

Sought to Worship



I Am Sent

John 4:19-26

If you have your bibles, please open to John's gospel to John chapter 4. We are in the second message of our four part series during the month of June called, I Am Sent. This morning we're going to be bringing our remarks from John chapter 4.

I think you can just see this; Jesus has stopped from a long journey. He is going from Judea to Galilee, and He has to go through Samaria. It is noontime. His disciples have gone into town to buy food. He is sitting, tired, exhausted from the journey, and all of a sudden, a lady appears at the well and she is getting water. Have you ever been somewhere where someone else had what you needed, but you didn't have the ability to get what you needed, so you really wished they would just share? So Jesus just says, mam, give me a drink of water. She looked at Him and said, how is it that you, being a Jew, as me, a Samaritan woman, for water? If you don't get what's going on here, here is what is going on. The Samaritans believed the Jews were prejudiced. She knew that in Jesus' eye, Him being a Jew, He looked at her as being biracial. Part of her family heritage was Jewish, but the other side was Gentile. The Jews didn't have much dealings with the Samaritan because of that, so she is calling Him out; yeah, under ordinary circumstances you wouldn't have anything to do with me, now you need water, so you're asking me to give you a drink of water! Jesus

immediately says mam, I hate it that you don't understand who I am, because if you had known who I was, you would have asked Me for a drink and I would give you water that would spring up into you like a well of living water, and you would never thirst again. She said whoa, where are you getting this living water? Are you greater than Jacob? He says mam, if you would just drink...and she said I want this water. I don't ever want to thirst again, but if I don't thirst again, then I wouldn't have to come back to this well ever again. I would have time to do other things. Give me what you have! He said, before I give it to you, go home and get your husband because I don't want him to miss out on this either. She kind of looks at Jesus and says I don't have a husband. Jesus said that's right; you don't, but you're living with a man, but before you moved in with him, you have already had five previous husbands. She looks at Jesus and says I perceive you are a prophet. Then it appears she completely changes the subject. In preparation for this, I've read a lot of commentaries, a lot of pastors, who firmly believe that now that it is getting personal and Jesus is talking about her sinful past, like some people do, she is trying to change the subject and get into a theological debate with Him. But I don't see that in the text. As a matter of fact, if I can be frank, I think if you believe that, you are reading that into the text. It kind of sounds like to me, that where I am now, that all of a sudden she realizes I am not in the presence of an ordinary man, I'm in the presence of a man who speaks on behalf of God; he is a prophet. Get this picture. What if you were a religious person in the presence of somebody who you believe was from God and could answer any question you had? Do you think there is a good chance you might ask a really good theological question? So she just asks this question. Our fathers say we ought to worship on this mountain, but you, being Jewish, believe we ought to worship on that mountain in Jerusalem. Which is right? Jesus is going to answer the question, and it will give us the reason why we are being sent. Stand as we open our bibles to John chapter 4 and pick up the story in verse 19.

Scripture

"The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in

Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

(Prayer)

Father, wow, what a story, what an encounter. Father, it blows me away to imagine going to a place to get what was just a necessity of life. It changed this woman's life, and changed many in her village. Father, we truly want to make sure we've had an encounter with You that has changed our life. If we've had that encounter, then we will fully understand that we are sent. Father, we want to make sure everybody understands why we are sent. We don't want anyone to get the wrong idea, and today, we want to talk about the ultimate priority of a Christian, and why we are sent into the world. Father, may this lay the groundwork for the two sermons that will follow as we talk about the great command and the great commission. Father, don't let us miss out on the great call, and that is that You have ultimately sought us to worship You. In Your Son's name we pray, amen.

This lady wanted to know where the proper place to worship is. I think you can understand that. We still have people today who question where the right place to worship is. You know that there are people meeting today that believe only those people who meet where they are meeting are actually worshipping God, and all the other people meeting in other places are not actually worshipping God. It's an old, old thought. Can you imagine being a Samaritan and believing on this day when you worship, the folks

