

In Spirit and Truth

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0 : 00] Well, we start a new series tonight on worship. And we'll mostly be focused this semester on corporate worship and the elements of corporate worship specifically. So when we come to worship, there's a specific logic that's at play in the way we write a service, for instance.

God invites us, he gets the first word, and we come and we approach him. That's the call to worship and a prayer and a song. We respond. God calls us to renewals, so we come confessing, we come saying we're sinners, we come remembering the gospel. So we sing about that, we talk about that. God calls us then to commit to him. So we read the word, we preach the word, we think about the word, and we commit. And then God blesses us and send us out.

And that's the benediction. That's the song of response, right? So there's a logic to the elements of our worship. And in all of them we are singing, praying, speaking, reading, moving a little bit, not much, but a little, every once in a while. We eat in worship, we drink in worship, we pour water in worship, we pronounce, we bless, we do a lot of different verbs in worship. And we're going to be looking at those specifically the elements in this series. But before we get to the elements tonight, we're going to talk about worship in general. So it's an introduction sermon.

In this passage, Jesus confronts a woman. And on the surface of it, only until the very end, it doesn't really look like it's about worship. But this encounter does, it teaches us a lot about worship. And I want to answer three questions from the text tonight. The first is what is worship? And then we're going to ask why worship? And then how? How do you worship? So what's worship? Why do we worship? And how to worship? So first, what's worship? And specifically what's true worship? And the answer from this passage, and from the Psalms, which we're just saying about, is that worship is the outwork of a heart directed towards something it values. In other words, in Psalm 96 which we're just saying, it says that worship is a scribing glory, or a scribing value. So it's your heart turned towards something you value. And a scribing value too, that's something.

[2 : 32] And in this passage, specifically the metaphor of water is at play. So if you use a metaphor of water to describe worship, worship is a pouring over of your heart. It's like water bubbling over a cup and pouring over towards something that you find valuable.

Towards something that's worth it. And that's why the old English term for worship, where we get the word worship itself today, was worth-ship. So if you go read a 17th, 16th, 15th century text, in English it'll say worth-ship.

Because worship is turning towards something that's worth turning towards. It's a scribing value. Now, maybe that's not what you noticed in the first reading of this text. So let's pull it out a little bit. The encounter.

The encounter between Jesus and this woman. Jesus is traveling from the south to the north. From Judea to Galilee. And to get from Judea to Galilee, you have to pass through Samaria.

In the middle of Samaria, which he reaches by noon, Ish is a plot of land that Jacob had bought in Genesis. And that he had dug a well on, where Jacob's well is, and he comes upon this well. It's about a mile outside of the town of Sikar. And as disciples go into town and leave him, and it's midday, and it's hot, and he's been traveling probably since daylight. If not before, multiple miles, a lot of miles. And he's weary, verse 6 says. And so he tells this woman, give me a drink.

[4 : 08] And the text simply says that she asks, you're asking me, a woman in a Samaritan, to give you a drink. Now, it doesn't really convey the shock that probably would have been there. John tries to convey it in verse 7 a little bit more by adding a little parenthetical authorial comment that says, Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

But actually, if you translate the text literally, it says, Jews do not use dishes after Samaritans use them. In other words, he's just asked her for a drink, and he's about to use her bucket, or her cup to

drink.

And so John says, Jews don't use dishes that Samaritans have touched. So you can start to get a little bit of the feel of the barrier that's there in the culture.

In other words, Jesus slices open the heart of the culture of the day, and he stabs it with a knife. He cuts right through it.

A century later, a text would start to be written called the Mishnah. The Mishnah is a Jewish commentary of sorts. It's part of a bigger book called the Talmud, and it's a commentary on the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, as we Christians call it. And it really reflected the flavor of this day in a chapter in verse called Mishnah Nidah 4-1. And it says this, the daughters of Samaritans are minstrels from their cradle. Now if you don't know what the word minstrels means, it's referring to ministration, which means that in Jewish law that they're unclean from birth, they're to be put outside of our city from the time they're born as little girls all the way to their death. This is the culture. This is what Jewish men think of Samaritan women.

