



HONESTY

John 4:15-26

God, we confess this morning that you are holy and you are worthy. We pray that all that we do would be humbly centered around you in our corporate worship. We pray that as we open up your Word you would show your majesty to us, that you would penetrate our hearts by your Spirit with your Word and that you would transform our hearts to be more in line with the image of Christ and lives that worship you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to the book of John, John 4. This morning I want us to talk about the nonnegotiable of honesty in corporate worship. And there's a word here for us in a culture where it is common to be sitting where you are sitting this morning. And it is the thing that many of us do on Sunday mornings, but there is a dangerous, dangerously subtle tendency to be involved in corporate worship week after week after week, and never come to a point of true honesty with God.

In fact, I am convinced that you can be in church every single Sunday of your entire life and never meaningfully engage the person of Jesus Christ in worship. You realize that's possible. That is dangerous, so we've got to make sure that honesty is a part of our corporate worship.

Spiritual Pretenders ...

I want us to see that in a story of what I'm going to call a spiritual pretender. And I want us to see some characteristics of spiritual pretenders. And what I want us to do – we're going to look at four different characteristics. My challenge for every single person in this room, whether you are a leader in this church – you're on staff or an elder – or whether this is the first time you've ever been to this church, whether you have been in church all your life or this is the first time you've even come to church, regardless, as we look at these characteristics I want to challenge you to see if any of these characteristics is present in your relationship with God or your worship.

We're going to look at a conversation that took place, on the outskirts of a little town called Sychar, between Jesus and a woman. This woman, if you could put yourself in her shoes, has come out to draw water from this particular well, Jacob's well, and she's come out alone. She's by herself. Her story is that she's had five husbands and the man she's living with now is not her husband. As a result, she has been marginalized in her culture. She is the outcast such that she would come alone instead of with other people, other women, to draw water. She's a woman with faith, but even her faith has left her empty.

And so I want to invite you to put yourself into her shoes, because this is the person Jesus has a conversation with about what honesty in worship is all about. Look at John 4. We'll start in verse 13.

Picking up on their conversation:

Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.' He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.' 'I have no husband,' she replied.

Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'

'Sir,' the woman said, 'I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, 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. Yet 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.' The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am he' (John 4:13-26).

... Try to worship without being honest with God.

Four characteristics of spiritual pretenders: First, spiritual pretenders try to worship without being honest with God. Spiritual pretenders try to worship without being honest with God. What we've got here, in the beginning of this chapter, is a conversation between Jesus and this woman about water. She's come out to draw water. Jesus is using this picture to talk about how He gives water. He satisfies the thirst of our souls in a way that nothing else can satisfy. That's their conversation up to about verse 16, then there's a pretty abrupt transition.

He says to her, "Go, call your husband and come back" (John 4:16). Now, we know a little bit about her history here, and we see Jesus is hitting the most vulnerable place that she has. "Go call your husband and come back." And she said, "I have no husband" (John 4:17). She kind of dodges the question. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true" (John 4:17-18). Jesus is not playing games here. He goes right at the issue, the core issue, in her life. And so what does she do?

She does exactly what most of us would do. She changes the subject. "Well, since we're talking about all of my husbands, let's have a theological discussion about where you think we should worship, on your mountain or this mountain." And all of a sudden we see this woman dodging the question then trying to put the question aside. She's avoiding at all cost being honest with this man that she's talking to.

Now, this is not a new thing in Scripture when it comes to our approach to God with our past, with our sin. Hold your place here. Let's go back to the very beginning of the Old Testament. Look with me at Genesis 3, a story, I'm guessing many if not all of us are familiar with Genesis 3, The Fall of Man, when sin entered into the world. Look at Genesis 3:6. Remember the story of Adam and Eve being tempted. Let's look at their response when they were confronted in their sin. It says in verse 6:

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.' And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from' (Gen. 3:6-11)?

"And the man said,"—what does the man do, blames it on the woman—"The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Gen. 3:12). "It's her fault." "Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said,"—not to let the women off the hook here, the woman passed the blame as well—"The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' So the Lord God said to the serpent" (Gen. 3:13-14) – and the passage goes on.

