

**John 4:21-24**

*“Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

Last week we started on a journey to build the different types of ships the Church needs in order to sail out into the *Perfect Storm*, the *Perfect Storm* which has been building steam and will destroy the church, unless preparations are made to ride it out. Last week we looked at the first ship in our fleet, the *Fellow-ship*. We learned how we are all to be crew members and not passengers. This is a point which holds true from every ship in the Christian fleet. In other words, to be a church member means you are to be a crew member and not a passenger. And the most important thing we learned was, true Fellowship, cannot, and will not take place without a right relationship with our heavenly Father.

This week we look at the next ship in our Christian fleet, the *Worship*, but this ship is different. It is different because for the past few decades it has lost if not all, at least most, of its crew and/or passengers and has become ... a *Ghost-ship*! A *Ghost-ship* is one which has no living persons on board, only the spirits of those long dead and gone.

One writer wrote: *“Worship in our time has been captured by the tourist mind- set. Worship is understood as a visit to an attractive site to be made only when we have adequate leisure time. For some it is a weekly trip to church, for others, it’s an occasional visit to only special services. Some, with a desire for Christian entertainment or maybe a sacred recreation.*

*People plan their lives around only special events like retreats, rallies, conferences, and special services. We may go to see a new personality, to hear a new truth, to get a new experience and somehow maybe expand our otherwise humdrum lives. We'll try anything once, or until something else comes along.”*

Does any of this describe your attitude toward worship? Think about the question before you answer. Does any of this describe how you view, and/or your attitude toward worship? The word worship literally means, to depress, to fall prostrate in homage to royalty or God: to bow oneself down, to crouch down, to fall down flat, to bow humbly, to do reverence, make to stoop.

Do any of these descriptions describe how you worship? When was the last time you humbly fell prostrate before God? More to the point, have you ever been prostrate before God?

Genuine worship, true worship is a direct meeting with the Holy, Almighty God and will always, without exception; result in life changes within the worshipper, not just an emotional experience for the moment. True worship is a choice made by the worshipper, not something that just happens or is planned out. True worship is not measured by emotional responses, but it is measured by the changes in the life of the worshipper. The question found in the book of Micah; *“What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”* This is what God desires instead of the ritualistic, half hearted sacrifices that the Israelites offered Him. This is what God wants from us, instead of our half-hearted, self-centered so-called worship services. When we walk humbly with God, worship will come naturally to us. It won't be a stale repetitive ritual, but an outpouring of love and praise for our creator.

In order to truly come to worship God we must prepare our hearts for worship, and it all begins by having a right relationship with God. The heart of worship is worship of the heart. A little boy once asked his mother if she could remember the highest number she ever counted to. The mother said she didn't know so she asked him about his highest number. He answered, "5,372." The mother was puzzled and asked him why he stopped at that particular number. The boy responded, "Well...church was over."

In various surveys, when people are asked why they don't go to church, they often reply that church is just too boring, or they complain about someone who they believe should not be there. While I agree that sometimes a church service can seem dull, especially to someone who does not have God at the center of worship; I want to suggest to you this morning that true worship, real worship, should be, and is anything but boring. The very essence of what true worship is does not allow us to be bored. When we come before Almighty God, the one who created everything and has done amazing things in our lives, it should be all we can do to keep our seats, and we should want to break out into loud praises.

Worship should always incorporate two very important elements: rejoicing and reverence, and, perhaps most importantly, worship must lead to a personal response. If we don't respond, we risk becoming self-centered rather than God-centered, and thus we become hard hearted. Before we go any further let me ask a couple of questions.

Who should be worshipped? The Lord God not us!

What is worship? I mentioned earlier, worship means to "humbly fall on your face or bow down" and this is found more than 170 times in the Bible.

In true worship you recognize your place before God and acknowledge His position before you. In other words, worship is about God and who He is, and what He wants, not about us and what we believe we deserve. How should we worship? With music, any music which sings praises to God; we should worship with proclamations or public statements; we should worship by giving God the glory; by bringing our offerings; by coming into His courts with praise; by living holy lives; and by witnessing for Him.

Why should we worship? Because God saved us; because of His greatness; because of His power; because of His splendor, majesty, strength, and beauty; and because God is righteous and true and He is coming to judge. Where are we to worship? In His sanctuary, and in His courts. When are we to worship? We are called to sing and proclaim His salvation day after day not just Sunday, we should worship Him everyday.

Just like the culture in Jesus' day, we too have fake worship happening. We need to know what fake worship is if we are to avoid it. Fake Worship is: Selective Worship! When you choose what it is you wish to know about God and omit the rest. The Samaritans took what they liked from Scripture, and paid no attention to the rest. Much Worship today is very similar to the Samaritan's type of worship. Today people pick and choose what, how, and when they will worship. Most Christians today can be referred to as Buffet Christians. Buffet Christians are those who come only when they feel like it and take only what they think tastes good, and ignore the rest.

