

Introduction

I am Pastor Jeremy, Pastor of Discipleship. That was Pastor Steve; he is the Senior Pastor. So I always say when I preach, "Give us two weeks, if you're here for the first time, and make sure you hear the senior pastor before deciding if you want to come back." (Laughter) I would appreciate the grace on that end. We are starting a new series this morning called "Kumbaya" – about worship. Right out of the gate, I just want to talk about "What is Worship?" In talking about this series, in planning and thinking... I think often, when we hear "worship" in association with the church, we think "music." You know, I think if we were really challenged or pressed on that, we would say, "Oh no...no... I know it's more than music." But if you were talking about our church or asking someone else about their church, you would say, "Well, the worship was such-and-such, and then the preaching was this, and the children's ministry was this, and the serving... the missions..." But when we say "worship" we really mean "music." The worship was great. The worship was too old-fashioned or too loud or too whatever. What we want to establish today, moving forward for this series, is that "worship" is more than music. Worship is not just song; it's not just notes and our voices singing lyrics. Worship is so much more than that, so we want to look at that today.

The passage that we want to read from is John chapter 4, starting in verse 19. This is a conversation that Jesus is having with the woman at the well. You may have heard of that conversation where He talks to her. He knows, because He is God, what her story is. He kind of brings that up to her and reveals that obviously He is not just a normal person but that there is some wisdom and insight there. She is astounded by that, eventually telling her that He is the Christ. This is part of that conversation. Starting in verse 19 of John chapter 4: *"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but You say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'* The woman said to Him, *'I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.'* Jesus said to her, *'I who speak to you am He.'*"

You hear a few stories in the New Testament about someone being called a Samaritan and how that should stand out for some reason. But we don't always get to understand, "What is that reason? Why is that such a big deal?" You hear the story of the Good Samaritan. So today, when we hear about Samaritans we think, "Oh that's a good person, the one who helps out when someone is in need." But what the Bible is emphasizing in the story of the Good Samaritan is that it wasn't supposed to be the Samaritan who helped. It was unlikely for the Samaritan to help a Jewish person. So to say the Good Samaritan was to say, how unlikely would it be for this person to be the role of the one who is good... because there was some connotation and some ideas about Samaritans. In this passage as well, when the Samaritan woman comes to the well, a Jewish person should not have talked to her, and she wouldn't have talked to them. It wouldn't have been an interaction that would have happened. Not just the sin she was in but the fact that she was a Samaritan. So where does that come from? When God's people were spread about and were exiled... they no longer had a place and a home to all be together and set apart physically and they were scattered. God still told them to be set apart in how they lived. "You've been set apart as God's people, so you live in such a way that your lives are devoted to Me, your hearts are devoted to Me, and so you don't intermarry with other faiths," ...those who worship pagan gods or other gods or idols or anything like that. So the Samaritans are a mixed race of Jewish and non-Jewish. There was a lot of conflict... a lot of racial and religious conflict between Jews and Samaritans because the Samaritans

were not full-blooded Jewish people. There was a lot of worship of other idols that had been brought in and mixed into those who intermarried, so a lot of disdain... a lot of conflict. So when you see "Samaritan" in Scripture, it means a lot of context that we need to be aware of. So she says, "Our fathers have said to worship on this mountain, and the Jews say to worship at Jerusalem." So the Samaritans believe that worship of the one true God happened at Mount Gerizim, so she is saying "My people say we are to worship at Mount Gerizim, but You who are full-blooded Jews say we can only worship in Jerusalem. So which is it? Where do we worship? Where is true worship happening?" And right away Jesus is trying to set the standard here that says it's not about geography when we talk about worship. It's about spirit and truth.

So, as we move through the outline, if you are following along in the worship guide, you need to correct two things... or one thing that involves two things... it depends on how your mind works. But the first point is in the right order. The second point is actually the third point, and the third point is actually the second point. So if you want to do "1, 3, 2" on those points, you'll be set. They'll be right on the screen and in my outline as well. I don't want anybody to get lost. There's only three points so if you get lost, I can't help you too much. (Laughter) I do want to direct traffic as much as possible.