Do you see the evasion of the issue? Do you see them hiding from the Lord? And then when they're brought face-to-face with the Lord, "It was her fault. It was serpent's fault." Passing the blame, not wanting to be confronted in sin, trying to not be honest with God about what's just happened. Well, that's the first book in the Old Testament, and go to the last book in the Old Testament, the Book of Malachi.

Look at Malachi 1. Easiest way to find it is just to go to Matthew and then take a left. Malachi 1 – you can go through all the Minor Prophets if it would bring you pleasure, but it'd be a lot easier to do it the other way. Malachi 1, this is a passage where God is speaking to His people about worship. And in that day the base for the system of worship was you had the temple where God's people would bring sacrifices. And there were laws, regulations about what kind of sacrifices to bring and to bring the best sacrifices.

And what we're going to see in this passage is, that's not what the priests, the leaders, were doing. Look at Malachi 1:6. This is God speaking to His people. He said, "'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?' says the Lord Almighty. 'It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name'" (Mal. 1:6). Listen to how they respond. "But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?' You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, 'How have we defiled you'" (Mal. 1:6-7). They're standing in the face of God and asking, "What have we done wrong?"

'By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?' says the Lord Almighty. 'Now

implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?—says the Lord Almighty. 'Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and I will accept no offering from your hands' (Mal. 1:7-10).

Do you catch the picture there?

The priests, instead of offering the best sacrifices before the Lord, they would take the blind animals or the diseased or the crippled animals and they would put those on the altar to sacrifice before the Lord and they would keep the good animals for themselves. And then they would have the audacity, when God confronted them in it, to say, "Oh, what are we doing wrong?"

And God looks at them and says, "It would be better for you to close the door to the temple and not try to worship because you coming in here with your dishonesty only increases, multiplies, your transgression." Did you catch that? Obviously we're in a much different system than the temple-worship system of the Old Testament, but at the same time, we're seeing that God is very serious about honesty among His people in corporate worship.

In fact, you get to Chapter 2:3, listen to what He says to the priest. He says, "*Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will spread*" – get this picture, "*I will spread on your faces the offal*"—the dung—"from the festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it" (Mal. 2:3). God takes honesty in corporate worship extremely seriously.

So that's why, when we get to John 4, we see Jesus confronting head-on the sin in this woman's life. And there's part of us, when we read Him saying these things, wondering, "Isn't that insensitive of Jesus? Is that appropriate for Him? I mean, this is the wounds in her life that he's just opening up. Maybe the God of the Old Testament would do that, but Jesus?"

Why would Jesus be bringing all of this to the forefront? Why would He do that? Even at the risk of bringing her to experience the pain of reliving that over and over and over again. Why would Jesus do that? Well, I think there are two primary reasons.

Number one, because Jesus desires not just to confront us in our sin, but He desires to cover over our sin. Jesus desires to cover over our sin. And the beauty of what's happening is in John 4, and it's what we see all over Scripture. We all have sin in this room, every single one of us without exception, and either we can try to cover it or God will cover it for us. That's our option. And praise be to God that He has taken the initiative and come to us in the person of Christ and said, "I want to expose your sin so that I might cover it with my grace."

But don't miss it. We can't see sin covered in grace until it's exposed, until it's out there. That's why it was necessary that she come to a point of honesty with Christ, because He desired to cover over her sin. Don't miss the picture here. God delights in taking the dirtiest sinner in this room and cleansing our sin with the righteousness of Christ, with the blood that He shed on the cross. He delights in that. At the same time, He will not be mocked. He will not be mocked and receive our songs and our religious activity if we leave honesty with Him behind us. If we come in here and we sit on our sin and we pretend like it's not there and we pretend like it's not that bad or we pretend like it's not real, then we'll miss the point, the whole point, of corporate worship.

