



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
September 30, 2018

JOHN 4:17-24

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, it is with honor that we come before you, recognizing that you have something for us today. We come with open hands and open hearts, ready for you to speak to us and teach us. Lord, we need to be inspired. We need to be convicted. We need to get ourselves out of ourselves and onto you. And we need to understand more about what it means to serve you. Lord, I pray for each of us as we come now into this solemn moment of opening your word that you would use it to teach us and to grow us in a new way. Bless this time. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Last week we looked at the story in John 4 about Jesus witnessing, talking about Jesus talking to the woman at the well. As He described to her this living water, it was described as this well inside of her, something she desperately needed. There are forty-two verses in our passage in John 4 and you can open your Bible there if you'd like. In John 4 I skipped over a couple parts of the story just so we could focus in on that dynamic between the woman and Jesus. Now I want to come back and I want to look at one of the tangents that takes place within the story.

Because in the story as Jesus is getting close to the pinpoint moment... You know how it is when you're witnessing to someone and you're sharing with them, you're getting very personal with them, she wants to back out a little bit. She has a question. She has a question that's been bothering her and she's been waiting to talk to a religious person so that she can ask her question. You've likely experienced that. Right? Where you're starting to talk to someone and they have this question like, "Why is there evil in this world by the way?" or "why did my parents split up when I was a kid and leave me damaged?" or "why are there so many different churches that people can't seem to get along?" People have questions. Right? And when they have those questions, it takes away from the person that Jesus was working with inside of her heart and now it takes it into something else.

But Jesus goes with it and when Jesus goes with it, something very important happens in the whole dynamic that I really appreciate. What happens is we learn something about worship. This worship that He talks about is something that we need today, we need in our lives right now. So in our study today, we're going to go with the tangent that Jesus has. We're going to learn about worship and apply to our lives not just a Sunday worship, but a Monday worship and a Tuesday worship as we serve the Lord together.

I'd like to start by reading the passage. So would you stand with me in honor of God's word? I'm going to read starting in verse 17 down to 24 of John 4.

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." So that's how we're getting into the story now.

And she says in verse 19 – "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, 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 the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

Notice the word there in verse 23 – *true worshipers*. We all want to be true worshipers. We're going to learn more about what that looks like in practical terms today. You may be seated.

The first thing I want to do is I want to define worship in way that I think is very practical. This is not a dictionary definition; this is a working definition. I would say that worship is a powerful, spiritual exercise that brings about breakthroughs in our lives. For those who think of worship as singing on Sunday mornings as kind of the precursor to the main event, that is the sermon, this, I hope, will bring some new life to that worship experience that takes place during the singing time on a Sunday morning. It is a powerful spiritual exercise that brings about breakthroughs in our lives. God uses worship to do that.

You've probably experienced that sometime. You're standing in worship and worshipping the Lord and God just does something inside of your heart. God used worship as the Israelites were coming into the Promised Land to conquer the first city. Remember they marched around the city with their trumpets and blasting their trumpets out there. And what happened in the midst of that worship? The walls fell down. I think God was making a statement to them. That really this isn't about you. This is about what I'm doing here in this world and you get to be a part of it. So worship really was used as an instrument to accomplish this breakthrough as they were coming into the Promised Land.

I think about the story of Paul and Silas and it just seems so challenging to me for them to be mistreated the way they were. They cast a demon out of a girl. They were doing something good. Unfortunately there were some people who owned the girl and they were making money off of her fortune telling, so they were upset. So they told the political leaders in the town. They dragged Paul and Silas in and they beat them and threw them into prison. They were being mistreated for doing something good. It was just so unfair. They were victims, true victims, I think, of an agenda that was going on. I say that because I know that some of you are true victims of other people or businesses or organizations. You're caught in the system or someone's abusing you. You're being mistreated. You're a victim.

I'm so amazed by Paul and Silas' ability to worship God. So what they're doing is singing in a dungeon in the dark. They're singing in the middle of the night, the Bible says. As they're singing in the middle of the night, God chose that moment to cause an earthquake to release them.

The jailor was just so upset about this because in those days if the jailor lost his prisoners he himself would be killed. He decided to commit suicide right there. And Paul says, "Wait. Wait. We're all here." The jailor comes in with his lantern and sees that everybody's there even though the doors have been blown open by the earthquake. And he is just so impressed with what had happened that he says to Paul and Silas, "What do I need to do to get saved?" A breakthrough took place because of worship. Worship is this breakthrough experience. It's this spiritual exercise that we do so that God can do something deeper inside of our lives.