1. Worship Is A Response.

So the first thing we see here is that worship is a response. It's a behavior or a reaction. It's how we show honor or devotion to something. It's how we acknowledge the worth of something else. So it's an acknowledgement, a behavior, a response. Jesus tells her that true worshipers will worship. There is some kind of action that worshipers will do. Worshipers will worship, so there's a response there. It's not, again, singing or music that just count as worship. It is prayer, giving, serving, loving others with the love of God... all of these things... in devotion to God. Everything you do by faith to the Lord is really an act of worship as we devote our lives to Him.

There are a few words in Scripture, in the original languages, that are all translated to the one word "worship." We are just going to look at a couple of them today. I hope that this doesn't muddy the waters of what God wants to get across. There's a verb called "proskuneo" which is a Greek word. "Proskuneo" is a verb which means "to bow, to kiss the hand" or even "to prostrate yourself on the ground with your forehead to the ground to someone who outranks you." So there's the verb, the action of laying yourself low before someone, to show honor, to submit and humble yourself before someone who is of a superior rank. It's almost like a military term, but they would use that in the sense of, "When you come before the Lord, of course, you would bow, surrender, and humble yourself before God because of who He is." So there is that verb "proskuneo." That's what's being talked about here in John 4; that's the word "worship" that Jesus is using in this conversation. There's also the noun "latreia"... the Greek word "latreia" which we will talk about a little bit later, but this is the services of worship. This is the requirement of worship. God has given His people laws and said, "Here are different ceremonies or actions or things to do." They would refer to that as "those acts of worship." That is the service rendered unto God. So this noun of, "If I want to fulfill the Law and the requirements that God has put before me, that's what I'm answering with this 'latreia' worship." So there's this verb of laying ourselves low and acknowledging that we are humbling ourselves, and then this noun of "here are my services of worship, to meet the requirements of the Law so that we might be accepted before the Lord."

There is a response. There is an action. There is something that we are showing... we acknowledge there is worth before something. Of course, we want to point ourselves throughout this series that we want to worship God, and what does worship to God look like? But I think today, as we establish worship, I want us

to also think about, "What things in my life am I worshipping that are not God?" That's what also helps us to think, "Well, I don't sing hymns to my family." Well, no... but how is your life rearranged to devote yourself to them in such a way that they are higher than the Lord?

2. ...Toward Something Or Someone.

So we think about, "What are we worshipping in our lives?" It's a response. It's a response toward something or someone. So that's why I don't want to confuse that point to say, "toward something or someone." You would say, "It's not a something if it's God." That's right; that's worship of the Lord that we're trying to get to. But I also want us to think about... "Where is my worship in all areas of my life? What am I worshipping?" It may be something. And it may be someone. It may be something that is good but not ultimate. And that's where God wants us to put our worship in Him. So He tells this woman at the well that worshipers will worship. He says, "Worshipers will worship the Father." There has to be an object of the response. If we're responding, if we're showing worth... if we're humbling ourselves before something or devoting ourselves to something, there has to be something that receives the devotion... something that receives the praise... something that receives our efforts, and that is the Father when it comes to worshipping God. He says, "Worshipers will worship the Father."

Of course, I believe much of our worship is misplaced. This is what I was just referencing... that we make good things and treat them as ultimate things. Sometimes we worship things that aren't even good things... the temptations of a fallen world... the pleasures of this earth that we wrap our worlds around our lives in such a way that we have created idols out of them and have come to worship them. This isn't new. This is an ancient struggle, an ancient concept, an ancient sin... of people and mankind. In Romans 1:25 it says that people began to worship creation instead of the Creator. So there's a slippery slope there, for a God who is good and loving and perfect and holy... to bless us with such good gifts in this world that we become so short-sighted that we only see the good gift in front of us and don't see the Giver who gave it. So our worship stops at the gift and doesn't get exalted to the Giver who is the Lord. So our worship is in the wrong place.