A guy named Cornelius Plantinga talks about the seriousness of sin and how that's being undermined today. And one of my favorite quotes is this, "For the Christian church – even in its recently popular worship trends – for the Christian church to ignore, euphemize, or otherwise mute the lethal reality of sin is to cut the nerve of the gospel. For the sober truth is that without full disclosure of sin the gospel of grace becomes impertinent, unnecessary, and ultimately uninteresting."

We do realize that if we come in here and don't talk about sin and don't talk about judgment and pretend like everything is great and there's no sin in our lives, then we may walk out of here with a good feeling, but we will cut the nerve of the very gospel that brings us together. It's only when we come before God, real in our sin, and we say, "God, there's things I'm struggling with that I just can't handle, and there's things that I just can't seem to overcome," that God delights in showing His grace and covering us in that sin and giving us the strength to overcome it.

But we can't get there if we hide it. He wants to cover over it. And we all know it's possible, week after week, year after year, in our Christianity holding on to these sins and pretending like it's not that big a deal. God, deliver us from that.

And not just a desire to cover over our sin, but He has a desire to comfort us in sorrow. And here's the part of John 4, in this part of the dialogue, that you don't hear a lot of people talking about, but think about it. Jesus exposed the sin in her life not only so that she would see her need for forgiveness, but don't miss it because of her sin. This is the deepest hurt, the deepest point of pain. The wounds are most open. She has sought after satisfaction in this guy and this guy and this guy and this guy and now she's seeking after satisfaction in another guy, and she's coming up empty every time. And Jesus wants her to see that she's not going to find satisfaction in him. She's not going to find satisfaction in him. She's going to find satisfaction in Christ, and He desires for her to see that so He brings this to the forefront.

You know, this is something we miss. I've been in worship services before where the worship leader or preacher will sometimes say something along the lines of, "We've gathered together for corporate worship. Let's put aside everything that's going on in our lives and let's come into this place and focus ourselves on worship." What a ridiculous statement to say in corporate worship.

The purpose of our corporate worship is not to leave the reality and the hurts of our lives outside this room so we can come inside to what we would call this sanctuary. The purpose of corporate worship is to take all the hurts and all the pain and all the sorrow that we have in our lives across this room. Bring it into this family together and lay it before God because He is big enough to handle everything we have.

He desires for us to be honest with Him about the struggles that we're going through. And we all know that in this particular culture that we find ourselves in called the Bible Belt, it is very tempting to go week after week through corporate worship pretending like everything is great and putting on the face like everything is great. God help us to be honest about what we're struggling with, lay that at His feet, and know that when we cast our cares on Him, what does He do? He cares for us.

He is big enough to handle your struggles. He's big enough to handle your doubts. He's big enough to handle even your questions. He's big enough to handle it all, so bring it before Him in corporate worship. Christ desired to bring satisfaction to her soul. And the good news is He desires to bring satisfaction to every single soul, no matter how difficult things

are that you find yourselves going through right now. But spiritual pretenders try to worship without being honest with God.

... Limit worship to a certain place.

Second, spiritual pretenders limit worship to a certain place. They limit worship to a certain place. In this dodging of the question in verse 20, it says, *"Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem"* (John 4:20).

Now, a little background here between the Jews and the Samaritans. There was major conflict between Jews and Samaritans. In fact, the idea that Jesus is having a conversation with this woman is crossing all kinds of barriers. Men didn't talk to women like this in public at all and have these kind of conversations, and especially not across Jew and Samaritan lines. But here's the background. I'm just going to read it to you, from Deuteronomy 12. You don't necessarily have to turn there, but verse 5, this is what the Old Testament taught in Deuteronomy. God said to His people, *"You are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling"* (Deut. 12:5). Deuteronomy 12:5 basically said that God was going to dwell among His people in a place – He was going to put His name, His dwelling there. It was the temple.

Now, what we've got in the first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Books of the Law – it's after Deuteronomy that the Samaritan stopped. They said, "Nothing else." And so they only paid attention to Genesis through Deuteronomy. All the other books in the Old Testament they kind of left out. As a result, what you had is the Jewish people, knowing Deuteronomy 12:5, God is going to put His name, His dwelling, somewhere. And God reveals that through prophets that this will be in Jerusalem through the Davidic line, that the son of David, Solomon, would build the temple there in Jerusalem. That's why the temple was in that city and that's why they went there to worship.

