's what a Christian is, Philippians 3:3, a worshipper of God.

We talked about the object of worship, the fact that when we come together it is to focus on God and to worship Him and Him alone, and He is to be worshipped as Spirit and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, right? We worship God, then, in His Trinitarian fullness. We do not evaluate worship on the basis of what it does for us. We do not come to get a blessing. We do not come to receive something. We do not come asking how is it going to lift me up? How is it going to meet my need? How is it going to give me a good feeling? How is it going to inspire me? How is it going to bless me? To do that is to substitute subjective affection for objective trust. We come to give to God, to worship Him. He's the object.

And now I want to talk today about the sphere of worship just for a brief moment. We just need to

clear this up in our minds as a brief review. The sphere of worship, Jesus indicated, it's not going to be in Jerusalem. It's not going to be in Mount Gerizim. And then in verse 24 He says, "God is a Spirit." Therefore worship is not restricted to any location but it is to be done where? Everywhere, everywhere.

And yet we said there is still a temple where God meets His people, and what is it? It's the corporate assembly of the living church, right? So while we worship God everywhere and at all times, there is still the uniqueness of the living stones that come together to be an inhabitation for the Spirit. And that's why in 1 Corinthians 11:20 Paul says they "met together in one place." That's for that *latreuō*, that *leitourgeō*, that special unified formal worship when God's redeemed people come together. You need to worship God everywhere and at all times, but also in the corporate assembly of His redeemed people and forsake not that assembling of yourselves together.

Now, let's look at the nature of worship, the nature of worship. And it's simply stated in this passage. Verse 22, let's start there. "Ye worship ye know not what." Now what does He mean by that? He says to a Samaritan woman, "You don't know what you worship." Now, first of all, it is acknowledging that she worships, right? You worship, you just don't know what you're worshipping.

And that is characteristic of the Samaritans. Why? Listen now, because they only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament, that's all. They only accepted the Pentateuch as from God. And so their knowledge was limited. So the Lord says to them, "You don't know what you worship." I mean, you have the Pentateuch, and that tells you some things about God, but not enough to have the full salvation revelation, right? So you really don't know the fullness of what you're worshipping.

And here's what we have with the Samaritans. We have enthusiastic worship without proper information. You have the aggressive, enthusiastic, excited, faithful worship of these people, but they don't necessarily have the right content. So we would say to begin with that they worship in spirit, that they're into it, right?

In fact, here we are several thousand years later, and would you like to know that in 1982 the Samaritans will be up on Mount Gerizim doing their thing? They dipped down to about 170 of them a couple of years ago, and now they've started reproducing again, and so there are 400 Samaritans in the world. And if you were to go to Mount Gerizim on their holy days, you would see them slicing up animals just exactly as in the Mosaic economy. They're still at it. And they will not give it up. They are enthusiastic about it.

But, they don't have the right information. They're very limited in terms of what they understand, limited to the first five books of the Old Testament, and that leaves them 61 books they haven't considered in the Bible.

Now they do have enough information to know about the Messiah because He appears in Genesis, doesn't He? The seed of the woman, the scepter. So they have some information, but it isn't enough, and so the Lord says to them, "You worship in spirit, but you lack the truth," right? You lack the information, or the content, that's necessary.

Look back at verse 22. Now speaking of the Jews. "We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." Now the Jews had the very opposite situation. They accepted all of the Old Testament books,

all 39 books. They accepted all of the revelation of God. They had the truth but lacked what? The spirit.

I mean, you read Matthew 6 and it says that when the Pharisees prayed, and when they gave alms, and when they fasted their hearts weren't in it. Jesus says, "You are hypocrites. You are phonies. Your hearts aren't involved in it." How many times did Jesus say to the people what was an Old Testament truth, you follow after Me with the forms, but your hearts aren't in it? What did Paul say? You have left out the basic truths and you're going through religious motions. He indicted the Jews again and again for that.