Jesus has asked a question, so we're going to go with the question. Before I go there, I just want to say God wants to do something new continually and He often uses worship to do it. Notice this verse in Psalm 40:1 of 150 psalms in the Bible that talk to us about how to worship God, notice the newness in the worship. *He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what He has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.* That's why I say worship is this spiritual exercise that brings about breakthroughs in our lives. God wants to do that. And often in the midst of a worship experience, God will do something very powerful.

The woman asks a question of Jesus and it's really not a question, it's a comment, expected an answer. She says to Him – *"Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."* She's focused in on a place. Jesus is going to change that for her because she's asking the wrong question. We have to understand a little bit about the history and geography in order to get this idea.

Here's a map of Israel. What's happening is that the woman is asking this question where do we have to worship? You guys are telling us we have to worship in Jerusalem down here. Can we worship on Mount Gerizim, the blessed mountain?

Now the reason she's asking that question is because of her history, way back, many years before they even came into the Promised Land, it was Moses' job to prepare the people. He never really made it into the Promised Land. But at the end of Deuteronomy he's giving them some instructions and he's saying when you go into the Promised Land, we're going to have a rally. And when we have a rally, six of the tribes are going to go on one mountain, Mount Gerizim, and the other six tribes are going to go on the other mountain, Mount Ebal. The priests are going to call out the blessings that you'll have if you obey the Lord. Obey the Lord and when you do then you'll receive the blessings. So everybody on Mount Gerizim would cheer because of the blessings. And if you are not serving the Lord, there's going to be curses. So all the people on Mount Ebal would cheer because they don't want to have curses. So there was this rally going on that Moses said would happen. So Mount Gerizim became this place, the mount of blessing. If you lived nearby there, you knew this was the place where the rally was. This is the place where God shared the blessings of His people.

Here is a picture of it today. You can see when we see mountains they're just big hills, but you can imagine six tribes all on one side and six tribes on the other all in this rally. So this little city of Sychar was at the base on Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans would go and they would worship on the mountain and they would feel the blessing of God and they would experience the blessing of God.

So she's asking this question: Does it have to be in Jerusalem? Is the place that important that we have to go there? Or can we also worship on Mount Gerizim? There's an argument that's existing there and Jesus often does this with our questions. He changes the question. He doesn't answer the question that we're asking. He changes the question to something else He answers because that's really the question that we have. He knows what the questions are that we have, so He'll adjust the question and ask a different question. So let's see what Jesus says.

He says in verse 23 – *“A time is coming and has now come (we'll talk about when it comes) when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”*

So He's saying it's not about a place. It's about something deeper than a place. It's about something inside of your heart. It's about something that is going on that is very different than you would experience otherwise. This is not about going somewhere to worship. So when we talk about worship, we're not just talking about the singing that we do on Sunday morning. This is about living our lives during the week and experiencing the beauty of a sunrise and going, “Wow, God, you're so big.” Or the fact that God rescues you out of some kind of a problem, you go, “Oh thank you, God, for what you've done for me.” And worship takes place because now we're connected with God in a very special way.

There's several principles about worship in this passage that are very important. The first one I mentioned is that worship is the spiritual exercise that brings about breakthrough experiences in our lives. But Jesus is giving us two words now to understand the depth of this worship and how we're going to bring that about in our own personal lives. So as we share with the woman, we're going to draw some truths from those ideas for ourselves.

The first word is *spirit*. It's the word *pneuma*, which also can be translated wind and it also can be translated principles, this sense of depth that a person has. So when we worship God, It's not about a place. It's about some place inside of our hearts, about the being that we are. We're worshipping God with our very spirit. That is we're singing a song, it's not just coming from our mouth, but it's coming from somewhere deeper within. Now we're worshipping the Lord in this way that it connects with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Our spirit connects with Him. So I suggest that worship is not about a physical place. It's about a spiritual connection with God Himself. It's such a privilege.

So we contrast this with the Old Testament kind of worship because Jesus is doing that. He's contrasting with the Old Testament worship in the past. He's saying something new is coming. We think about Old Testament worship and we think about the tabernacle, which was the portable temple that they would carry around with them. And then the temple was made out of

the same model out of the tabernacle and it had progressive intimacy as you moved into its design and structure.