Well, the Samaritans had a different idea. Because they stopped at Deuteronomy, they basically took Genesis through Deuteronomy and said, "Okay, where does God want His name to dwell?" And they go back to Genesis and they see Abraham and the first sacrifice he offers in the Promised Land is at a place called Shechem that is overlooked by Mount Garazene. And so they say, "That's the place where we're going to go to worship." And so what you had from that point on was a historical division between Jews and Samaritans. Jews would say, "You worship in Jerusalem." Samaritans say, "You worship at Mount Garazene."

And so she brings this issue up. "Well, where do you think we should worship?" And what I want you to see in her bringing this up is I want you to see us. I want you to see the tendencies we have to mis-define worship. We mis-define worship according to external circumstances. Well, where does worship take place, at Mount Garazene or at Jerusalem? We mis-define worship according to external circumstances.

Now, obviously we're not debating today whether you go to Jerusalem or Mount Garazene to go worship. Obviously a lot has changed since then. However, when you think of corporate worship, what do you think of? Most likely you think of a room or a building with the external things that are here whether it's screens or music, musical instruments, the stage. We think of worship in terms of all of these external things and, as a result, when you look at all the debates that we've had in the church over the last 10 or 20 years about worship, they've been mainly about external things.

What kind of place is best for worship? And so we have worked at designing the best multi-million dollar facilities for worship to happen, and what kind of instruments? What kind of style? All of these external things are what we debate about. It's no different. The interesting thing is though, when you get to the New Testament, the New Testament is strikingly indifferent to all these things that we're debating. It really doesn't matter according to the New Testament. In the end, what matters is not the external circumstances. What matters, and what we see Jesus doing, is redefining worship according to internal circumstances. And that's what He starts to do.

"Jesus declared, 'Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem'" (John 4:21). It's not a matter of external this or that. There is an internal picture here. And why did He say that? Why did He say it wasn't going to matter if it was on that mountain or this mountain? Here's why. Go back to John 2, two chapters back to the left. Come to John 2:13. Look at what happened soon before this in John's narrative.

John 2:13 says:

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!'

His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' Then the Jews demanded of him, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this' (John 2:13-18)?

And what did Jesus say? *"'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days'" (John 2:19-20)? They're confused, but then John gives us a little commentary. "But the temple he had spoken of was his" (John 2:21)—what? His body. "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22). This is a huge part of the introduction of Christ in the Book of John, because Jesus is redefining worship completely. He literally is overturning the external things.*

And He comes on the scene and He says, "I'm the place where you worship, not this mountain." That's why Jesus is not about to get into this theological discussion about Mount Garazene or Jerusalem. It's a mute point. "In a few days I'm going to go to a cross. I'm going to die for the sins of the world, and I'm going to be raised from the grave. And at that point the locusts – location, the center place of worship, is going to be in me."

So when we think about worship, it's not about all the externals. It's about internal circumstances, first and foremost the reality of the presence of Jesus. This means that all the externals we surround ourselves with are not necessary. Not necessarily bad, but they're not necessary for corporate worship. The presence of Jesus, He is the only location that is necessary for worship. He is the place where worship happens. God help us to see this. We have missed it. We have crept back into a Jewish Old Testament picture of worship that centers around location, external location, and missed the internal location of the person of Christ.

And I want to be careful with what I'm about to say because this is part of the reason Jesus got killed by the religious leaders, and it's the reason Stephen was stoned in the temple, stoned by the Sanhedrin because he started talking about the temple. So just follow me on this, okay? But if we come into a building and we begin to rely on all the external things in this room to create a sense of worship such that when they come together in a smooth and powerful way and then we walk away and sense, "Wow, we worshipped today," or if they don't come together quite like we thought, and, you know, "The music didn't really do it for us today, and the sermon really didn't do it for us today," and so we walk away and we think, "You know, I really didn't worship today. It just wasn't there for me." Do you see how our worship is based on externals at this point? And what happens is if that continues week after week after week, then people start to say, "You know, I just can't worship there anymore. I need to go to another place to worship." And then they'll fade there. "I just can't worship there anymore."