Now there were some Jews who had a zeal for God. There were some Jews who really were zealous inside. But the basic existing religion of Jerusalem, the stuff that was going on up there on Moriah, was truth based on what the Bible said, but the hearts were empty. They had even pumped it full of the traditions of men.

So, the Lord says Jerusalem has the truth, but not the spirit. Gerizim has the spirit, but not the truth. Now here are the two poles of worship. On the one hand you have Mount Gerizim, which is enthusiastic heresy. On the other hand, you have Jerusalem, which is barren, lifeless orthodoxy. And that's what Jesus sees as He talks to the woman.

And may I add that that's what we see today. You can see those same two extremes in the church today. On the one hand you've got over here the sort of charismatic Pentecostal people who are just really going at it. I mean, they worship maybe for hours, maybe all night long. They're holding hands, and swaying back and forth, and singing songs, and speaking in ecstatic language, and doing whatever they're doing. And we look at them and we say, "Oh, oh, heresy, heresy." But we can't mock their enthusiasm. I mean, some of them are even falling over and rolling around and all kinds of things, singing songs.

On the other hand, we've got barren orthodoxy, which is closer to where we are. We've got all of the truth in the right compartments, we just can't get turned on about it. We just don't get that excited about it. In fact, we get bored in about 30 minutes during the service, and we're looking at our watch or counting the Es in the bulletin or - that's what I used to do when I was little - or checking out the spots on our dress, or looking at our husband and saying, "I've been with the guy for 20 years and he still doesn't polish his shoes." I mean, there are so many, so many, many distractions. And we've got all of the content and we don't know how to turn loose the heart. Those are the two poles. Truth is the balance.

And so He says, "Look. The hour is coming when the true worshippers are going to worship God in both ways, in spirit and in truth," right? With the truth and the heart, that's what He's after.

The Jews had all the accurate data and no heart. They killed the Messiah. The Samaritans had all the data - I mean, all the heart and none of the data - didn't know the Messiah. The truth and the spirit, both must be there.

The two enemies of true worship are Gerizim and Jerusalem. You can't have one without the other or there's imbalance. Sincerity, that's great. Enthusiasm, that's great. Aggressive worship, that's great. But it must be based on truth. Truth, that's great. But if it doesn't issue in an eager, anxious, thrilled,

and filled heart, it's missing. You so often have light without heat, or heat without light. Jesus says the Father seeks both, both.

There's a pastor on the east coast by the name of Al Martin. He has a good statement. I think it speaks to my heart, and I'm sure to yours. He said this. "Men have worshipped with open Bibles, and with the name of Christ, and the Bible on their lips, while whole congregations before them have been held in the grip of barrenness, and lifelessness, and powerlessness. Where it has been weeks, and months, and years, since hearts have been ravished with the sight of the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ. Years since any hymn has been sung with abandonment. Years since a tear has trickled down the face of a worshipper. Years since a hallelujah flowed out of a bursting heart."

He's right. And we are guilty on that barren orthodox side of sitting here with our Bibles open, with all of the theology known, and indifferent to the spirit of worship. And I want to take these two: today the spirit, next week the truth. Let's talk about spirit.

In verse 23 and 24, it says we must "worship the Father in spirit." Now if Jesus said we need to do this, then we need to do it. And if we're going to do it, we need to know what it means. How do you worship the Lord in spirit? And, you know, it's hard for me this week to speak about the spirit and next week to speak about the truth because I can't keep them separate because they're totally interrelated, totally mingled. It makes it very difficult. And that's the way the Lord meant it to be. You can't talk about one without the other, and yet we'll try to emphasize one this time and the other next time.

But what does it mean to "worship in spirit"? This refers to the human spirit. It basically refers to the inner person. You are to worship from the inside out, from the inside out. It is not a matter of being someplace in the right place, and the right time, the right words, the right demeanor, the right clothes, the right formalities, the right activity, the right music, the right mood. No. It is the inside, the spirit. In Romans 1:9 Paul says a very important statement. He says, "God is my witness - " and listen to this " - whom I worship with my spirit." Latreuō, he worships God with his spirit.