And then there is One-Sided Worship. Jesus' words in our passage this morning are to worship in "*Spirit and Truth*," not one or the other. Many churches today have spirit worship with no meat, no substance, and some have great theological depth, but no feeling. All *Spirit* is nothing more than emotionalism, warm fuzzies, and all *Truth* is mere head knowledge and/or book knowledge. Jesus said we must have both. You cannot pick one or the other. Remember the passage this morning, "*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*" Jesus said a time is coming, and the time is now that we must *worship in Spirit and in Truth*. Worship isn't to be some academic exercise; worship should be an expression that encompasses your whole being. You cannot worship sitting around not participating and being unresponsive.

The question is, "Is there a right way to worship? Yes! Jesus said to "*Worship in Spirit and Truth!*" So how do you "*Worship in Spirit and in Truth?*" You start by declaring who and what God is; He is the God of gods, the Lord or lords, He is the one who sits on the throne over all the earth.

You are to give God your thanks for everything. It should be a time of joyful thanksgiving to Him, and Him alone for all He has provided, which means it's more than just coming and taking a seat.

*Worship in Spirit and in Truth* is also celebrating God's promises. It's the acknowledging of God. Acknowledging that He is not a part time God, but that He is present both now and down the road, present through anything you face. It's the rejoicing of what's in store as you live your life for Him, and frankly, that alone is worth coming to worship Him.

*Worship in Spirit and in Truth* is responding to God's personal call you're your life. When you come to worship, really worship, God will always call you into a deeper relationship with Him, either through salvation or a call to a closer walk with Him or even a deeper call to commit your service to Him, and when He does you should not ignore it, but respond to it. This is when worship becomes exciting. When you worship in this way, even the offering becomes an exciting act of worship! This is worshipping with all that you are, heart, mind, soul and strength.

Let me try to explain. Exciting worship is when you can walk away from the worship service **NOT** saying... “Oh, that was a nice music special, I enjoyed that ...” or “Weren’t those children cute up there,” or “That was a good sermon preacher, I enjoyed that.” Exciting worship is when you walk away saying, “Wow, God is a great God!”

Unfortunately most churches today worship in a way that get people to respond like the little girl when she was saying her bedtime prayers who said... “Dear God, we had a good time at church today, You should had been there...” When was the last time God was invited into worship?

To have true and exciting worship as an individual and as a church, you **MUST** come to worship with an open heart. When you come with an open heart you are not pretending to worship, you’re not being a hypocrite, you’re not putting on a show for others to see, you are simply coming to worship, to praise and thank God for all He has done, all He is doing, and all He will do.

To have true and exciting worship as an individual and as a church, you **MUST** come to worship with your focus on the Holy Spirit, not on you and what you want. It’s taking your focus off of your

“personal agendas,” and asking what can I give to God? It is willingly submitting yourself to God and His desires and not yours. Most people come to church wanting to hear something special, and if they like it

they will cheer and clap for the individual or group, but never ever would those same people ever lift their hands in praise, or stand, or cheer, or ever applaud God. Why is that? Why are we so quick to praise people, but refuse with your whole being to praise God?

To have true and exciting worship as an individual and as a church, you MUST come to worship with a real hunger and thirst for God. Remember, Jesus said in Matthew, “*blessed are those who hunger and thirst for they will be filled,*” hunger and thirst for a relationship with Him. Do you have such a hunger for God? If so why is it evident in your worship? Jesus told the Samaritan woman, “*Whoever drinks the water He gives will be filled.*” When you approach worship you should come expecting and wanting God’s presence, seeking God’s presence and hungering for God’s presence. Again, it’s not about you, Worships about God.

To have true and exciting worship as an individual and as a church, you must come to worship with a true hope. I admit that sometimes you may not approach worship with a hope for a future, and that's ok, but you can approach worship with the hope that God has the answers.

Because if you come to worship with an open heart, a Holy Spirit focus and a hunger, I can assure you that while you may not have approached it with a real hope you will leave with one.

If each worshiper comes to worship in this way then there will always be a powerful moving of God's Spirit, and His presence, which will equip and enable the church to move mountains, and the church that worships in *Spirit and Truth* has a powerful attraction.

It strips away the things that close our eyes and hearts. Worship like this strips away personal agendas; it strips away false pretenses and the masks you wear and it holds up Jesus not you. It becomes real and genuine. People will see it, they will know it, and they will feel it with all that they are, they feel it with their heart, mind and soul, and they will walk away with a joy in their heart and praises for God.

The Wor-ship has been a Ghost-ship long enough. It's time we board the Wor-ship as crew members with a desire to praise God, a desire to lift Him up. Let's start today and make Worship about God and stop making it about us.