down south are really worshipping. Here you are, down south in the temple, and you look up to that mountain and you know there was a temple that stood on that mountain that was torn down by your forefathers, yet people still go there to worship. But you don't believe that worship is really taking place, so in all the little places of business, in a lot of little homes, on a lot of sleepovers, that theological question has been debated on who is actually worshipping in the right place. Jesus is going to teach with this encounter that the question we should be asking is not where we should worship, but when we should worship, who we should worship, and how we should worship. If it's not obvious this morning, we are going to talk about our call to worship. I want to make sure that you understand before this message is over that when we are sent, the ultimate priority of being sent is not to do evangelism, nor discipleship, but the ultimate priority of a Christian is to worship God. When we properly worship God, what will flow out of our worship of Him is evangelism and discipleship. But it is important for us to understand why God is sending us. See, Jesus said, "As the Father sent Me, so I send you." So, as Jesus was sent, so we are sent. Kory quoted last week Jesus saying, "For the Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost." When you hear Kory say that, when you read that in Luke's gospel, you might get the idea that the ultimate priority is for you and I to be saved. But when we take all of the gospels, put them together, and understand Jesus' full intention, His ultimate teaching is that the Father is seeking worshippers, true worshippers, for He is Spirit. Therefore, we must worship Him in spirit and truth, and the ultimate priority of the life of the person who has been sought by God is to worship Him, for that is the reason God sought you and me. Now the question is not where do we go to worship, Jesus turns this thing upside-down and tells the lady we are now living in a different time, we are living in a new age. The hour is coming and now is when you don't go there, or you don't go here because it is not about a place; it is about a person, and right now, wherever you are, is the time to be worshipping Him.

Let's make sure we understand what this word, worship, means. This word is actually a compound word that is made up of two words. The first word literally means 'to bow before,' and the second word means 'to blow a

kiss.' I don't know about you, but it's kind of cute when a little curly haired girl, who is affectionate towards somebody she loves, sees them a great distance away, and before she can get to them to hug and give a kiss, she just blows them a kiss. That's cute. As a matter of fact, sometimes we teach our little girls to blow a kiss to someone. Here's what I want to ask you. Have any of you ever been on the other side? Have any of you ever been the recipient of one of those kisses that is being blown from a little bitty girl? Is it not awesome to see the face of a little girl, she sees you, immediately her eyes light up, and she can't wait to run fifty feet to get to you and hug and kiss you, so she has to blow you a kiss! If any of you think I am talking about Evie Kate and me, I'm not talking about that at all. ☺ But if you've ever been on the side of that, you know what that's like. That is not the thought here, totally. We've got to go back to understand why we have an English word, worship, that comes from two words that are put together; to bow, to kiss, and why it is translated as worship. We have to go back to Persian culture to understand this. In Persian culture, if two people who are equals met, as a sign of respect they would kiss each other on the lips. Yuck! I'm glad I'm American and not Persian. Can you imagine me being out in the community and meeting a fellow preacher, and we are equal, (I'm not going to see him); no, we see each other and we embrace at Culver's and we kiss each other on the lips. That is yucky to us, but in that culture, it would say we recognize each other as equals. But let's suppose I meet someone who is a little less than me, or I'm a little less than him. If he is a little less than me, I wait for him to kiss me, but if I'm a little less than him, he waits for me to kiss him, but to show I recognize that he's a little greater than me, I kiss him on the cheek. Have you ever met those people who you just know that you aren't in their class? You put them up here, and you are down here. If you were in the Persian culture, when you met those people and you saw them coming, you would bow. Depending on how great that gulf was, you would bow your head until it touched the earth and you had dust on your forehead. Then, you would rise with dust on your forehead, and while they were still far away, you would blow them a kiss. In blowing them a kiss, you are recognizing who they were and who you are. That's the word. That's the picture. Now through time, and by the time the Greek world and the

Roman world picked up on this concept, to blow a kiss towards someone was a sign of affection, of reverence, and it came to be the word that was used for worship. So, are we clear? The highest priority of you and me as a Christian is worship, worship of God, not worship that takes place at 9:15 on a Sunday morning at Hardin Baptist Church because it is the first day of the rest of the week. It is about the affection you have for God everywhere you are, 24/7. Do you understand that? I am sent, and as I am being sent, my ultimate priority is to recognize that the reason God sought me out was because He is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and truth. For God is Spirit, therefore, those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. Please hear this. The nature of worship is dictated by the nature of God, not the nature of man. If there is one thing that irks me about us as Christians, it is how so many of us make worship about us, and what we like and what we don't like. Yet, worship is not dictated by your nature or by my nature; worship is dictated by the very nature of God.