And then I love Psalm 103, you know it well. It says, "Bless the Lord, O my - " what? " - soul: and all that is - " where? " - within me, bless His holy name." That's what it is talking about. It's talking about glorifying God from within, from within.

Now let me give you what I think is a very beautiful illustration of this in the 51st Psalm. You can just listen to it. Write it down for reference. In Psalm 51, David comes with what I'll call in later weeks, when we look at it, the worship of repentance. But he says in verse 15, and I just think this is so wonderful, "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth will show forth Thy praise. For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

David says, "I know you don't want the external stuff. I know that's not the issue. That was just a symbol of the fact that You want the heart. And so I ask You this. 'Open my lips; and my mouth will show forth Thy praise.' " Now you know what that says to me? That pictures to me a man whose heart is filled with praise, and all he needs is to get his mouth open and it will come out.

And that's the worship of the spirit. That's when it's inside. And David says, "My circumstances are

such that I just don't have the strength to open my mouth. If You'll just open my mouth, it will all come out." What a great picture. That's what it means to worship in spirit, to have a heart that is literally overflowing, Psalm 45:1, bubbling over with a good thing. And when the mouth is pried open, it just gushes out. Worship and praise.

Now I want to get practical. How can we do this? How can we have that in us? And how can we let it out of us so that we worship in spirit? So that we're not like the Jews, who have all the facts, and all the data, and cold hearts, bored, indifferent. How can we do that? Here it comes. Number one - and I'll give you several principles - first of all, You must possess the Holy Spirit. You must possess the Holy Spirit. Before you can worship God in your spirit, the Holy Spirit has to be there to prompt that. "For no man - " 1 Corinthians 2 says " - knoweth the things of God, except the Spirit of God."

And if you don't have the Spirit of God within you, prompting your heart, motivating your heart, cleansing your heart, instructing your heart, it is not going to happen. You cannot worship God without God energizing in His Spirit that worship. And that's just basic. That's the bottom line, obviously. You have to be redeemed. You have to be saved. And when you're saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live in your heart. And the Holy Spirit points you to God, points you to God, prods you, pokes you, pushes you, instructs you, purges you, so that you may worship. That's His ministry. So it all begins then with the resident Holy Spirit.

In fact, in Philippians 3:3 where it says we "worship God in the spirit," some of the manuscripts indicate we worship God in the Holy Spirit. You could go either way. We worship God in the human spirit because we are prompted by the Holy Spirit.

You see, no one can say "Jesus is Lord - " 1 Corinthians 12 " - except by - " what? " - the Spirit of God." You can't affirm the Lordship of Christ. You can't worship Him as sovereign except prodded by the Holy Spirit. And you receive the Holy Spirit upon the reception of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. So, you begin there.

Look at your heart. If you have trouble worshiping, maybe you're not saved. I mean, maybe the reason you get bored in church, and maybe the reason you're ready to leave in a half an hour, maybe the reason you'd just soon miss church all together is because you just can't get into the thing, and the reason you can't get into it is because the Holy Spirit isn't in you prompting your heart. It's a fair question, isn't it? And you need to ask it of yourself.

Let's go to a second one. The second principle, and I think this is so important, is that thoughts must be centered on God, thoughts must be centered on God. And that's very simple but it's a very profound thing. Worship is an overflow of a mind renewed by the truth of God. Contemplating God is the trigger that sets off worship. It's the motor that turns the flywheel that energizes the emotion. You must be thinking thoughts of God.

Now I can translate it into a very familiar word, and that's the word "meditation." True worship comes forth out of meditation, meditation. Now forget everything you ever heard from the world about meditation - transcendental or any other kind. Let me tell you what meditation means. Are you ready for this? It's focusing your whole mind on one subject. That's basically it. Focusing your whole mind on one subject. That's a MacArthur definition, but I think it works.