[6 : 04] You don't touch them, you don't talk to them, and you certainly don't drink water from their dishes, in other words. Now the point is that Jesus is cutting across every possible barrier you can imagine in this setting. This text is so ancient and it's so modern.

Because we've just said he's cutting across a cultural barrier. This woman is unclean. He shouldn't even touch a dish that she's touched according to the common law of his culture.

Later in the passage we read in verse 27, the disciples marveled and said why were you talking to her? They're absolutely shocked. They're scandalized.

But not just cultural barrier, there's a moral barrier. Now she is unusually alone in this passage. Women in the first century typically would not go get water by themselves because of danger mostly. And so they would almost always travel in groups especially when it's quite far outside of the city.

Also women would not go get water at lunchtime because that's one of the hottest parts of the day. And so they typically go get water in the mornings and evenings in large groups. She's by herself.

[7 : 24] It's not just that she's a Samaritan completely unclean, untouchable, but she's the untouchable of the untouchables. She's a social outcast even among Samaritan women. She's completely castigated by her society. And that might be because we're not for sure, but one of the actions, one of the things that she might not be identifying as in going to a well at midday is a prostitute. Now nobody's sure about that, but some commentators think that's the case because that would have been a normal way to exchange prostitution relationship was to go to the wells by yourself at an unusual time and meet men.

She's the outcast of the outcast. There's also a gender barrier. She says, why would you speak to me? Not just as a Samaritan, but a woman. Men don't relate like to women like this in public in the first century. And we know this is somewhat of a patriarchal society. She's not just a Samaritan. She's not just a social outcast. She might be a prostitute, but there's a gender barrier in the society. She's a woman. And this would be unusual.

There's also a religious barrier. We saw at the end of the passage, she worships at Mount Garazim with the Samaritans. She worships at Mount Garazim. She worships at Mount Garazim.

The Jews regard it as a different religion, even though it was born of the Old Testament, born of the first five books of the Old Testament. Look, moral, cultural, religious, gender, every single possible barrier you can imagine.

[9 : 12] Socioeconomic, everything. It's all there. It's all in this passage. And the point is that John wants you to contrast it with what has just previously happened in the book of John. You see, right before this, in John chapter 3, Jesus had an encounter that's quite similar to this.

It was another encounter by scandal, except instead of the scandal of the middle of the day, it was the scandal of the middle of the night, which is also strange. And he goes and sees Nicodemus, you remember, in John chapter 3. Nicodemus is the absolute reverse of this woman. Well, he's a man in a patriarchal society. He's a Jew, but he's not just a Jew.

He's the head of Jewish society and culture. He's a Pharisee. He defines Jewish culture. He's religiously pure, not unclean. He's literally the total reverse of the woman. You see?

So we have two encounters. John chapter 3 and John chapter 4. Both of them strange, both of them with the opposite ends of the spectrum, the elite and the outcast.

And in the, you remember in John chapter 3 with Nicodemus, he says to Nicodemus, you must be born again. And Nicodemus says, do you mean I must go back into my mother's womb a second

time? He asks.

[10:32] He completely is immersed in the physical and has no idea what Jesus is talking about. In this passage, what does Jesus do? He comes to this woman for a physical drink and then says to her, look, I can offer you water that will quench your ultimate thirst.

I can offer you water that will leave you satisfied forever. And he was talking about eternal life. And she immediately says, you don't even have a bucket.

That's literally what the text says. Not that you don't have anything to draw with. You don't have a bucket is what she says. Same mistake as Nicodemus. She immerses herself completely in a physical understanding.

Now you see what's happening here. You see what's happening here. From the social elite to the social outcast, from the religious elite to the religious outcast, from Jew to Samaritan immersed in the worshipers.

This is what Jesus is saying. Becoming a true worshipper is a gift. In other words, the gospel doesn't privilege the privileged. You see? The gospel doesn't privilege the privileged. If you want, he's saying to Nicodemus and to this woman at opposite ends of the spectrum, if you want to become a true worshipper, it's a gift.