I've heard it said that we are created to worship, and we are all worshipping something. So even those who say, "Well, I'm not religious, I don't believe in God" ...whatever that may be, they have devoted their lives to something. Their lives are centered around something or someone. It may just be themselves, or it may be some idea or some pleasure or pursuit of this world. But they are worshipping with how they live. Everyone is worshipping something. So we want to make sure that that something or someone is the One true God. And that's where we want our devotion to be.

How do we know what we are worshipping? How do we recognize the idols that we may have created in our lives? I think what we do is some simple assessments to try to evaluate. I say "simple" but they may be painful and uncomfortable. But really just step back and think, "Okay... this doesn't always necessarily mean I've created an idol out of something, but let me look at my life... let me look at my calendar. How are my days devoted? How are my hours spent? Let me think about my thoughts. What are the dominant thoughts in my mind? Let me look at my bank account, and where are my investments and my money going? Or even if they are going to good places, how uptight and stressed are my hopes wrapped up in... my amounts or lack of finances?" Maybe family... which is great and a huge blessing from the Lord... and children... but somehow, again, we've taken that good gift and elevated it to something ultimate and start to worship family instead of the Giver of that good gift of family. So think about these things... "If I have something in my life, but the thought of it being removed from my life sets me off in an unhealthy way..."

that I'm unnecessarily defensive and angry about the thought of losing something... I may have elevated it to a place that I should not have and created an idol out of that. So, we want to make sure that we are trusting the Lord with these things. Not, "God, You can have all of this but not that area... not that thought... not that possession... not that relationship." Those are the kind of things that become idols in our lives, when we don't give them over to the Lord and relate to them in the way that He would want us to.

So why should we worship the Lord? Why should He be the object of our worship... of our praise? Why should He receive these things? Pastor Steve read, in the Call to Worship, from Revelation chapter 4. We read that God is holy, and this eternal worship service going on in eternity, day and night, it says, *"They never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'"* You think, "Oh... that's pretty powerful. What's the second verse?" There isn't one... right? (Laughter) Those are the lyrics. That's the whole song. And that's the challenge where we think, "Well, wait a second; that doesn't seem like a very moving or creative worship song to get me going." But that is just in the presence of God, declaring who He is. There is a lot of repetition even in those two lines, and yet that is what they repeat without end: *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come! He is Holy, holy, holy the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"* We get so wrapped up, right? To think, "This song doesn't speak to me... or "This song doesn't really speak to where I'm at in life..." or "This doesn't describe where I've been..." or "The melody of this one..." or "The swell of the music here..." We think that is not the heart of worship. But acknowledging who God is... declaring truth about who God is in the presence of God: *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*

Revelation 4:11... *"Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created."* Growing up in church, I always thought "holy" was this... it is supernatural but it is kind of magical, "Oh, that will burn you if you touch it..." It's just this power... this force-field, I guess, around something. So when I read something was holy... because you read about "The ark was holy and if they touched it they would die..." ...so I was like, "Oh, the power is in the ark and its holiness..." like an electricity was something.

"Holy" means "set apart" so if God has declared something holy, He means, "That is set apart... it has a purpose that I have declared, and to use it for any other purpose is wrong and outside of the will of the Lord. So to declare God as "holy" is to say, "He is set apart." For it to repeat, *"Holy, holy, holy..."* ...so set apart... so "other"... so above... He stands above any idea or figure or being in the universe because He is so high and lofty and mighty and perfect... eternal. We can't fully comprehend all of that, but that is the character, the Person of God, so He deserves all worship. Nothing deserves worship like the Lord does because there is nothing like Him and nothing above Him.