God help us. What an unbiblical statement to say, "I can't worship in that setting." It misses the whole point of worship. God help us – our brothers and sisters who are in chains around the world are in worship together. God help us if they're in chains and worship. God help us to be able to worship together in our churches regardless of external circumstances.

The problem is, and even affects our view of God and our personal relationship with Him because when we start to focus on all of these externals and for some reason they're not coming together, they're not giving us the feeling that we're looking for when we come into corporate worship, then what we do is we start to walk out of here thinking, "You know, I'm just not feeling God anymore." And we start to wonder if God is still there, if God is still pursuing us.

All we need for worship is the reality of the presence of Jesus Christ. He is the location where worship happens. And if you have Jesus it does not matter if you are in a prison cell in Asia. It does not matter if you're in this room. It does not matter if you're in a house church, in another part of the world. All you need is the presence of Jesus for worship to happen. We've got to see this, especially as we want to be part of a global mission. The way we are going to reach the nations for the glory and the worship of Jesus' name is not by building buildings all over the world. Do we have that much money? Absolutely not. What a horrible strategy to impact the world with the worship of God.

Instead, we will go one by one in small groups and we will penetrate the world with the presence of Jesus Christ. We will introduce people all over the world to His presence and they will begin to gather together around His presence, whether it's in secret late at night, whether it's in small groups in homes, or maybe it's in a building. Wherever it is it won't matter because they'll be gathering together around the person of Jesus Christ. We've got to see this.

Not only the reality of His presence, but, second, the response of our hearts. Jesus goes on to start talking about how God is spirit and we worship Him in spirit. And there's debate over whether or not that's a reference to the Holy Spirit or not, or whether it's just talking about the nature of God. Regardless, the point is clear. God is not limited to external things. That's what he's trying to say. And this is all over the New Testament.

Let me show you two instances. Go back to Matthew with me. Go back to Matthew 15. I want you to underline this verse. And it's a verse we need to take to heart when we consider our corporate worship. Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders. And again, we're going to see Him speaking pretty seriously. You'll notice that just about all the passages

we're looking at from Jesus this morning are not happy passages. You don't walk away with a, you know, this fuzzy feeling, "Wow, that was really touching." No, this is serious.

Look at Matthew 15:6. We'll start about half way through it. "*You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you*" (Matt. 15:6-7). Listen to verse 8. "*These people honor me with their lips, but their—* what? "*Their hearts are far from me*" (Matt. 15:8). Do you see the danger here? We just sang, what, five songs? We honored Him with our lips, but it's possible for our hearts to be far from Him. So Jesus warns against that. He said, "It's my presence and it's the response of your heart." Now, is this just something Jesus talked about? Go over to the Book of Ephesians.

Take a right and you go to 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, then Galatians, then Ephesians. You come to Ephesians 5, and look with me at verse 18. I want you to see how Paul describes worship in the New Testament church. This is the passage we looked at a couple of weeks ago when we were studying community. I want us to think about it in relation to honesty. Look at Ephesians 5:18, He says, "*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*" So the Spirit leads us in worship. And it says, "*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your—* what? "*In your heart to the Lord*" (Eph. 5:19).

It doesn't say sing and make music in your mouth to the Lord. That's implied, obviously, if you're speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but the emphasis here is on singing and making music in your heart to the Lord. Now, this is a heart deal, that our response to the presence of Christ in our hearts is what makes corporate worship, worship. It's not the songs we sing. It's not what comes out of our mouths. It's not the routine we go through. It's not the seats we sit in. What makes corporate worship, worship, is what happens in our hearts, which only we know what's going on in. You see how dangerous this can be, that it would be possible for us to come in together and all be faking it today. We've got to guard against this.