[12:00] You don't have what you need to become what you ought be in and of yourself. It doesn't matter where you see it's not by blood. It's not by history. It's not by moral purity.

None of these things. Neither of them have it. And neither of them get it. The gospel doesn't privilege the privileged. It cuts across every single boundary. This text is so modern.

Because it cuts across every single racial, every single ethnic, every single moral every single cultural boundary. The gospel unites in a completely unusual way like nothing else ever in history. Because it doesn't privilege the privileged. And so what he's saying is this, if you want to become a true worshipper to Nicodemus, to the woman, the prostitute perhaps at the well, to any of us, it requires the gift of a heart that spills over with living water that you do not possess.

Now what does he mean by living water? He says that I can offer you living water and she doesn't get it. In the book of John we have already seen water on two occasions prior to this as an important character. Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding. And now, and then Jesus was baptized. He went under the water which we preached on that text just a few weeks ago. And now in the very next chapter we see Jesus offering this woman living water. Now one of the reasons that she's confused is because this is Jacob's well.

And then if you read Genesis you'll see this, but when Jacob dug a well it took him a long time because he had to dig really deep into the ground to get to a natural spring. And the word living in the Greek here, the way the word is translated living, just means running water. Or fresh water. Or natural spring water.

[13:52] Right, so when he says, if you knew who I was you would be asking me for water and I will give you living water. What she hears is you're offering me running water instead of the stagnant water that's sitting on the top of the well. Right, so in the very next verse she says, you don't have a bucket. Do you think you're greater than Jacob was? Now this is not a religious question. This is not about him, Jesus being greater than the prophet or patriarch Jacob.

She's simply saying it took Jacob days to dig down to the moving water underneath that supplies this well and you don't have a bucket. And you think that you're going to get down to that water and bring some up and give it to me? No, we're going to have to drink the water on the top.

The stagnant water, so she doesn't get it. The other reason she doesn't get it, what this idea of living water is because Samaritans only read from the first five books of the Old Testament Genesis to Deuteronomy. So they don't accept any of the prophets or Psalms or anything like that. Jesus says when he uses the phrase living water, when he offers living water, he's quoting, he's picking up on something that the prophets talk about all the time. So for instance in Jeremiah 2.13, God pronounces to Israel, I am the spring of living water. You see, I am the spring of living water. I am the fresh water. In other words what he's saying to her and to Nicodemus is that if you want to become a true worshiper, a worshiper of the living God it requires the life of God in you.

That's what he means by living water. God says I am living water. And what he's saying is you need the living water, the life of God poured over the brim of God's heart to come into your heart. You need the very life of God in you.

It doesn't matter your history, your blood, your affiliations, your past moral achievement or inachievement. If you want to be a worshiper, a true worshiper you have to have the life of God

poured into your heart so that the life of God pours back out of your heart directed to him again. [16:08] That's what he's saying. What does this mean? This means that worship is first an expression of your inner life moving outward before it is an outward act that moves inward. You see?

It's first an expression of your inner life. It's of your heart spilling over is what he's saying. True worship before it is outward action that turns inward. It also means that when you worship you ascribe value with your whole person.

So he says here when he talks about giving living water he's talking about giving it to your heart. To the center of who you are. You ascribe value or glory with your heart.

The heart in the Bible is the very center of who you are. It's your soul. It's your identity. It controls all of you. And so that means worship expresses itself in every part of who you are. In your knowledge, in your thinking, in your mind, in your emotions, in your will, in your desires, in your actions, and in your body. So worship is expressed in our, through our bodily action. We sing. We eat.

We partake of the table. These are movements. You see? Worship is expressed in our minds. We read. We think. We understand. Worship is expressed in our emotions.

[17:36] We weep when we're worshipping properly. We rejoice. We mourn with those who are mourning as we worship. It's expressed in our will.

You change. You desire things that you didn't previously desire and you desire to stop desiring things that you previously did desire. Did you get that?

We change. We want to be different. In other words, true worship is a gift of God that reaches across every single aspect of a barrier in life, no matter where you've come from or who you are. True worship is a gift.