So at the very center was what we call the Most Holy Place. There was this big curtain between the Most Holy Place where the ark of the covenant was. The very presence of God was there, then there was the Holy Place. This was all kind of enclosed. The Holy Place, then a curtain, and the Most Holy Place. That was the place. You could come and offer sacrifices at the temple and once a year the holy priest would go into the Most Holy Place where he would offer up a sacrifice with blood on the horns of this altar and he would ask God to forgive sins. Once a year the atonement.

Now Jesus is saying there's a time coming when that won't take place anymore. I'm going to tell you when that time happens. That time happened when Jesus Christ died on the cross. The Bible tells us when Jesus Christ died on the cross that that curtain, the curtain that separate the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place, was torn in two. Not by a priest. By God Himself. It was torn. It ripped right in half. It was open, symbolizing the fact that now we come into the very presence of God. We have this connection with God that you never could have before. Now you don't have to go to a priest and share your sins with Him so He could go in the Most Holy Place. Now you have access to the very presence of God.

There's that spiritual connectedness that takes place between us and God that's all about worship. So Jesus is saying to the woman, "Lady, this isn't about a place. This is about something deep within you that connects with God in a powerful way." This is what worship is – spirit.

He uses another word to describe this deep worship that needs to take place. He says that *true worshipers will worship the Father in the spirit and in truth*. In truth. You see, there's an element of this worship that must be grounded in some kind of reality because there's a lot of people who think that if they just feel good that that's worship. That isn't what worship is. Now I hope that you feel good in worship. That's great. But some of us need to feel bad in worship because we're doing the wrong thing. So God's going to connect with us and He's going to help us change the way we're responding. But it's not just about feeling good or bad. It's about acknowledging something else, some kind of truth. See, there's a lot of sincere people today. Some of those sincere people are sincerely wrong. There has to be some truths that were embedded in here.

So let me share with you another principle about worship that I think is just strategic. If we're going to worship God, then we must realize that worship flows out of a revelation of the majesty of God. Now where are you going to get that revelation of the majesty of God? It's going to come through your knowledge of Him. That knowledge is going to come maybe through experience that you experience God rescuing you, saving you, working out something in your life. And it may come from reading God's word and understanding more about the holiness of God. And then you come to that wow experience where you go, "Ah." That's worship. It's coming from something that's embedded in truth. The very truth of who God is and His majesty.

That's why I suggest here the revelation of the majesty of God. So we have these pictures in the scriptures of God's throne and the majestic nature of this. Sometimes because of our

understanding of God as our friend or our Father, we sometimes miss the majesty of God. It's that majesty that draws us into worship. It's embedded in truth.

I like the words of A.W. Tozer in the book *The Knowledge of the Holy* when he says this: "With our loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine Presence. We have lost our spirit of worship and our ability to withdraw inwardly to meet God in adoring silence. Modern Christianity is simply not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience the life in the Spirit. The words, 'Be still, and know that I am God,' mean next to nothing to the self-confident, bustling worshipper."

Be still, and know that I am God. For those of us who are busy (I consider myself a rather busy person), sometimes that busyness can squelch the atmosphere in which worship can take place. God wants us to understand His majesty. He wants us to be able to appreciate Him because worship is important and worship makes a difference in our lives.

There are several things that make worship important. I would suggest one of the things that makes worship important is that it helps us get a picture of life's events. Our perception of life's events depend significantly on how we view God and His involvement in our lives. We live in a broken place. There's a lot of bad things going around in our lives. God wants us to continually move above so we can see His understanding of life. When we get His perspective on life, it changes who we are. Worship does that.

I would encourage you to practice worship. When we're here on Sunday morning, we practice worship. That's why I encourage you to get here at 9:45 so that you can get here and get your coffee and get your bagels so that when we start singing you're not chewing on your bagel. I'm not going to criticize you if you do, but the point is if we can get that part done then we can come here to experience the presence of God and worship together. That's just practice. That's practice for what you're going to do in the course of the week. As in the middle of the week you're listening to the radio or you're just lifting up a song before the Lord and you're coming into His presence in a way that helps you receive life events from His perspective.

It's just a beautiful thing that worship does. It puts us in our place so that we can see that we are here and God is here and it's not all about me. That God is doing something much bigger in the midst of all of this process. It changes who we are.