God help us to see that corporate worship transcends externalists. That it's a matter of what is going on in the hearts of men and women, students, all across this room. What's going on in your heart? That is the crux of corporate worship, and we are flat out faking it spiritually if all we talk about is externals. It is just evidence that we are faking it to the core. However, when we begin to talk about what God is doing in our hearts, we begin to talk about our hearts being turned toward Him, now we're getting to the core of what worship is all about.

The reality of the presence of Christ and the response of our hearts to Him. And even when I say, "The response of our hearts," let me encourage you. That doesn't necessarily mean that every time we come together in corporate worship that you've got this red-hot zeal, passion that is just bubbling out of you. That's a good thing to have, but you know, we've all been there. There are times when we come together for corporate worship when that red hot zeal is not quite as hot as we'd like it to be. Maybe we're struggling some in our relationship with God. Still see, though, that even in that moment it's still a turning of your heart to Him.

I'm guessing there are people here across this room who were there this morning who were thinking, "You know, my desire is not that strong right now." But worship is turning your heart to Him and saying, "God, increase my desire." You know, worship involves saying, "God, I'm pretty out of it. I'm pretty confused about some things that you're doing in my life, and I'm not able to put it all together." It's still, at that moment, turning your

heart toward value in God. In fact, I would submit that it's in those moments that worship takes steps deeper, far deeper, and even sometimes when the passion is just flowing out of us, corporate worship does not limit worship to externals, to a place and what happens there, internally, what's going on in response to the presence of Christ. Spiritual pretenders limit worship to a certain place.

... Try to worship a God they do not know.

Third, spiritual pretenders try to worship a God they do not know. When you come back to John 4 and you get to verse 22, He expands. He says, "*You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews*" (John 4:22). And here Jesus just comes right out and says what He thinks about the fact that Samaritans have ignored most of the Old Testament. He says, "You camped out in Genesis to Deuteronomy, and my Father has been doing a lot since then. And you've ignored it, all the historical books." The Psalms, the Prophets, all of it, completely left out.

And He says, "You know the salvation comes from the Jews – the picture is the fact that all the Old Testament, not just the first five books, but the whole picture was pointing forward to Christ, and Jerusalem was obviously at the center of that, the locusts of that, that He would be the new Israel, Zion, all the pictures from the Old Testament." They would know that but they'd missed out on it because they had ignored His Word. Now, again, we're not Jews and Samaritans in this room necessarily, and we're not having some of the debates they were having then, but we do need to see that our worship is hollow if it's disconnected from the Word of God.

If when we gather together this Word is not at the center of our lives as Christ followers, if it hasn't been at the center of our lives all week long, then we come together and no matter how many songs or no matter what words are put up on the screen, they're ultimately hollow because we're trying to worship a God that we have no intimate knowledge of. And don't miss the picture here. I keep using the word "dangerous" because it is, because everybody in the world is a worshipper, right? Everybody worships something. The question is not whether or not you worship. The question is who are you worshipping? So, if we are not getting intimate knowledge of God through His Word, then what is to separate us from those who are bowing down and worshipping idols all around the world?

You say, "What do you mean? Well, I didn't come in here to worship an idol." Well, what is an idol? And idol is something that we create and we look to as God. How often have we heard in the church, how often have we said this statement, the outright blasphemous statement, "Well, when I think of God I think of this. The way I view God is this."

We don't have the right to determine who God is. God has revealed Himself to us. Our responsibility is to get into this Word, to study it, memorize it, digest it, make it a very real part of our life, and the deeper we go into it then we come together in corporate worship and we're not just worshipping blindly. It's not just hollow singing some songs. We've got intimate knowledge of the God we're seeing, too, and it transforms our corporate worship.

It's the truth that sets us free in worship. It takes us to new heights, new depths, new lengths and breadths as we get to know our God and we worship the God we know. Don't be surprised if when we come in together for corporate worship, if it's just not clicking if we are not spending time in the Word, it only make sense because you're trying to give adoration to someone you don't know.