It's a change of heart. It's a heart that pours over with the very life of God and it's expressed in every aspect of your being. Every aspect. The way you move, the way you think, the way you speak, the way you weep, the way you rejoice, and the way you desire, all of these ways.

So that's point one. What's worship? Now point two, why should we worship? Why worship? And the answer that's given in this passage is because you must.

[18:48] You can't not worship. That's the answer that we're given. Jesus is saying to us in this passage, the human soul is thirsty for an ultimate outside source to place value upon. What he's saying is that to the woman and to all of us is that you're thirsty.

That you desperately want, beyond all wants, to put ultimate value into something and to find satisfaction from it, to find fulfillment from it. You thirst. Everybody thirst.

So the question is not do you worship, but what are you worshipping? So the first thing to say is this, you worship because you are a worshipper. Now we learned this from the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter one.

Paul says God has revealed himself to every single human on earth, all over the world. And then he goes on to say the choice that's left to us is do we worship creator or creature? So in Psalm 96 it said the option of worshipping the creature is to worship wood or stone. In other words it's to worship the finite. In other words it's to describe ultimate value to thirst for something in this world as ultimate satisfaction.

So the two options you have to worship are either something outside of this world or something inside of this world. Paul is saying either creator who exists outside of the frame of the finite or creature, anything that exists inside the frame of the finite.

[20:16] It's to describe value to one or the other and everybody does it. Now in this passage in John chapter four with the woman she misunderstands that water means the life of God, eternal life.

So she thinks it's natural. Now Jesus does something a bit shocking and surprising. All of a sudden in the midst of this conversation he says go get your husband.

And if you're reading the text and paying attention it doesn't make sense. It's an abrupt stop and start. He's just offered her living water and she says you don't have a bucket.

And so he says go get your husband. Now she dodges. She dodges. She says I don't have a husband. You see what Jesus is trying to do?

She hasn't understood the first time and so what he's trying to do is he's trying to help her understand her need. So he's exposing her.

[21:20] He's putting her before him completely bald. He's exposing her. He's saying go get, you don't get it. You don't understand the water that you need, the very life of God. So go get your

husband.

You see. And now what has he just called her out on? What does he tell her? You've had four husbands. The man you're currently with is not your husband. In other words she was in a sexually active relationship with someone not her husband.

Quite common in our day. Not as scandalized to us in the 21st century. In the first century, totally uncommon, totally scandalous in the eyes of the entirety of the culture. He's trying to uncover her need for her so that she can see it. He's saying to you, you don't understand what you need. And the point is this, he's saying look you are worshipping. You're worshipping something. You're ascribing ultimate value somewhere. And he's telling her what you have ascribed ultimate value to is your relationship with men.

The place that you're looking to find identity, your identity and your fulfillment to be fulfilled is the same thing that you're worshipping and that's relationship with men for this woman.

[22 : 40] And that's what he's saying. In other words, he's saying this is your idol. He's holding it out in front of her and saying this is what you've been looking for to fulfill you. And you keep chasing and you keep chasing and you keep chasing. Husband after husband after husband, lover after lover, man after man, and it's not working. See, he's exposing her need.

In the first book of the Harry Potter series, this is my fourth Harry Potter illustration since I've been at St. Columbus, but the last three have been in the past month or so. They're ramping up these days.

In the very first book of the Harry Potter series, Harry comes into a room and there's a mirror and it's the mirror of Aresed. Now this is the not so subtle way of J. C. Rowling explaining exactly what this mirror does to you. You see Aresed is the reverse of the word desire and so it's the mirror of desire. And what does Harry see?

Harry looks into the mirror and he sees his parents who have died right around his birth. And then Ron, Harry's best friend, comes into the room and Ron looks into the mirror. And what does Ron see?