To meditate is to focus your whole mind on one subject. Now if you find that hard, it's fairly normal. It's hard to do that, isn't it? Boy, we live in a distracted world, a distracted world. You know, we have today, just because of our exposure to media and everything, more stuff in our brain than I think any civilization ever had. I mean, we are exposed to so much stuff, the thing is so cluttered up that our attention span is very limited, very limited. But to meditate is to concentrate your whole mind on one subject. And let me tell you something. That is the key to effective worship. Without question, your reason, your imagination, your emotion are all concentrating on one reality.

If we go back from that one step, maybe you'll get even a deeper insight. Now are you ready? Meditation is based on information. If you're going to be thinking on one subject, you've got to have a subject to think on, right? That seems basic to me. You've got to have something to think on. So listen, I'm going to give you a word and it's a word you ought to write down somewhere right in the front of your mind so you never forget it.

The best, the purest, the truest, the most wonderful and blessed meditation is based on discovery, discovery, discovery. In other words, you discover a great truth about God, and then you begin to meditate on that truth until it captivates every element of your whole thinking process. And what it does is begin to build into you this worship, and when somebody gives you an opportunity, and you gather with God's redeemed saints, and they pry your lips open, it just comes out. But it doesn't come out if it isn't in there when you arrive, or when you begin to seek to worship.

So we can go back a step before that. Worship is a response to meditation. Meditation is based on discovery. And discovery is based upon - are you ready for this? - time spent with God. Time spent with God, in prayer and in the Word, in prayer and in the Word. Feeding, feeding, feeding. Sadly, we see prayer as a way to get things, and we have long ago, I think, lost its communion element of just living in the consciousness of God's wonderful presence and communing with Him there.

You see, Jesus chided His disciples. He attacked His disciples in this way. He said, "You have eyes, but you do not see; and you have ears, but you do not hear." In other words, your thinking is so shallow that you're dull. I mean, if you come here and are bored, may I suggest to you that that is not a commentary on the sermon, or the music, that's a commentary on your heart. I mean, if you had nothing else, if I was totally not worth listening to - which may be the case - if nothing here was worth listening to, for you just to pick up the truths about God that come through and meditate on them should be the most exhilarating time of your life. See?

You see how far we are from that? That hits us right out of left field like something we never thought of. See, if you come here and you're uninterested, or indifferent, that's not a commentary on us. That's a commentary on you.

Now, we want to do all we can to present the Word of God in a way that is meaningful. I mean, the worse sacrilege you can do is bore people with the Bible. If you're going to do that, then don't teach the Bible, teach Mother Goose and bore them with that. But don't bore them with the Bible. That's a sacrilege. It's amazing how many people can do that, how many teachers and preachers can bore people with the Bible. What a horrible thing to do to the Bible. It's the most fabulous thing in the world.

I mean, I get excited about it, as you well know. I don't understand how people can prevent

themselves from having that excitement. But the excitement comes to me in the process of discovery, discovery. And when I go to the Word of God, and I spend time talking to the Lord, and I open my heart to Him, and I start to look at a passage, and look deeper, and show me, Lord, what You want me to see, and go into there, and you begin to meditate, and you begin to think about that, and all of a sudden you discover some tremendous truth that saturates your mind. Then out of that comes the overflowing of joy and praise to God.

Spurgeon says, "Why is it that some people are often in a place of worship and yet they're not holy? It is because they neglect their closets. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it. They would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the field to gather it. The fruit hangs on the tree, but they will not pluck it. And the water flows at their feet, but they'll not stoop to drink it."

I mean, if you come here saying, "I hope John MacArthur's got some stuff to say that will get me into a worship mode," you've missed it. I just want to be the little topping on the top. I want you to come here with a heart so eager to worship, you can hardly wait to get into the place and get started. Because you've been in the process of meditation over what you've discovered in the Word of God. That's the joy.

