

It was early in their marriage when Marshall Shelley wanted to give his fairly new wife a special gift for their anniversary. Susan was a farmer's daughter. So, what gift could Marshall give that would be meaningful, special, and creative on his part.

He found what he thought was the perfect gift, bought it, and had it wrapped. He was so full of anticipation of her surprise when she would open it up. All the anticipation quickly popped like a bubble when she opened it, and said in "not impressed" tone of her voice, "A rain gauge for an anniversary present?"

In the years that followed, the gift became a running family joke. It also became a classic example of a gift enjoyed by the giver, but not the receiver.

One word I hear a lot these days is *authentic*, as in "we seek authentic worship." Usually this means we're trying to create an experience that helps worshipers feel something. Nothing wrong with that, but if our focus is only on our experience, we may be giving God a rain gauge.

Are we offering in worship a gift we enjoy and figuring God will like it? A real gift or real worship means knowing what is important to The Receiver. So then, can we discover what it is God wants from worship?

The classic passage on worship is found in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Turn with me to John 4. I want to begin reading verse 19 and read to the end of verse 24.

Read the passage.

*<sup>19</sup> The woman \*said to Him, "a|Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." <sup>21</sup> Jesus \*said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. <sup>24</sup> God is |b|spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

I want to talk about the manner of our worship.

There are three questions that are answered in these verses as to the manner of worship: the where of worship, the who of worship, and the how of worship.

## The Where of Worship

This is the argument the woman brings up. We worship here on the mountain. You Jews think that is Jerusalem is the place of worship. Jesus basically said, "That is not relevant." Now, hear me out. It is not relevant in that neither the Jews nor the Samaritans had a clear understanding of the "whom" of worship. He is not a nationalistic God. That's how the

Jews and the Samaritans saw God. Because they saw God that way, the where of worship became more important than the whom of worship. Peter discovered that God is not partial. This does not mean that you can go worship God in the woods just as easy as you can in a church. Remember one the heads of lettuce in God's lettuce patch in Hebrews 10. *"let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together,"*

## The "Whom" of Worship

Jesus told the woman that the Samaritans did not have a complete understanding of who God is because they rejected most of the Old Testament. Therefore, they lacked the full revelation of God. The Jews had more of an understanding of God, yet, some limited His presence to the temple.

God is Spirit. That is a classic biblical understanding of the nature of God. He is not man. He does not consist of flesh and bones. He is not the man upstairs. Colossians 1:15 in describing Jesus says, *"He is the image of the invisible God."* 1 Timothy 6:16 says *He alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see."*

Here again is that word we used last week. God is transcendent. He is superior. He is beyond our comprehension. He is beyond our ability to completely understand. This is our God. He is not our equal.

## The How of Worship

True worshippers are those who worship in spirit and in truth. John Piper does something that can help us understand the whole process of truly worshipping our God using what Jesus teaches.

Truth is the fuel of worship

Truth is the Word of God revealing God to us. God reveals Himself to man through the Bible the Word of God. Last Sunday night, we saw how central the Word was to Acts. Acts 2:15-16 - Peter used the Word to preach the Sermon at Pentecost. He used Joel 2. Acts 2:42 - The early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. We have those teachings. It's called the New Testament. Acts 11:20ff - A group were in Antioch preaching the Lord Jesus. When Barnabas was sent to investigate, he saw that this was legit, and went to get Saul of Tarsus and they spent a whole year teaching, discipling using the Word of God. Acts 17:1 - Reasoned with the people in Thessalonica using scriptures.

Do you get the picture? This book is living. This book is active to accomplish what God set out to do. This book is piercing into your very thoughts. This book is powerful.

Incidentally, this book is under attack by secularists in our nation. This book is neglected in so many of our churches. To give you an idea of the power of this book, let me share with you what I shared last Sunday night.

North Korea is the top of the list for the most severe persecution of Christians in the world according to Open Doors.

The Christian Post reports that Kim Chung-seong was able to escape North Korea right before he was to be killed. He now lives in South Korea and is involved in missions work. "The one thing that the North Korean regime fears the most, and is afraid of, is the spreading of the Gospel."

And some churches make little use of it.

By the way, for the first time in the history of our nation, United States is now on the list for a nation to be watched for increased persecution.

Truth of the Word is the fuel. Again, Jesus teaches that the true worshipper will worship in spirit and in truth. So, what is spirit? Jesus is not referring to the Holy Spirit. I think he is referring to the spirit of man. There is no definite article before spirit. If Jesus were referring to the Holy Spirit, He would have said, "The Spirit." From this we learn that worship is to be done internally. It is a spiritual thing. That doesn't leave out the externals such as music, the offering, the utensils for the Lord's supper. The externals are to be used as means for us to worship God in our spirit. When the externals are the only focus, it leads to the dangers of traditionalism and formalism. Externals are not to be the focus. Worship is to be done internally, our spirit worshipping God who is spirit.

Truth is the fuel. Your inner spirit is the furnace. If you have fuel and a furnace, something else is needed. What is needed is the Holy Spirit. He is the fire. God takes His Word, and fuels the fire of the Holy Spirit in the furnace of our inner spirit.

John Calvin calls it the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. You read along in scripture, and you suddenly stop in your reading like a sudden ah-hah. That's the Holy Spirit. That's what makes the Word come alive. That's why nations hate this book. It doesn't take much for the Holy Spirit to work.

Take for example a Japanese gentleman who lived in the early 20th Century. His name was Tokichi. He had been sent to prison more than 20 times and was known for being as cruel as a tiger. His life of crime came to an end when he murdered a person. Tried, convicted, and sentenced to death, Tokichi awaited his sentence to be carried out. In that time, two Christian missionaries, Miss West and Miss McDonald, sent him a New Testament. Miss West visited him. After the visit, Tokichi began to read the story of Jesus's trial and crucifixion. His attention was drawn to one sentence. It was where Jesus prayed to the

father, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Holy Spirit put fire to that fuel in the furnace of his inner spirit. This is what he wrote.

"I stopped: I was stabbed to the heart, as if by a 5 inch nail. What did the verse revealed to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it his compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart, I believed."

In that short time that Tokichi had to live, his life was radically, completely transformed. Near the end of his life, Miss West directed him to the words of 2 Corinthians 6:8 – 10. That passage addressed the suffering of the righteous. The words moved him very deeply as he wrote,

"'As sorrowing, yet always rejoicing.' People will say that I must have a very sorrowful heart because I am daily awaiting the execution of the death sentence. This is not the case. I feel neither sorrow nor distress nor any pain. Locked up in the prison cells 6' x 9, I am infinitely happier than I was in the days of my sinning when I did not know God. Day and night, I am talking with Jesus Christ."

When our worship is directed towards the person of worship, fueled by the Word of God, fired by the Holy Spirit in the furnace of our inner spirit, there will be heat. The heat is that of reverence, awe, fear, adoration, joy, gratitude, trust, hope, salvation.

True worshippers are those who worship God in spirit and in truth. Spirit without truth is dangerous. Truth without spirit is dead. Spirit with truth is dynamite.