I was selfish this morning early. Usually Matt and I talk during the week, and this week we didn't. It was one of those rare times we didn't talk. I got up this morning and I had this thought. Does Matt know I'm talking about worship? It was 3:00. I thought I'm not going to call him, so I just prayed, Lord, you know my message. You know what Matt has chosen. I pray You have put it together. Please let there be a few songs. Then I came in this morning and we sang, 'behold our God, seated on His throne.' And do you know what my next point is? It is Revelation chapter 4. Do you know what the Bible teaches in Revelation chapter 4? It is a scene where John sees Heaven. I want to make sure you understand this. According to Bro Ricky, my interpretation, the book of Revelation is being written to the church. It is not being written to talk about the last seven years of time that is going to happen right before Christ comes back. It is written to the church in its entirety because it is a letter that is being written to encourage us during this church age, that no matter how bad it gets, we're going to stay faithful to God. So he is writing this letter to encourage us to know that at all times, everything is under the sovereign control of God, no matter how bad it looks, for the church never panic, and never to be distracted from what we're supposed to be doing. It opens up after you have these seven letters to the seven churches. All of a sudden, you have a scene in Heaven, and

there is God, the Father, sitting on the throne. The closest created beings around Him are four living creatures, and they are saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, who was, who is, and who is to come." Then, we have twenty-four elders and when they start hearing the four living creatures say holy, holy, holy, they start worshipping Him (the same word as to blow a kiss) and they fall on their knees, take off their crowns, and throw them at His feet. Together, they burst out into song, saying, "Worthy are You." The reason He is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power is because He has created all things, and all things that were created were created for You, they say. While they are on their knees before God worshipping Him, all of a sudden, they see a scroll in His right hand, and no one is worthy to take the scroll. There is weeping in Heaven by John! Then, through the crowd steps a lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah. When you look at Him, it is as if this lion is a lamb, and He takes the scroll. He starts to open the scroll and the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders who were worshipping God, the Father, turned to Jesus, the Son, and they sing a new song, a song that's never been sung. Please, don't see this as something that is going to happen in the future; this has already happened. The Bible is trying to picture what happened when Jesus Christ died for us on a cross, was buried, victoriously raised again, and ascended back into the Father's right hand side and the Father said to the Son, take a seat. When He took His seat on the right hand side of God, He took hold of the title deed of the earth, which is the Father's will for the earth! He is the executor of God's will. Now, the church is getting ready to see God's will take place on the planet, and the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders begin to worship Him and sing a new song, "Worthy." When they sing this worthy song, it is because by His blood, He has redeemed man out of sin, and man has been redeemed from sin to be a kingdom of priests who will now reign victoriously over the earth, God's creation, and carry out God's will. Therefore, Jesus is worthy to be praised. The next thing you know, there is this scene of myriads and myriads, and thousands and thousands of angels, and they get in on worshipping Jesus. If that's not enough, the next thing you see in Revelation chapter 5 is every creature in Heaven and on the earth, under the earth, and in the sea begins to worship Jesus. That is the picture of the church. That's the

picture of all creation that you and I are a part of. We have the highest priority given to man, and that's to worship God, the Father, and His Son Jesus through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

I don't know if you've ever done this, but have you ever left 9:15 going home, and with no kids around, say to your spouse, "Do you feel like we were just a little off this morning at Hardin?" Do any of you feel like we've been out of sync here at Hardin, that our worship just really wasn't what it should have been? How many times have you personally critiqued yourself during the week? The main priority of our life is not when you and I gather together on a Sunday morning; it is how we live in relationship to God on our mission the other ninety-nine percent of our time. It is not just when, not just who, not just where, but how, spirit and truth.