There was an eleventh-century Benedictine monk named Anselm of Canterbury. He had a lot of theological ideas and philosophies that we have the pleasure of studying and trying to wrap our minds around today. One of the things that he talked about has been used in talking about the existence of God... arguing for the existence of God. It's an ontological argument... that's just a fancy word that means it relates to "being" or "existence." So when we talk about "Is there a God?" this is the kind of thinking that leads us to admit there is a God. Just in our minds, how do we philosophize ourselves... as I make up a word... to get to a place to acknowledge there is a Supreme Being... there is a God? So he defined God as "That then which nothing greater can be thought." "That then which nothing greater can be thought." He argued that this Being must exist in the mind... even in the mind of the person who denies the existence of God. And if the greatest possible Being exists in the mind, it must also exist in reality. So let me try to break this down. I remember this is an idea that stuck with me since I heard it, and I didn't start to compare to other

philosophers and theological ideas when I thought about it. I just was presented with the idea that he is basically saying, "If you can't think of or imagine a being superior to God, then God must exist. If there is a being that is so 'other,' so divine, so perfect, so eternal, and so powerful... if there is a being that nothing else is above, that being must exist." He is saying, "That being even exists in the mind of those who don't believe." ...Because even those who say "I don't believe in God..." understand the idea is there is nothing greater than God. So they may say, "I don't believe in that God... but I can't imagine anything that would even be greater than the idea of God." So as I was wrestling with that thought and thinking about that, I said, "Is that true? Can we not imagine something greater than God? Has no one ever tried to say that there is something greater than God in power and in might that can vanquish the one true God?" No... there isn't. I don't know every corner of every thought of philosophy, but where my mind went was to comic books... where they have to create all these beings and powers and lower-case-'g' gods. So I was thinking about the Avengers movies and how there is always another universe and another god there, and all of these kind of things, but there is always some way to defeat them. There is always some weakness, some whatever, some power, some jewel, some quantum... whatever. There is always some way to defeat that being. Yet in the story of God and what God has told us about Himself and what we believe is that there is no weakness, there is nothing that can defeat Him; there is nothing greater than God. So we can't imagine something greater than God, and what God has done in that thought is really written on our hearts... His existence. He hasn't written the Gospel on our hearts, but He has written His existence on our hearts. Where we come to the fact when we think, "Man... there must be a divine Person... there must be a divine Being... there must be something "other"...something greater.

As we start to think that thought and what we've been given about God and about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit, as we think about the Eternal God... there is nothing greater than Him. If there is nothing greater than Him, then nothing deserves our worship like He does... because that is who He is. He is deserving of all worship. Guys... that's before He does anything. That's just who He is... that's His being... that's the face and character of the Lord **before** He extends His hand. He deserves all worship and glory and power.

3. ...From The Heart.

When we really recognize and experience who God is, our hearts are changed. We see this in Scripture as Moses is confronted with the glory of the Lord and has to hide his face. We see this in Luke 7 as a woman... again, another sinner as judged by society and who has sinned against the Lord. She encounters the Person of Jesus, and she just throws herself at His feet and begins to wet His feet with her tears and wash His feet with her hair because her heart has just been changed by the Presence of the Lord. So, of course, in that setting... in that scenario... they would say, "This is not the proper worship. This is not the actions, the mode of operation to worship Jesus or to show Him honor," and yet it was her humility of heart that led to authentic worship of who Jesus was because she encountered the Lord and was changed. Philipians tells us that *"At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess..."*

When our eyes are open to who God is, our response is worship, so we have a response to Someone from the heart. That's kind of what Jesus is really emphasizing as the woman says, "Are we supposed to worship here or are we supposed there? ...Because I don't want to get it wrong. I want my worship to be acceptable. I want to be on the right side, so I want to know the mechanism, the steps, the process, to do worship correctly. Is it here or is it there?" And Jesus, as He always would do... "Neither." She's thinking, "Well, that's not very helpful." But He continues. "It's neither here nor there; true worship to the Father is in Spirit and in truth. It's a matter of the heart being right before the Lord... not the actions being right before

the Lord. If you only focus on the actions, that's as far as your worship will go. If your heart is surrendered to the Lord, your worship will be authentic; your worship will be received. He says, "Worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." So there's a response of worship to someone... the Father... in spirit and in truth... so from the heart. It's not restricted to a place. If you save your worship for Sunday morning in these four walls, that is not enough. That's not what God requires... it's not what God deserves. That's not what worship is. It's more than that. It's not just when Christian songs are playing or in a Bible study setting. It's when I go to work; it's when I drive... Lord, help us. It's when I'm meeting people at the water cooler, on the sports field, or in the classroom. These times, when we have opportunity to acknowledge with our lives, our actions, our thoughts, "Who is the God of our lives." We do those things by faith. Those are all worship responses to Who God is.