As I open the Word of God and discover things, as I commune with God in my spirit and He teaches me things, and the discovery becomes meditation, then comes the joy. I think on Friday of this week, I had this - I was kind of just studying around the text. I call it going around and around the text. And I never was really getting the core of it. I had interruptions and everything. And finally, I just locked my brain in, and locked the door, and sat down, and I said, "O Lord, teach me what You want me to see in this passage."

And in the next hour and a half, I saw one great reality that just dawned on me, and I began to trace that reality through my mind, and through the Scripture, and to meditate, and to mediate. And the result of it was a heart filled with praise that was still there, so that when I came this morning, and I had my lips pried open, all that was in my heart just came out. See?

Worship for me is not self contained in this hour. This is merely a way to get the thing out. And I'm not restricted to this for that either, but this in a special way. You see, we've been rooted and grounded in Christ, but how deep our roots grow and how beautiful our fruit appears has to do with how we meditate in the process of discovery of God's wonderful truth. That's the joy.

It's hard for us to meditate, isn't it? You know, one of the things you learn as a preacher is that people don't listen to everything you say. They tune in and out. Some of you just came back. Welcome. I mean, you're redecorating your living room, or walking through the aisles at May Company, seeing what you want to wear, or you're figuring out how to make that big business deal next week, or you're thinking about the trip you're going to take, or you're fishing somewhere, or playing golf, or you're just doing all kinds of things in your imagination, and every once in a while something hits you.

Either your wife pokes you in the ribs, or something comes out that startles you, or you sort of tune back in, or maybe I've said something that's tracked you onto a thought, and the Holy Spirit sort of chased you down a little thought, and you're thinking that thing, and then all of a sudden you come back and you plug in again. That's why I repeat myself because I have to keep you up to speed.

See? I just keep welcoming people back in the whole time I'm speaking. See, it's very difficult for us to meditate.

It's very difficult for us to isolate our minds on a subject. And it's a discipline you have to train yourself to be able to do that. And I think about these screwballs that learn how to sit in the middle of a teeming mass of humanity in India and contemplate their navel for days at a time, in an undistracted fashion, and I wonder why Christians can't think on God without being distracted.

So it all begins, then, with the resident Holy Spirit. Thoughts centered on God, which come out of prayer, and Bible study, and discovery, and out of that discovery comes meditation, and out of that meditation, worship. And may I make it very simple? No discovery, no meditation. No meditation, no worship. And if you come here with a heart filled with discovery that you've got in your own study, or you've learned it from somebody, and you've meditated, and you've made it your own, you're going to find that when your mouth is pried open, it will gush with praise.

Now there's one other principle. You start with the Holy Spirit in your life, your thoughts centered on God, and then you must learn to have an undivided heart, an undistracted heart. Psalm 86. I want to take a moment to have you look at Psalm 86.

It's just a beautiful insight into a principle. In verse 5, David begins to worship God. And he says in Psalm 86:5, "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive." And that's so good because it doesn't mean He'll just forgive, it means He's eager to do it. It's not reluctant, but eager. "You're ready to forgive; plenteous in mercy." He doesn't just have mercy, He's got plenty of it.

He's really just extolling the virtues of God. "For all who call upon Your name." You're good. You not only forgive, You're eager to forgive. You not only have mercy, You have plenty. And You've got it for everybody. "So, Lord, would You listen to me?" Verse 6, "Give ear to my prayer; attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee for Thou wilt answer me." He says, "I know You'll hear me."

"Among the gods, there is none like unto Thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like Thy works." And there you have the heart of worship, glorifying God for who He is, and what He has done, for who He is, and what He's done. O, there's no one like You. And no done has ever one anything like You've done. "All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name. For Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone."