See how Spirit and truth go together? They're spirit and truth, not we worship in spirit or truth, in John 4, Spirit and truth. Why and? Well, if you have the Word – if you have the

Word – “Okay, Dave, we’ll get in the Word” – but you don’t have the heart that we’ve talked about, the spirit. You have the Word, but you don’t have that internal heart that’s turning toward Christ. And all you’ve got – the Word without the heart makes us fighters.

I give you a picture of what we’ve done with worship in the last 20 years. If all we do is look at the Word and we miss the heart that is there in worship, then we’ll just end up debating about this or that, fighting about this or that. And as a result, somebody will go down the street and start Unity Baptist Church, and then Second Unity Baptist Church, and Third Unity Baptist Church. And we’ll have Unity Baptist Churches all over the place because the word has turned us inward. The Word without the heart makes us fighters.

However, conversely, the heart – you got the heart without the Word – and I wanted a word here that starts with F so here we go. The heart without the Word makes us flighty, makes us flighty. I couldn’t decide between flighty or flaky, and I went with flighty. And I don’t in any way want to offend anybody or any contemporary worship trends, however if we embrace freedom and worship apart from the depth of the Word, then we will not have freedom and worship. We will be captive to our emotions. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. It is when we get into the Word, and that combines with the heart, and we will avoid being caught up in spiritual frenzy and basing our worship on how we felt that day. We will now base our worship on the rock solid truth of God’s Word, and it will be the foundation that will never crumble underneath us, so we won’t be flighty when we have the heart with the Word. You put them together and we’re worshipping a God we know.

We need to be honest with God about the biblical illiteracy that is rampant in our culture, and not just our culture but the church. And we need to get to know the God we worship. I promise you, it will be worth the journey. Spiritual pretenders try to worship a God they do not know and are content not to know Him.

... Put off worship until another time.

Finally, spiritual pretenders put off worship until another time. “*I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us*” (John 4:25). I told you this was a woman of faith. She had religion, and she knew that maybe there was a day – and this was her last ditch effort to get out of this conversation. And I’ve got a feeling this is one of the things that she said that afterwards she was just, like, “I can’t believe I just said that to Jesus. And I’m recorded in all of history of saying, “Jesus, well, I know Messiah’s coming. When He comes, I’ll talk with Him.” Jesus looks at her and declares, “*I who speak to you am he*” (John 4:26). The beautiful thing about that verse that is missed in our translation is that in the original language of the New Testament, Jesus declared, “The one – I who speak to you” – and it says – instead of saying, “I am he,” all it says is, “I am.” He’s not even in there.

“I am he” helps us finish it out, but it misses part of the point because all throughout the Book of John Jesus is emphasized as the “I am.” John 8:58, “Before Abraham was born, I am. I am the bread of life and the resurrection of life. I am the way, the truth, and the life.” All of these truths, I am. Jesus is the “I am.” He is God. He is the place where worship happens, and so you need not put it off any longer. Worship can happen now.

Spiritual pretenders are content to go week after week, and would even be content this morning, to say, “I’ll do it later. I’ll get honest with God later. I’ll get to know the Word later. I’ve got other things in my life right now. I’m not ready for this. I’m not able to do this at this point. I need to get to a point where I’m able to do this.” Spiritual pretenders put off true worship until another time.

But the beautiful thing in this text, and this is the best part, is this woman comes to a realization of who is standing in front of her, and she realizes two things. Number one, she realizes Jesus has come to satisfy her eternally. Jesus has come to satisfy us eternally.

This whole picture of living water in the beginning of the chapter now starts to make sense. "You mean it's not just physical water we're talking about? You're talking about satisfying my soul." So what does she do? It says in verse 28, "*Leaving her water jar*"—you see the imagery there—"*the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' They came out of the town and made their way toward him*" (John 4:28-30). Here she is, she's going and telling everybody about who Jesus is, then you get down to verse 39 it says, "*Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.'* So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, '*We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world*'" (John 4:39-42).