The woman's question reveals a lot about her ideas concerning worship. Right? "Is it here? Is it there? I want to do it right." This is a temptation we all face because we have a lot of options today when it comes to church. We can pick what style we want. We can pick the temperature we want. We can pick which church has the best coffee... which church has the loudest music or the brightest room or the darkest room... or the fog... or no fog... or the hymns... or the organ... We can pick all that stuff, and we get caught up in the fact that that is worship, and if I worship the way I want, then I'm worshipping... then I can worship correctly.

That was a challenge even today, I confess... and Shawn, forgive me... Lord, forgive me. As we planned for today, Shawn was like, "Hey... we're just probably going to do piano and just slim down." I said, "Yeah; of course... that's the whole heart of my message." Then I walked in this morning and I thought, "Man... it's hard to kind of get going with just a piano and a couple of vocalists." The Lord was showing me, "This is not what worship is." As I began to sing the character of God and declare the truth about the Lord and who He is, then my heart was changed. God would convict me and tug on my heart to say, "That is worship. It doesn't matter the setting. It doesn't matter the surrounding. It doesn't matter the mode of operation. It's the heart laid low before the Lord."

I was thinking of how and why... It is really concerned more with us. Right? "Is it in line with my preferences, or am I actually surrendering my heart toward the Lord?" Sometimes we get intimidated by that. Sometimes we don't worship because we think, "I have to do it a certain way, and I don't know how to do it, so I'll just not do it at all." I used to use this illustration when teaching students about prayer... because I think it's the same thing. If you've been in a setting where someone has asked you to pray out loud and someone will say, "Well, I'm not good at that... I don't do that." There's a fear there because they think, I have to have the right words. I have to sound really educated. ...Or I have to ...whatever. But really what God has asked us to do in prayer is just to share our hearts... just to talk to Him.

So we get intimidated by these things, and I always think of this scene from National Lampoon's Vacation where the Griswold family is supposed to travel across country in the family truck to see Walley World. Of course, everything goes wrong that could. It is a comedy so trust me as I talk about this next scene. They have Aunt Edna with them, and Aunt Edna passes away on the trip. But Clark is like, "We've got to get to Walley World, so this is an inconvenience for us." He never really liked Aunt Edna anyway, and she didn't like him... so that creates some friction. They have Aunt Edna's body with them, and they have to do something with her. Of course, Clark's wife is like, "We need to do it respectfully. We need to honor her in her life." There's some distant relative or something and they show up at their house, and they want to leave her with them, but it's raining and no one is home. It's pouring down rain. They are in the back yard, and Clark is like, "Well, we tried. Let's go." His wife says, "No... Clark, we need to say some words. We

have to do something. We have to honor her." So this layman, who is not very religious, is now thrust into the position of, "You have to conduct a ceremony for Aunt Edna for it to be right." So he strikes off into this amazing improvised monologue where he is offering up this prayer in remembrance of Aunt Edna. He gets really formal... "Oh, Lord... we come before You... and though they walked in the valley of the shadow of the Canaanites..." (Laughter) "...we ask that You invite her into Your heavenly areas up there..." (Laughter) It's hilarious because he is just trying to **sound** correct. He is trying to sound like he knows. He is trying to sound spiritual. He breaks into song... "Baa ruchitah... lay-lu-yia..." And that's where she interrupts him: "Clark... you are mocking the situation." In his frustration, he is like, "I'm not an ordained minister, so this is the best that I can do."

But that is the kind of thinking that we walk around in life with. It's that, "If I don't have exactly what I think is acceptable worship to God, then I don't offer any worship to God. It has to be exactly right. Is it here on this mountain, or is it in Jerusalem?" That's the thing we walk around with. "I want to make sure my actions are right, so that I can be accepted before God. What God has told us over and over again in His Word, is that it's not the actions that make you acceptable to Him. It is a heart surrendered to Him that makes us acceptable to Him.

