

Authentic Faith: Worship

John 4:1-26

Minister Gabriel Yip

February 17, 2019

What does it mean to be a genuine believer? If we have accepted Jesus then we are being sanctified, being made less like sin and more like Christ. But it also means we worship genuinely in spirit and in truth. Genuine worship is more than just singing in church; it is something that should fill our entire lives. When we worship God we acknowledge that He is worthy of praise. But so many of us have other things that we deem worthy of our admiration and praise. Some worship professional gamers, athletes, TV stars, or even their credit card rewards program. But we are called to worship God based on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

In today's passage, we see that Jesus comes to Sychar and sits down at the well. Usually women would collect water in the cool of the morning. But this Samaritan woman comes at noon, when nobody else is around, because she is a pariah. Normally, no Jewish man would go near a Samaritan woman like this, but Jesus offers her living water. Only when He reveals her sordid past does she believe that He is sent by God, at least as a prophet. So she asks Him about a point of contention between Jews and Samaritans, which is where the correct place of worship should be, Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim (v. 20).

In Jesus' reply we see the first point about true worship. It is about who we worship, not where. Jesus says that the object of worship is more important than the location. Samaritans worshipped a God they did not have full knowledge of. Jesus then says salvation is from the Jews not only because the Jews had the Law and the Prophets, which pointed to the Messiah, but because the Messiah was from the house of David, from Judah. To fully know the God we worship, we must also know His Son. Knowing who we worship is more important than where we worship. So for us, worship is not tied to a church building or specific services. We know that we are always in the presence of God, since through Jesus we have full access to God. His Spirit dwells in us, and we are His temple. So our worship should permeate our entire lives. This means we should live lives that glorify Him and bring Him praise. It should affect how we think, act, and treat others, even those who sin against us and make us angry. Our praise shouldn't depend on how we feel or our circumstances, but rather on who God is. Whether or not we feel like it, God is always worthy of praise. But even when we fail to live a life of worship, we just realize

all the more how much we need God's grace. And in response we should praise Him with thanksgiving for the grace He has already given us.

Second, worship is about the heart, not about the external (vv. 23-24). Worship is not about the quality of the songs or sermon, or about rituals or rule following. It is about having a real relationship with Jesus. When I was young I goofed around with my friends during service, but when we were rebuked by the pastor after one of them spilled Skittles on the floor, I realized that the relationship with God was not something to be taken lightly. We should take seriously our relationship with the One who gave so much for us. No guy would limit his interaction with his girlfriend to a few hours twice a week, so why would we do this to God? Most of us wouldn't constantly ignore or compulsively betray our friends, but do we think it's alright to live most of our lives as if God wasn't there and sin against Him without hesitation? You might be able to live like this and still fool other people that you are a good Christian, but you can't fool God. He doesn't care about empty gestures, but about the heart. He wants a real relationship with you. A heart of worship values the relationship with God and drives us to obey Him. But sometimes, often because of circumstances, we feel far from God. This inevitably happens to all of us, but are you fighting for the relationship? Are you praying about it? Often in these dark times, God makes us realize the emptiness we feel is from all the other worthless things we hold on to, and that He is the most precious One we should hold on to.

Finally, worship is about Jesus. When the Samaritan woman mentions the Messiah in v. 25, Jesus reveals that He is the Messiah. We worship Jesus because of who He is. The world may think He was a good teacher, but they do not worship Him because they don't know that He is the living, risen Son of God, who gave us victory over sin and death. He humbled Himself to become a man and suffer a humiliating death in order to save the world. We study the Bible because Jesus is worth knowing more, and we praise Him because He is worthy of praise.

During a childhood family trip when I was awoken by our car swerving on an icy road, I was so much more appreciative of a stranger who helped us put on chains than I would have been if I slept through the ride. Likewise sometimes we must appreciate how doomed we would be without Jesus to appreciate what He did for us. Let Christ, who loves us as we are, be the center of our worship, and let us worship Him in all aspects of our lives.