

The Purpose of Worship

John 4:19 through John 4:24 (NKJV)

¹⁹The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Series Introduction:

What is God’s will for our lives? A few weeks ago we began to understand that Purpose driven ministry answers that question for us in a holistic way. I shared with you there are five things God wants for all of us. As we began our examination of Jesus’ ministry to the Samaritan woman, we learned the first of those five purpose statements: “God wants me in his family.”

God wants us in his family and is willing to go out of his way and put his reputation on the line to reach us. Last week we learned the second purpose statement: “God wants to make me better.” God wants to make me better when I know better and do better. Today, as Jesus continues his ministry to the Samaritan woman, he reveals truth to us about the purpose of Worship. We will examine three key points, share our third purpose statement, give you some action steps, and conclude for the day.

Introduction:

The conversation Jesus is having with this Samaritan woman has taken some serious turns along the way. The Lord has addressed her sin issues and has revealed the story of her life. In response, the woman issues somewhat of a challenge to Jesus. She throws the conversation into a doctrinal competition.

Ezra 4:1 through Ezra 4:5 (NKJV)

¹Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of Israel, ²they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ *houses*, and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you *do*; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.” ³But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers’ *houses* of Israel said to them, “You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King

Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.”⁴ Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building,⁵ and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

The Samaritan inhabitants of the land asked to participate in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem but were denied. The end result is the Samaritans and Jews didn't like each other. So the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. They determined that the Pentateuch was the only true set of scriptures and that Moses was the only true prophet. They didn't read the prophets. They didn't believe the prophets. They had nothing to do with prophets.

So this woman kind of challenges Jesus. Since you appear to be a prophet let's settle this issue of worship between us. Why don't you tell me where the right place to worship is? Our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you Jews say the right place to worship is in Jerusalem. Which is it?

That brings us to our first point...

The Ritual of Worship

Jesus rises above the issue. He doesn't answer her. He doesn't stoop to her level. Instead, Jesus doesn't give approval to Jerusalem or Samaria. None of the issues of location, or method, or style are as important as spirit and truth. Often, because of our experiences, we tend to gravitate towards what is comfortable for us. We grew up in church and things were done a certain way, so we can't imagine anything different. Those circumstances become our church identity.

We want to hear the songs we've always heard. We want to have the same experiences we've always had. Songs must be sang a certain way. Praise must happen a certain way. Expressions of worship must happen within our guidelines. Because of this we have had issues in the church. In the past, we had difficulty embracing instruments like drums or guitars even though they are mentioned in the Bible. If we haven't historically danced in our church, we may frown upon it or give people funny looks. But Psalm 150:4 says "praise him with the timbrel and dance".

Even though the place of worship was important in the argument between the Jews and Samaritans, Jesus says the place won't be that important. It's amazing how we make things important through our traditions and customs that are not that important to God. Every generation has to wrestle with this, and here is good example.

Turn in your hymnals to #339. This is "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" and it was written by Thomas A. Dorsey. Thomas Dorsey was out of town at a revival while his wife was home expecting their first child. During the revival service one night, he received a telegram saying "Come home your wife has died." He had a friend drive him home and he found it was true. She died while giving birth. Two days later, the child died. He was grief stricken. He expressed his grief and comfort in God by writing "Precious Lord".

This is one of the most popular gospel songs of all time. It was the favorite song of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was sung at his funeral at his request. But there is more to this story. Before devoting his life to the Lord, Thomas Dorsey was one of the most popular "Honky-Tonk Blues" writers and musician in the 1920's and 30's. He went by the name of "Georgia Tom". Under the name "Georgia Tom" he performed with blues artist Ma Rainey and her Wild Cats Jazz Band.

At age 21 he had a nervous break down. He returned home and his mother admonished him to stop singing the blues and serve the Lord. He didn't listen. He went back to Chicago to perform with Ma Rainey. He got married, had a second breakdown and was left unable to play music. Dorsey began developing a sacred music based on the secular blues. It featured syncopated notes in an eight-bar blues structure.

Less than a year later, however, Dorsey was back in the secular blues business full-time. His "gospel music" met so much resistance from pastors who considered it "devil's music," that he found it easier to play the blues straight. He was quoted later in life saying "I've been thrown out of some of the best churches in America."

Thomas Dorsey created gospel music and nobody wanted to hear it because it was not what they were used to hearing. It sounded too much like the blues. He traveled around pushing his sheet music with a demonstrator. Then he got a new demonstrator, named Mahalia Jackson who was his demonstrator for 14 years.

Dorsey wrote songs like "Highway to Heaven", none can walk up there but the pure in heart. He wrote "The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow" and the "Old Ship of Zion". Thomas Dorsey is known as the "Father of Gospel Music" yet he was rejected by pastors and thrown out of some of the best churches in America.

That generation, in the 1920's and 1930's rejected the music we've been singing for the last 70 years because it was different. They rejected it because it didn't line up with their ideas of worship or ritual.

When Jesus talks to this Samaritan woman, he doesn't get bogged down with the details. He doesn't focus on the ritual of worship as a set of dos and don'ts. Worship is about God not the logistics. Worship is about God, not locations or styles. Worship is about God, not traditions or culture. Worship is not limited to our rituals of time, place, form, or fashion, but if it's from the heart, it's right with God.