Now David's into a definite worship expression here, pouring out his heart to God. He's just extolling the wonder and the virtues of God. And we all can identify with that. We want to do that. We long to do that. But David faces a problem in his humanness that we face too, and it comes in verse 11. First of all, he says, "Lord, I have a basic problem. My worship is hindered because I am lacking the truth." "So teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth." You see, the missing ingredient, David says, is I want to discover, and I want the thrill of discovery, and I want to know what Your Word is saying, and I want to see You.

And sometimes discovery isn't discovering something you never knew before, it's discovering something you knew before and forgot, or it's discovering something you knew before and remembered but never saw with the same clarity. But he's saying, "I want to know Your way, and I

want to understand it, but I'm ignorant and You have to teach me."

And so I would just suggest to you that when you find it difficult to worship, when you find it difficult to meditate in the Word of God, to go through the process of discovery and let God open His Word to touch your life and your heart and bring out praise, you need to stop and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher, because we all have that problem.

I get distracted just like anybody else. And I struggle. Sometimes I say, I look at a passage again and I say, "Lord, I'm over and over and over this thing and I still - it's not coming through. Teach me." And that's where you can claim the promise of 1 John that we have an anointing from God in the Holy Spirit who teaches us all things so that we don't need to depend on human wisdom, right? Because He's our teacher.

That's what Jesus said when He said He's going to send His Spirit who would teach you all things in John's gospel. What a promise. The resident Spirit is there. And so David says, "Teach me the truth, Lord. Let me see it. Let me discover it. Let me meditate on it." And so the first problem you have in worship is you've got to know the truth. And we'll get into that more next time. And in order to be able to see that, you depend on the Holy Spirit.

I know you've said, "Well, you know, I'm going to go to the Bible. Boy, I'm going to start my Bible study." And all of us have made those commitments, right? I'm going to get into the Word. And you read a little bit and you say, "This isn't very exciting. I mean, I'm trying to discover but I'm not discovering anything, except that I don't understand this. It doesn't seem to hit me. I better get a book or a tape."

And people will often say to me, "You know, when you do it, it's so exciting." Well, it can be that way for you. The Word of God can touch your life, too. You may not have all of the tools that I do, and I hope there's a place for me in the kingdom somewhere that I can feel a need in that regard, but you can discover the truth of God because the Spirit will be your teacher if you'll ask Him.

There's a second thing in verse 11, and this is the thing I really want you to see. At the end of verse 11 he says, "I have another problem. I need You to unite my heart to fear Thy name. Now "fear Thy name" would be a euphemism for worship. "I want to worship You, but I need You to unite my heart."

Now what is the opposite of a united heart? Very simply, what is it? A divided heart. The first problem you have in worship is you don't know the truth. You can't discover it. You don't have the thing you need to meditate on. So, Holy Spirit, teach me the truth.

The second problem in worship is you're distracted, right? And you tend to have a divided heart, and you maybe sit down sometime, and you know, you say, "I'm going to pray. I'm just going to spend time with the Lord." And you sit down and you pray for about a minute and stuff floods your mind - junk. You know. Where's Alice? It's after so-and-so time. She's supposed to have delivered the - you know. And the kids come blasting in the door at the moment of your greatest discovery and interrupt your meditation. And then we just are - it's so difficult for us to concentrate.

And so David knew that. I mean, after all he was a king. And wouldn't you think a king had a little responsibility? I mean, he had a few things to worry about. And he worried about them. And they

weren't only the things going on in his kingdom, they were a lot of the things going on in his own life that weren't right.

And so he was diverted and he said, "God, I need two things. I need the truth and the spirit. I need the undivided heart to go along with the right instruction. I want to discover and I want to be able to meditate without being distracted."

That's really the heart of what our Lord is saying in John 4. We must be able to set our heart on God and on His truth. And I've asked the Holy Spirit many, many times, for that same thing that David is asking for right here. Lord, teach me, teach me, teach me. In fact, on one day this week I was studying and I found a passage, and I'll share it with you in a few weeks, hard not to share it today because it's so good, it's so exciting.