Another thing that makes worship so important is that it inspires great gratitude and gratitude inspires worship. They kind of go around and around like that. If you're worshipping God, you become grateful. Not just grateful to God for who He is, but you become a grateful person that looks around for the things that God is doing. Instead of complaining in the prison and in the dark, you're worshipping the Lord. You're grateful for what you have instead of complaining about what you don't have.

Let me take you back to another psalm, Psalm 100. I just want you to see how worship and gratitude are wound together on the same spool here. In Psalm 100 it says – *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God.* Know that the Lord is God. That is the heart of worship, really. That the

Lord is God. *It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise (start your worship with thanksgiving and praise); give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Worship is about understanding God and what He wants to do in our lives and it changes how we think about our daily lives. Worship makes a difference. Worship is important.

I would also suggest that worship is all about surrender. It's about giving up our agenda. That's why breakthroughs take place. You're singing to the Lord and in the midst of that you go, "Okay, God, I know I've got to give it up. Okay I'll do that. And that happens when you sing before the Lord." There's something about singing that gets right to your heart. There's something in the midst of your spirit that allows you to give up your agenda and to surrender to the Lord.

Here's an interesting use of the word worship in Romans 12:1. *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

There's a surrender as a living sacrifice as we all want to crawl off the altar. But the idea is that we're a living sacrifice that allows God to be in control. We surrender ourselves to Him. As we do that, there's this something that takes place that's not just worship in a box, it's worship that I would suggest results in action, that changes the way that we operate. It changes the way we function. So worship is very important to draw us into what God has for us and what He wants for us in our lives.

I've got to share with you one more verse. This verse doesn't really fit into an outline, but it's a verse that I really enjoyed looking at that uses the idea of worship. It's important for our church because in our church we're committed to the next generation, passing the faith on to the next generation. I'm glad that we have children up here, that we have young people in our discipleship group, that we have twenty-something's that are here. We're grateful for you. Young parents, we're grateful for you. If you look around, there's some of us older folks here. The reason all of us older folks are here, we want you to know, is because we're committed to you. We're committed to the next generation to help you understand how to take a stand.

That's what the next verse says. Listen to this. *Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.* See, as we pass the faith on to the next generation, that next group of leaders, those people are going to be outposts in the culture. The culture that's shifting back and forth. They are going to be those outposts that are going to be able to stand firm. Why? Because they're learning how to worship.

That's why we have our children in here. They might be distracting to you at times as they're running around or doing whatever (and I think parents should be careful about letting their kids run around), but being in the spirit of worship is what we want in our time together. Please don't be distracted by the children. Embrace them. Because they're watching you worship. They're watching you as an adult or an old person, an old guy or old woman, or whatever. They're

watching you and they're learning something very important, that this is real. That this makes a difference. That worship is a part of who we are. It's not just singing a song. This is something that's deep within us. Because God is looking for true worshipers. Worshipers who are going to *worship in Spirit and in truth*. And that's who we are and that's what we practice.

I encourage you to take that time as we worship the Lord, either before our time of teaching or after our time of teaching to come into the presence of God and allow Him to speak to us. Because He wants to bring about a breakthrough in your life. I don't know exactly what that looks like for you, but He wants to do these breakthroughs, and often they happen in the midst of that worship. That's why we take some time and sing after the teaching. It's a time for God to just speak and bring about that breakthrough inside of your heart. That's the time we have prayer counselors up here. We have prayer counselors in case in the midst of what's going on in your heart, whatever is impressed upon your heart, either at the service or even before you came, that you want to offload that to the Lord. It's this breakthrough that God wants to do. Prayer counselors are available, psalms are sung, and it's an opportunity for you to be a true worshiper, someone who worships in Spirit and in truth. Someone who recognizes that worship is something that will take you into a new dimension of your spiritual life. It will bring you into a new platform of your growth as a person. It happens through worship and God delights in doing that in our lives.

So we're going to practice now in just a moment and we're going to sing a song. As we do, allow God to just give power to you, to speak to you, and allow Him to sing through your heart as you lift up praise to God and just worship Him in your own heart as a true worshiper of God.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Oh God, we are so grateful for your power. And that power we know is accessible to us as we exercise these disciplines, these exercises that you've given to us like prayer, like reading your word, like serving you, and also like worshiping you. So Lord, release your Spirit this morning in our lives. Change us. Cause us to be conformed to you, to be the people you want us to be. Lord, use worship to change our hearts this morning. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.