

## Spirit and Truth – John 4:1-26

Last week's message left us encouraged to seek ways in which we can increase our level of praise and worship for God. And of course, we know that when these things increase, His presence will become more evident and begin to have more impact on our daily lives. As I was working on this series of messages focused on True Worship, the Holy Spirit began leading me to places in the Bible I've read before, and He began to teach me a little bit more about what they mean. And as I contemplated last week's message, I was drawn to a familiar story found in John chapter 4 which informs us about the type of worshiper God is seeking. This is one of my favorite stories from Jesus' ministry. As I share this encounter with you, I want you to pay attention when we get to verses 23 and 24 because that's where we will focus our time this morning.

### Read John 4:1-26

You know, as humans, it's not a matter of whether we will worship. It's what, or whom we will worship instead. In the upside-down world, we find ourselves in, our worship is often given to the music star, or the athlete, or our favorite team, or our favorite TV show, or our favorite tik-tocker, or our favorite TV preacher, or our "you fill in the blank." You know what I mean. As fallen creatures, our self-serving nature leads us to place little value on the important things which have real worth and greater value on the things which may please us, but truly have no real worth. Let me explain it another way. People, and I'm not excluded from this, live lives in constant pursuit of status, or fame and notoriety, or fortune, but do this at the expense of their souls. It is our nature to pursue the temporal, worldly things as opposed to the more important eternal things of God. This is where verses 23 and 24 from this morning's passage stand as essential to what it is we should be pursuing as individuals and together as a body of believers. Jesus, to this lowly Samaritan woman, makes a very profound statement. He says, *"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."*

### **What did He mean?**

**Truth** is the simplest one to understand. Our worship must center around who Jesus is. Truth focuses on all His work, and it is supported and validated through the Holy Scriptures as well as in the lifestyles of His followers. It is the written Gospel as well as the lived-out Gospel. In **John 14:6**, Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* Paul even reminded Timothy of the importance of the truth of the gospel message that in its fullest, is Jesus Christ. He did this in **2 Timothy 2:14-19**. The truth is the truth and everything we are as Christians must be based on this principle!

### **What about Spirit?**

There's some potentially confusing language here because Jesus says God is spirit and then says we are to worship in spirit. Is this talking about our spirit, our soul? Or is this speaking about the Holy Spirit? Well, it is this humble pastor's belief that Jesus is referring to both, simply because

of the beautiful union that exists between a believer, who is born again with a new spirit. When we give our heart to Jesus we are spiritually born again and become this new creation and as part of that process we also receive the Spirit of God as permanent resident in our heart. This is an explanation of what Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus on the roof under the cover of darkness. You see, it's the Holy Spirit that gives our spirit energy.

So often we place our attention on external things when it comes to our worship.

Most people think worship is only as good as what can be seen or heard. Man, they sure have a beautiful church. I wonder how many they're running over there. That praise band is as good as any rock band. That music leader should try out for American Idol or the Voice. Boy, that preacher is something else. I like His energy.

Then there's the opposite.

Boy, that church is looking shabby, and they only had a few cars in the parking lot. They don't even have music. I wonder if they even sing. All the preacher ever does is read an entire chapter, mostly from the Old Testament too. At least he tells us a joke, shares a weekly poem, and always has three points for emphasis.

While the external things which help our worship can be important, they should not be the essence. We must understand that true worship is internal and out of the internal flows the external. It is Romans 12:1 being lived-out. **Read Romans 12:1.** It is also living out the instructions of Moses to the Israelites, which was expanded upon by Jesus when He said, "*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*" (Mark 12:30)

True worship engages every ounce of our being. If not, then does it match the standard set by Jesus? If we have no real love for God, then there will be no evidence of passion in our worship. There will be no worship "in spirit". Along with that, we must strive to stay informed. Lack of knowledge concerning God means there is no worship "in truth". Worship without "spirit and truth" becomes this emotional rise or fall based solely on external factors and leaves us dry, passionless, and lacking in true joy. The more we worship God, the more we experience His presence. Those experiences fill us with joy. And it is our joy combined with our knowledge that makes us appreciate Him more. The more appreciation we have for God, the deeper our worship becomes, and the more God is glorified.

Page 12: Fanny Crosby's **Praise Him! Praise Him!**

Praise Him! praise Him! Jesus, our blessed Redeemer!

Sing, ye saints! His wonderful love proclaim!

Hail Him! hail Him! mightiest angels in glory;

Strength and honor give to His holy name!

Like a shepherd, Jesus will feed His people,

In His arms He carries them all day long;

O ye saints that live in the light of His presence,

Praise Him! praise Him! ever in joyful song!