But I found a passage in Jeremiah and I never understood the phrase there, the phrase says in effect, "Moab has not been poured from vessel to vessel." And I thought, "What in the world does that mean?" So I started to try to find out what that meant and I did. And I got so blessed. I'm going to tell you what it means in a few weeks.

I got so blessed that I went out my door and I grabbed Bill Rogers and I said, "You've got to hear this." And you know what? He got blessed just like I got blessed. Are you going to use that Sunday? I might. But I'm not now. It's in a later point. But that was discovery for me and I went home, got in my car, all I could think about going home was that great truth. Oh what a great truth that I've discovered. Began to meditate on it and my heart became filled with praise.

I don't know how you do, but I find myself singing when I do that. I turn the radio off, and sing in the car. I don't - try not to move my lips too much because people, you know, think I'm arguing with my wife when she isn't there so I can win, you know. But I really believe that discovery is the key, and it demands time with God, time with God, communion with Him, in His Word and in prayer. And then the wonderful joy of an undivided heart.

I want to close with a thought. There will be a hindrance to this when you try to focus your spirit on worship. In fact, somebody said to me this week, "You've covered the importance of worship, the source of worship, the sphere of worship, the nature of worship, and all this stuff. Have you thought about doing the hindrances to worship, and list all the hindrances to worship?" I thought, "Boy, that would be great." So, I sat down, I got my pencil and my piece of paper, and I thought, and I thought, I got 'em. And I wrote down one word: self. And then I began to think, "Now what would be number two?" And I couldn't think of anything. And I sat there for a long time and never thought of anything else.

There's only one hindrance to worship. That's when you get in front of God. That's all. I mean, you can come in all kinds of packages, but what hinders your worship is when you get in front of God. You see, when you come here to get what you need for you, or when you have got to do what you want to do to fulfill your desires, and that's why you don't have time for discovery, or time for prayer, or time for meditation, or time for worship, and you can't really have an undivided heart because you're always thinking about your projects and your activities and your needs. You see, it's always self, isn't it?

There's only two - you're only dealing with two things. You're either dealing with God or you, that's all. And you can't really free yourself up to worship God until you can kill yourself, slay yourself.

Oh, you just have to get rid of self in the process and be lost in worshiping God. Self is always in the way. And I think maybe the biggest problem that we have with ourself is that so very often, we who are committed to the right things, like here at Grace Church, it really comes down to the fact that we just are too lazy to make the effort. We're so self-indulgent at our ease that we won't expend ourselves to dig deep, "to scoop up the water," as Spurgeon said, "to pluck the grain." And that's why we lose.

One of the great experiences of my brief life has been to read Stephen Charnock's book called *The Existence And Attributes Of God*. It's a book of about 700 or 800 pages. It takes you a whole lifetime to digest it. All it is is all of his thoughts about God; rich, profound insights. And at one point he says in that book, "To pretend homage to God and intend only the advantage to myself is rather to mock God than to worship Him. When we believe we ought to be satisfied rather than God glorified, we set God below ourselves and imagine that He should submit His own honor to our advantage."

And that's the hindrance to worship. You set yourself, and your needs, and your advantages, and your blessings, and whatever, above God. Beloved, let's be free to come and worship God. And when we come together in the assembly of His redeemed people, and our mouths are open, may the gushing of praise come out because of the meditation and the discovery, so that our inner spirit offers worship to Him.

Now next time we're going to talk about the place of the truth, and how it lays the foundation for right worship. Let's pray.

We've faced some practical thoughts this morning, our Lord, and we know that You never reveal us Your Word to keep at arm's length, or to muse about, or to contemplate, but always to act upon.

And so we pray, Lord, that approaching this from a practical viewpoint might help us to refresh the commitment, to find ourselves in the closet, closet of prayer and study, the closet of meditation and discovery, that the praise might rush from our filled lives, boiling over, bubbling up, that the Lord's Day fellowship may be only the bursting forth of all that is there. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).