Do you see this picture? The most unlikely candidate, a Samaritan woman who comes out to draw water by herself because she is an outcast, marginalized by the society that she lives in, who has a history of adultery in her life and is committing adultery right now. Jesus comes to her and He says, "I've got living water for you, and I want to satisfy your soul."

Not only is her soul satisfied in Christ, but see how she becomes a fountain of life for an entire town. Praise be to God, that He takes us where we are in our sin and in our sorrow. He hits us at our point of need, covers over our sins, strengthens us in our sorrow, and gives us a renewed satisfaction in Him, a satisfaction that will never, ever fade away. Then He uses us to be a fountain of life for other people.

This is a picture of corporate worship. Jesus desires to satisfy us eternally. Why would you want to put that off? Why would you want to wait until another time when this is who is in front of you? It only makes sense. Worship is the most logical response to who God is. It's not something we are coerced into doing. It's something we're compelled to do. It's not something we have to do. It's something we desire. It only makes sense.

Not only did Jesus come to satisfy us eternally, but the Father has chosen to seek us personally. "*The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*" (John 4:23). Why? Because, "*They are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks*" (John 4:23). I want you to let that soak in. I want you to get this.

If there is evidence of any of this spiritual pretense in your life, if there are things, sin or sorrow, that you have not been honest with God about and you've tried to sit on, maybe for a little while or maybe for a long while, if you have become so focused on the externals that your lips have said one thing and your heart has said another, if you are so far from the Word and intimate knowledge of it that your worship has become hollow, and if you have prolonged facing some of these questions for a long time – and maybe for the first time this morning you're realizing that – I want you to know the Father has not stopped seeking after you. He has not left you to figure this thing out on your own. He has come to you. He has crossed more boundaries than it took for a Jew – Jewish man to talk to a Samaritan woman. He has crossed any boundaries there are, and He has come to you. He has sought after you, not just the person beside you, in front of you, behind you, He has

sought after you. And He desires to satisfy you eternally, to bring you into a picture of true worship.

So are you ready to stop pretending? Are you ready to be honest with Him and let true worship become a reality and not just something that you play a game with?

In the next couple of minutes I want to give you an opportunity to do that. The whole point of what we've talked about today is it's not external. It's what's going on in your heart. But I know that sometimes the things we do externally do help us show expression to what's going on in our lives internally. If you are holding on to sin – maybe it's something you've been struggling with for awhile, maybe just recently, but it's something you would do anything you can to keep from getting out in the open. I want you to know that it's not hidden from God. He sees it. He knows it. And the beauty of it is He desires to cover it with His grace.

And so whether it's for the first time coming to Jesus and saying, "Cover my sin," or for the first time in awhile, I want to invite you to say, "Now, this is a picture of me and my heart laying this before you. I need your forgiveness, and I need your power to overcome this sin in my life, these sins."

I know that there are many struggles that are represented today – sorrow – valleys that you're going through, maybe in your marriage, in your family, with your health, or maybe just a struggle spiritually. I want to invite you to not leave that outside this room to come in together for corporate worship. I want to invite you to bring it before God, who says, "Cast your cares on me and know that I care for you." And I want to invite you to have an opportunity, just to lay all that is in your heart before God and say, "God, I can't handle this on my own. You've got to do this for me." And know that He has sought after you, and He desires to take that from you, and to shoulder that burden on your behalf.

God, I pray that in the next few moments that it would be anything but spiritual hypocrisy. God, we pray that you would create in this gathering a culture of spiritual honesty, a climate of spiritual honesty, and, God, I pray that you would cover over sin. You would cover over sin, without bounds, by the blood of Jesus Christ. That you would draw people for the first time to trust in you and for the first time to truly worship you; that you would draw your children, who've wandered, back to yourself.

And, God, I pray for struggling hearts and lives who are dealing with some heavy things, going through some valleys, God, I pray that you would meet them in the valley and that you would strengthen and encourage them in the next few minutes we have together. We come before you honestly, as we are, and we lift ourselves to you. And we pray that you would be worshipped in us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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