I know there are a lot of different interpretations of what spirit and truth means, I'm the preacher so you will get mine. I think Jesus is contrasting true worship with what the Jews and Samaritans have been doing, and they've been doing a lot of stuff, a lot of activity, a lot of action. God is not into that. How many times did God, through the prophets, tell the children of Israel--*don't bring me another animal! I am sick and tired of the blood of the animals! Don't bring me any more goats, and don't bring me any more silver. I don't want any more wood. I'm done. Just stay home if when you come, your heart's not in it.* Let me just say that there are a lot of things you can do and your heart not be in it, your spirit not be in it, and you need to go ahead and do it. But when it comes to the Christian life, when it comes to worship, you don't just go through the motions. Worship is not just what's taking place in your bodily actions; worship is about your spirit in communion with God's Spirit. Worship is a matter of the heart, and the heart is the heart of the matter. Does that make sense? I think when the Bible uses this term, God is Spirit, therefore we must worship Him in spirit, John has just told us a story in the chapter before about a man named Nicodemus who didn't understand being born from above, so Jesus had to tell him that it's a work of the Spirit. Now we go from the Spirit bringing us into the family through regeneration to now, the Spirit being a part of our worship. See, at the moment of regeneration when the Holy Spirit of God opens your eyes to the truth of the gospel and you believe

the gospel, the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the triune godhead, steps out of the universe into your heart into your life. He brings you into a relationship with God, the Father, through God, the Son, and now He wants you to know that worship must be done in mind with that relationship. I think when this is talking about in spirit; it is talking about in relation to God, your relationship to Him. Your heart must be in to. Notice there is a connecting word, and. It doesn't say and in spirit and in truth; it says in spirit and truth, meaning you can't just have your heart in it; it has to be governed by truth too. Worship is a matter of the heart, and the head. What is John trying to do? He is trying to put two concepts together in my mind about worship. Please catch this. It's about relationship and it's about revelation. I worship God because of the relationship that I have with Him as His child. He is my Father, but my worship of Him, blowing my kiss, my affection toward Him must be governed by revelation, and must be governed by truth. Now this is going to offend some of you, but Jesus told this lady that you worship what you do not know.

Can I say this? There are some people who are worshipping this morning that are worshipping what they do not know. They worship God but do not know God in His fullness. I don't know if you know this about the Samaritans, you probably do, but the Samaritan people believed in the Bible, but only the first five books of the Bible. They only used the Pentateuch. They didn't have the historical books, the writings, and they didn't have the prophets. Imagine that all you know about God is what is revealed in Genesis through Deuteronomy. How many of you would agree with me that you are limited in your knowledge of God if you only have those first five books? Very limited. They are worshipping God, but they don't really know the God they are worshipping. It would be kind of like some people today who don't take the whole counsel of Scripture together. I get so aggravated when I hear Christians say "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? That better not ever come out of anybody's mouth who attends Hardin Baptist Church because if you quote that, it just shows your ignorance of God! We don't worship a God who wants us to live today under the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; we serve God who has revealed to us love, mercy, and grace, and we turn the other cheek and pray for our enemies!

We don't wish somebody dies and goes to hell because of what they did, unless you want God to do that to you for what you did. No. Therefore, when we truly worship God, it doesn't just flow out of a relationship we have with God, it flows out of the revelation God has given us, fully and finally, in His Son Jesus Christ. We have the full revelation of God, so our head must govern, set boundaries on the way we worship Him as we are sent. Please tell me you agree.

What does this look like? Praise the Lord, after the gospels, there were some really neat things God said to other men through the leadership of the Holy Spirit and expounded on worship. If you will remember in Romans chapter 12, Paul tells us what spiritual worship is. Romans 12:1 says, "I urge (beseech) you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." If I worship God in spirit and truth, what does that look like? I make a presentation of my body to God as a sacrifice. Did you catch that? It is the picture in the Old Testament of the worshipper bringing the animal to God, and giving the whole animal. I used to say that was bad if you were an animal, because if you're the sacrifice that means you die. But then I had this thought. Aren't animals all going to die anyway? Can you think of a better way to die if you are an animal than to die as a sacrifice to God, and your blood be used to cover someone's sin until the true Lamb of God comes? Wow! That's the way to die if you're an animal, amen. Except here's the picture, you're not an offering. God doesn't want you to give Him something. He doesn't want your time, He doesn't want your talents, He doesn't want your treasures; He wants you, all of you. You, as you're sent, must remember that you have made a once for all presentation of your body to God as a sacrifice, hands off of my life. It's the greatest act of worship we can give God. He wants our body to be alive, holy, and acceptable. In the Old Testament, if you brought something that was alive, you killed it, gave God something that was dead, and God says no, not into that anymore. I want you to remember I took you who were dead and made you alive, so now I want you to bring to me your body as evidence that it is alive from the dead. So your body is now presented to God alive, living, living out this truth that you are no longer under the penalty of sin, separated from God, but you are in a right