Ron doesn't see something quite as sentimental as his dead parents holding his hands, but what he sees is he's captain of the Quidditch team, which is like being captain of the Rugby team. And he's head boy at his school in his house and everybody is hoisting him up on their shoulders after winning a match. So he sees himself ahead above his peers, right? And immediately Harry realizes what this mirror does is that it shows you the desires of your heart. And later Harry's mentor and the principal of the school Dumbledore, Professor Dumbledore, comes and talks to Harry about this mirror and he says to Harry, do you know what it does? And Harry says, it shows you the desires of your heart and he says it shows you the ultimate desires of your heart.

[24 : 40] The thing that you want most in the world and then he gives Harry a caution. He says many men and women have been consumed by looking into this mirror. Many men and women have stood here for ages and ages until they just crumbled away.

You see, once they saw the thing that they desired most, they could never leave it. It killed them. You see. Now what Jesus is saying here in this passage about worship is that every single one of us is a worshiper and that if you put your worship directed in absolute value, absolute longing, ascribing ultimate value to something that's within the finite world, it will kill you.

It will eat you up. Just like the people that look into the mirror of their greatest desires and it consumes them.

This is cliché but we all know this. You know exactly how this works. You've heard it a million times. The people who write the success stories that you've heard who get the thing that they wanted so badly in life, the success, the clichés, the sex, the money, the power, the man and the woman, the men and the women, whatever it is, when they get it, you've heard it a million times. How many pastors have you heard tell a story about how some famous guy comes out and says, I got it and then I was left empty.

I don't even have to say it. You know it so well. It's cliché. So for some people that do get it when they ascribe ultimate value, but when they worship something in this world and they look to it for their identity and their ultimate fulfillment in life, their biggest and greatest desire, it leaves them empty.

[26 : 32] And so it forces them in a cycle of constantly chasing, and the next thing and the next thing, and it's just like looking into the mirror of Erosa to just eat you up by your performance. You can never quite grasp what you've been looking for and then you die. Those are the people that get

what they wanted.

The people that don't get what they wanted are left prior to that cycle constantly chasing. In other words, what these finite idols say to you is work, work, work, work, work, work, perform. You want it, you got to come get it.

Tie up your lace up your bootstraps and come. Come after me. The idols of wood and stone, the men, the women, the sex, the money, the power, come and get it.

And the problem is if you never get it in life, if you're like this woman, if you're a social outcast, if you're not the right gender, if you're not the right socioeconomic status, if you don't get the job you've always wanted, if you don't get the end of the university, the career, the man, the woman, then you find yourself constantly chasing something in life that's whipping you into performance. It's a task master.

You see? It's a gospel that says perform for me. And you never actually reach it and you find yourself empty in life. So either way, whether you get it or you don't, it ends up in emptiness. It ends up, it's performative emptiness.

[27 : 57] It's an alternative gospel to what Jesus has been offering to this woman. All of the finite objects Paul is saying in Romans 1, any worship that's placed ultimately towards something besides that which exists outside of this world, a Creator, will ultimately eat you up just like the mirror of Erisedon. There's no assurance and no hope for a God that demands that you keep acting in order to finally get Him or her. There's no assurance and no hope in that. You can never be sure and you can never have any ultimate hope. So that brings us to the final very brief point.

How to worship very briefly. How to do true worship instead. The matrix that's offered in this passage and I can only outline it because we're almost out of time. The matrix in verse 23 that he outlines is Jesus says, what the Father is seeking instead of idolatry is worship in spirit and truth. Now what does that mean?

She's been exposed to this woman and she deflects. I don't have a husband. And again she deflects a second time when he finally does call her out and exposes her need. The next thing she says is you're a prophet. Tell me what do you think about this religious controversy?

She's doing the same thing that all of us do in polite society and whenever somebody tries to get us to talk about something that we're ashamed or nervous to talk about publicly, we say what do you think about Donald Trump or whatever. We turn towards politics or we turn towards the big questions of theology because we don't want to talk about our heart. And that's exactly what's going on with this woman. She's deflecting.

Now the deflection she gives sets Jesus up. So she says this mountain or that mountain, where should we worship? And Jesus literally says to her, look, the Samaritans have been worshiping in the wrong place. The Jews, salvation is from the Jews.