²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

This brings us to the second point.

The Relationship of Worship

While the Samaritan woman wanted to address the issue of rituals, Jesus pointed out something was missing. He said "you worship what you do not know." While she was trying to figure out where and how to worship, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter and reveals she didn't know God.

The Samaritans were not allowed to help rebuild the temple. So they came up with their own belief system and built their own temple. They could have copied all of the things that were prescribed for the temple in Jerusalem, but they lacked the most important thing: the presence of God.

Exodus 29:42 through Exodus 29:46 (NKJV)

⁴²*This shall be* a continual burnt offering throughout your generations *at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you.* ⁴³And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by My glory. ⁴⁴So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. ⁴⁵I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God.

2 Chronicles 7:12 through 2 Chronicles 7:16 (NKJV)

¹²Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵Now My eyes will be

open and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place. ¹⁶For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

When God chose his house to dwell among men, he didn't choose the temple on Mount Gerizim. He chose Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. His manifest presence was in Jerusalem. Without the presence, the temple is just a building. You must have the presence of God, to know the person of God. The presence of God creates an atmosphere for the relationship with God. Through our relationships with God, we have his eternal presence in the person of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we can sing songs but we can't truly worship. Worship is a function of our relationship with God. We worship out of relationship.

Sometimes when God and I have gone through some struggles together, I cry in worship. When he reveals his greatness, I stand in awe. When he shows his sovereignty, I stand still and keep silent. When I'm wrong, his presence causes me to repent like Isaiah in chapter 6. When he delivers me, I shout out loud in his presence. When I recognize his goodness towards me, his presence causes me to praise and give thanksgiving.

If we don't have a relationship with God we are just like the Samaritan woman. We don't know what we worship. Without relationship, we are simply going through the motions. Without relationship, we may be here to watch and be entertained. The real show is happening in the spirit. God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Here is our last point...

The Reward of Worship

Look at what Jesus said.

²³But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The Father is looking for true worshippers. Jesus said the Father is seeking such or he is seeking these kind of people. What kind of people are they? True worshippers are those who have already entered into a relationship with God. They are not on the outside looking in. True worshippers conduct their worship in the spirit. Their worship may be manifested by actions that we see or words that we hear, but they started in

the spirit. They don't just say hallelujah. Their souls cry out hallelujah. True worshippers don't mimic what they see. Their worship is authentic.

Jesus says God is looking for these people. Why? So they can worship him. So they can bring him glory. So they can lift him up. So they can sing his praises. So they can magnify his name.

That's our third purpose statement: *"God wants me to magnify his name."*

2 Chronicles 16:7 through 2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV)

⁷And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. ⁸Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. ⁹**For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.** In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

Asa violated the worship purpose. God wants us to magnify his name but King Asa didn't include God in his plan. Look at the scenario. Asa needed help against the Ethiopians. He relied on God. God delivered them into his hand and God got the glory. God was magnified in the eyes of the people. Asa needed help against Lubim. He relied on God. God delivered them into his hand and God was magnified in the eyes of the people.

But now he needs help again and decides to rely on the king of Syria. God sends the prophet Hanani to him and reveals the purpose. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to him.

God is looking for somebody he can bless. He wants to show off for us. He wants to be magnified. He wants the glory. God is looking for someone who can lift him up. God wants us to magnify his name.

Say this: "My life has purpose because God wants me to magnify his name."

When I worship, God is looking for me. When I worship, God shows himself strong on my behalf. When I magnify his name, others will see and be blessed. When my praises go up, blessings come down.

The Plan

What is God's will for your life? First, he wants you to become part of his family. Next he wants to make you better. He also wants you to magnify his name. Here is what you do to fulfill that purpose in your life:

1. Expand your worship. Don't limit your worship to Sundays between 10:45 and 12:30. Worship where ever you are and whenever you are. Express yourself and your true feelings toward God. Sing, clap, dance, shout, weep, and moan.
2. Practice the presence of God. Become spiritually conscious. We leave church and sometimes forget about God. We are not conscious of the fact that he is always with us. Stay prayerful, stay in touch with God, stay connected. Seek his spiritual presence in church. Don't come to listen and watch. Instead, get into the presence for yourself.
3. Come out of your spiritual closet. Jesus said the things God told us in the secret place should be proclaimed from the rooftops. Tell others about the great things God has done for you. Give God the credit instead of stealing his glory. Use every victory in your life as a testimony to magnify his name.

Conclusion:

In his book entitled "Luke" Bruce Larson recalls this story about a conference at a Presbyterian church in Omaha Nebraska.

"People were given helium filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy in their hearts. Since they were Presbyterians, they weren't free to say "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord." All through the service balloons ascended, but when it was over 1/3 of the balloons were unreleased."

God wants to hear our praises. He wants to see our worship. He wants it to reach to the heights of heaven. As we express our love for him and the joy of serving him, his name is magnified. Sadly, many believers today are like the Samaritan woman who doesn't know what she is worshipping. We get too caught up in the rituals and traditions and clench our balloons with tight fists.

We fail to open our mouths and tell of his goodness. We fail to sing his praises and give him the glory. We fail to open our hands and release the joy in our hearts. We fail to recognize while our hands are closed to give, they are also closed to receive.

God wants you to magnify his name. Let your balloon go.