relationship with Him. Your body is to be holy. This word, holy, means 'to be set apart, to be sanctified.' Your body now doesn't belong to you; it has been set apart. It is God's, so you don't take your body out and do what you want to do during the day and then ask God to follow along with you. No, your body belongs to God. It's His, and your body is well pleasing to Him. It's acceptable. Imagine how that changes how you work, how you coach, how you teach, or how you parent. It changes our life when we recognize that the most reasonable act of worship we can do is to make sure our body has been presented to God, and it is alive, holy, and acceptable to Him. I won't be like the world because my worship of Him will dictate that the world won't be attractive to me. I have a desire to want to be transformed, and I want my mind to be renewed so that I can prove what is His will, perfect, acceptable, and good.

Let me give you a quick summary of how this works. We sung about the name this morning. Do you remember the name that God revealed to Israel first? When Moses said who are You, God said you tell Israel, I Am has sent you. That name, I Am, literally means 'the ever-present One.' So I want you to remember that God is ever-present with you. Tell me you know that. How many of you feel like He's not present? That's a lie. He's always present. Now, worship begins when I'm aware of God I'm my life, who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, or what He's going to do. So just get his picture, I'm in the tractor, I'm in my new truck, I'm in the office, I'm at a ballgame, I'm in a restaurant, but I'm aware at all times that God is with me. I don't know about you, but when you are aware of something, you make an appraisal. So here I am, aware of God, now I'm appraising God and the Bible says I'm supposed to worship God, glorify God, make God worthy, and make God glorious. This is where we get our word, heavy, from, so it means I now make an appraisal of God and instead of taking God lightly, I make God heavy in my life. God is now valuable to me, so I'm placing value on God. Let me ask you this, if you did a real appraisal of God in your life, would you appreciate Him, or depreciate Him? You would appreciate Him, right. So I'm appreciating God, and now I'm in a situation, wherever I'm at, I'm aware of God, done my appraisal, what is going to happen when you start appreciating? Have any of you ever started appreciating your kids, wife, or boss? Isn't there a little

affection that starts welling up inside? There's a little affection, right; we get a little affectionate. All of a sudden, I am aware of God, I'm appraising who He is, what He's done for me, I'm appreciating it, and now I've got some affection building up. When you start getting affection building up, that's when you just get a little attitude. Have you seen grandparents around grandkids? Do they have attitudes or do they have attitudes? They have attitudes. Where does that attitude come from? It's coming from the affection they have for those grandkids, which is coming from their appreciation of them, because they've appraised them and because they're aware of the value of grandkids in their life. You'll not understand it until you become one. The world ought to say that about us. I don't know why those people do what they do, and what we've got to say as a Christian is you just won't understand it until you become one. That's what worship is about. That's why worship leads to evangelism. That's why worship leads to discipleship, because there comes a point within you when you're aware, you're appraising, you're appreciating, and you've got affection building up, at some point you've just got to release that attitude. When you release that attitude, that is worship of God. Can I ask you this question? How long do you go without being aware of God? I hope your fix for God isn't happening every Sunday morning at Hardin. I pray you can't go a week without being aware of Him. I pray you can't go a few days, or a day, or even hours without being aware of who He is.

Now, let me close by going back to John 4 at the well. The disciples come back, bad timing. They've got food. You see them with a sack lunches, and the lady leaves and goes into the city. They turn to Jesus and give Him food, and He says I'm not hungry. Did somebody feed Him? Did He go home with somebody and come back? He looked at them and said my meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. Can I say this? As a man, my hunger will not be satisfied until I've had some meat. I can eat my fruit, nuts, and pickles, but I'm going to be hungry until I've got some turkey, or ham, or beef. Do you know what I'm talking about? I really believe the reason some of you stay hungry all the time is because you don't recognize the meat of a Christian life, and the meat of the Christian life is doing the will of the Father and finishing the work He sent you to do. Do you know what His will is? Are you being about His will?

You'll never be satisfied until that becomes your meat. Are you ready to be sent? Let's remember what our highest priority is while we're being sent.