[30 : 01] The Jews have it right. The true temple in Jerusalem is in Jerusalem. That's it. But verse 23, yet verse 23, a time is coming and has now come. In other words, he's saying, yet actually the Jews have it right but it doesn't matter anymore.

That's what he's saying. When it says a time has come or a time is coming, the word, the Greek word there is the little word the hour. And every time in the book of John that the word the hour is used. Every single time and we learn this later in the book of John, it's always a reference to the cross.

You see. When she tries to deflect, when she tries to go to a big political theological question of the day, Jesus brings her back. What does it mean to worship in truth? Not three chapters after this, four chapters after this. You guys know this. Jesus will say I am the way, the truth and the life. You see what he's saying? What does it mean to worship in truth? He's saying I am he. I'm here. The hour has come. In other words, he's trying to turn her face to Jerusalem.

Yeah, that's the correct temple over there, but it doesn't matter because the hour has come. He's setting her eyes towards the cross, towards what's about to happen. So what he's saying is this, to worship in truth is to worship in him with your eyes towards Jerusalem at the cross, at the cross in resurrection. How does he do it? How does he give you the ability to be a true worshiper in the truth? Because at the cross Jesus said, I thirst.

He's just come to this woman for a drink and he's offered her something that will quench an ultimate thirst. She is thirsty and you're thirsty for something ultimate. And on the cross when Jesus was dying, he said out loud the very last thing before he died, he said I thirst. And that wasn't simply about physical thirst. He was forsaken by his father. His father turned his face away from him. He

withdrew the living water, the water of life that was in Christ.

[32 : 29] He was thirsty, Jesus, you see, Jesus thirsted on the cross so that you might take a sip from the living water the very life of God and never be thirsty again.

That's what it means to worship in truth. It means to worship in the thirsty man, Jesus Christ on the cross. The second last thing, and I have I want to add two more things to say about that, but another day is the second aspect of the matrix. It's not only in truth but it's in spirit, he says. Now what does it mean to worship in spirit? It simply means this, worship comes from the trinity, father, son and spirit. The trinity delivers to you the very life of God and then worship is redirected back to the trinity. Okay?

The father sends the son. The son thirsts for you so that you may become a true worshiper and the spirit. Worshipping in the spirit means that the advocate of the father, the spirit, the very spirit of Christ comes and gives you that water, gives you that living water.

It's the spirit that comes and changes you. He says this later in John that the spirit is the para-caleo, the come alongside one. The spirit is the one who comes alongside you and changes you. You see to worship in spirit in truth means to worship in the trinity to the trinity.

It means to worship to the father, the most excellent because of the work of the son, through the work of the spirit. Worshipping in spirit in truth is trinitarian from start to finish. Now, I have to stop. What does this mean for you? One thing, the spirit is he who comes and whispers in your ear, Paul tells us in Romans and reconvicts, reconvents, advocates to you.

[34 : 33] The spirit is the one who works through the word to reconvents you that the father is most excellent and deserves to have ultimate value ascribed to him. And that means one simple practical thing for tonight.

While we're doing the series on worship, you should prepare for worship. And something that most of us in the 21st century don't do anymore, prepare for worship.

We need to take an honest assessment at the start of our series on worship of our boredom and our lack of zeal or longing or anything for actually turning our ultimate value to the father through the son by the power of the spirit in our corporate worship together.

Just an honest assessment. And one of the ways to change is to prepare for worship. So it's to come to the text and to prayer before you come together as a body and before you ever walk through the door to already have your heart turn toward the most excellent father because of the son in the power of the spirit. In other words, turning to Scripture and prayer before worship turns your face towards Jerusalem.

You see, so that you can turn your face up to the father when we gather together. And that will change you. Let's pray together. Father, we want in this season to become truer and better worshipers that truly desire you above all idols. And so we ask that you would deliver us from the mirror of Ereced, from the things that we want most in this world above you tonight. And that we would have our affections reshaped by looking towards Jerusalem.

[36 : 21] The man who thirsted for us will help us to want Jesus. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.