

# What the Father Seeks!

## *Genuine Worship:*

John 4:21-24

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On Sunday mornings we assemble, sing, pray, present gifts to God, read from and listen to the Bible. Does this please God? Does God reward this? Is this what God seeks?

On Palm Sunday I shared from the Scriptures how God assembled a crowd to honor Jesus. I showed from the Scriptures how God used the powerful miracle at Bethany with Lazarus to gather a crowd to honor Jesus. God was seeking worshipers. God was assembling people together through what witnesses saw and shared. Jesus told multiple stories of a master sending out servants to assemble people for a banquet honoring his son. God seeks worshipers, and he uses people like us to gather them.

On Easter we considered how Christ touched people personally in his resurrection appearances. He didn't just validate he was alive. He also opened individual hearts and eyes. As risen Lord, Jesus connected intimately with people. Moreover, Jesus promised he would be in our midst when we come together in his name:

*For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.* (Matthew 18:20, NASB)

**Does Jesus intend to be an unnoticed, silent observer when we gather, or does he intend to continue healing and enlightening God's beloved children?** Which is his purpose?

The answer becomes clear as we ponder an exchange between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. They were at a site that would be on any Samaritan tour guide. They drew water from a

well dug by the great patriarch Jacob. The Samaritans proudly descended from Jacob. Mount Gerizim was visible from the well. On Mount Gerizim Samaritans worshiped for hundreds of years. Moses commanded Israelites to worship only in Jerusalem. The Samaritans disobeyed. Consequently, in their minds and hearts, they drifted away from the one, true God. Their estrangement was clear from Jesus' words. He said:

***A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.*** (John 4:21-22, NIV)

The Samaritans were ignorant. They needed to connect with the one who truly is God and is acting to save them. Jesus said:

***A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*** (John 4:23-24, NIV)

Jesus told the woman that the Father of all is seeking worshipers who worship in spirit and truth. Genuine worship must focus on the true God who is acting to rescue humanity.

Worship in truth depends on learning and believing what God has said. The Israelites fell into false worship when they ignored God's word. When we ignore the Bible, we create the images of god we like. We define morality and redefine God to fit it. We then continue in our destructive ways. In contrast, God acts in Jesus to rescue us. To worship in truth, we must believe what God has revealed of himself in Jesus and in the words of Scripture.

We are also to worship in spirit. God is spirit. His worshipers must connect with him in spirit.

In the Lenten worship study, participants were exposed to the faith of Blaise Pascal, a pioneering mathematician, physicist and philosopher. They read this from his pen:

*From half-past ten at night to about half-after-midnight – fire! O God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob – not the god of the philosophers and the wise. The God of Jesus Christ who can only be known in the ways of the Gospel: security – feeling – peace – joy – tears – of joy. Amen.*

I quoted these words in our April church newsletter noting he had miraculously survived a horrific accident a month before. Pascal was seeking God when this moment came. He connected spiritually with the author of love and faith. At his death, those who attended him pulled a creased, worn paper from his pocket on which he recorded these words. Pascal kept the description in his pocket next to his heart. Why? It wasn't a routine worship experience.

Do you light up every time you have supper with your wife or husband? Do you revel in new truths every time you dine? Is every encounter a gee-whiz moment? Isn't spending time together important even when it is routine? Don't couples get in trouble without routine time? Do you save a tooth each time you floss? Yet, isn't the routine of flossing important?

We often dismiss or despise routines; yet in the Scriptures, God calls for routines. He has people light candles, wash, present sacrifices and gifts, repeat prayers and litanies. At times, the routines seemed lifeless. Did they provide a spiritual connection? Were they unimportant?

Do you recall in 1 Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul writing about the Lord's Supper:

***Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.*** (1 Corinthians 11:29-30, NIV)

When the Corinthian Christians took Holy Communion, they treated it like a common meal, acting as if Christ didn't mind their selfish actions and mistreatment of others. Because they despised this routine act of worship, not recognizing the holy presence of Christ, many of them suffered weaknesses, sickness and death. How many of our problems are routed in our unbelief and dismissive attitude toward acts of worship and the presence of the Lord among us?

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul describes worship in spirit and truth as believers honor what God is doing in their hearts and minds. He writes:

*What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.* (1 Corinthians 14:26, NIV)

You may not understand everything in this verse, but it reveals that genuine worship calls for a sensitivity to what God is doing and saying to us all weeklong. It trusts God to speak into our lives and work among us. It honors God's presence with us.

Do you trust that God is working in your life? Do you trust his word and are you sensitive to what he is doing with you and others? Have you had a gee-whiz moment where you've been overwhelmed by his personal love for you?

In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, we read of Cornelius, a Roman soldier who with his family was devout, generous to the poor and prayed regularly to God. God honored those acts of worship. After months and perhaps years of such devotion and worship, God met him with his family and friends, filled them, and reshaped the world of Christianity and the entire world as well. God made Cornelius the spiritual father of all non-Jewish Christians. He is your spiritual father.

Don't underestimate what God will do with you as you seek and honor him in worship. Today, God is seeking people to worship him in spirit and truth. Will you be one? *Do you honor what God is unfolding through the faith of your brothers and sisters today? Do you trust God's promises? Do you need to repent from despising the routine? Are you dismissive of the faith that is here? **God rewards all who diligently seek him!***