Psalms 51:17... David writes, *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."* So this is not just New Testament theology. In the Old Testament, during the sacrificial system, David says... he recognizes... "It's not just the act of sacrifice that You want, God. It is my heart, humbled before You. That is what is pleasing to You; that is what You will accept."

In Romans 12:1, Paul says: *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* I mentioned this word earlier. This is the "latreia"; this is that noun. So what Paul is saying, again, is that we get so focused on what is the requirement of the Law, that I might do the right action to be received before the Lord... and he says, "Your correct action before the Lord, the thing that you need to do ceremonially, is not just an action or a service. It is a living sacrifice... a life laid down before the Lord. That fulfills the Law... the requirement of your worship." But we get so caught up in, "If I can adjust my behavior to what God wants it to be, He will accept me... that is when I will be worshiping correctly." What God says is, "You can never get your act right on your own. You can sing the songs and go to the Bible studies and attend worship and give and do whatever you want..." but if your heart has not been humbled before Him, there is no relationship... there is no fellowship with God. That is where true worship is found.

So this idea of a living sacrifice... that's what God wants from us. It's kind of a strange term, right? ...Because a sacrifice wasn't something that served as a sacrifice and then got up and lived to see another day. The only sacrifice that did that was Jesus Himself. He laid down His life, poured out his life; He was dead, buried, and raised again. But when Paul talks about living sacrifices, he is making this illusion that you would sacrifice up an animal to the Lord, and it was consumed and that was a gift to the Lord. Then you need another sacrifice. But for the believer, those who trust in Jesus, He is saying, "Every day is a laying down of your life." So you physically continue to live and yet spiritually it's that idea, as we said, of laying down before the Lord... laying my life out there... every area of my life. We sang earlier that God is the God of all ...but not just God of the songs we sing. He is God of every area of your life. A heart surrendered to Him... that is what is pleasing and acceptable worship; our lives laid down. That's what Jesus did, right? He laid down His life so that we might have life. He laid down His life physically so that we spiritually could be born again and have life with our Father. So our worship is now acceptable to the Father because we can have fellowship with Him. And that is what God is after.

So what are you worshipping today? Has your heart been humbled before the Lord? Maybe you've never trusted in Jesus, but today you've heard... and I pray that you believe... it's not about saying the right thing or repeating the right thing or singing the right thing. It's a heart convinced of who I am and Who God is, and by faith surrendering that heart and life to Him. Maybe you are in Christ; maybe you have trusted in Jesus recently or a long time ago and have been walking with Him, and yet you realized today that "There are idols that my heart has created; my worship is in the wrong place. Coming in and singing the right songs does not make up for the fact that my heart is devoted to something that is not the Lord." I pray that you would just lay that before the Lord this morning. Pray with me.

"God... I thank You for the truth of Your Word. I thank You for the power of Your Spirit. God, as we think about worship, and I pray that we are able to understand that it's not just music, and it's not just actions separated from a heart of belief... a heart of faith. But God, if we will, by faith, trust in You, our actions will then line up with what we believe. Hearts that are transformed... hearts that are convinced... our convictions lead to action, and that's why our actions are pleasing to You, God. Not because the action is right but because the heart is right. So, God, I pray for anyone in this room who has never trusted in You, and today God You have removed the scales from their heart. Their eyes have seen You for the first time. They have experienced the person of God for the first time. God, I pray for faith to believe... faith to trust... faith to follow after You. And God, I pray for the believers in the room... anyone, God, who has been misplacing their worship... anyone who has put something good in the place of You Who is ultimate. God, that we would confess of that... repent of that... and turn from that... and lay our lives before You, God, as living sacrifices... to walk through life physically, day after day, and yet spiritually to die to ourselves, devoting ourselves to You, as hearts that have been transformed. Thank you for this time together today, God, in Your presence. I pray these things in the Name of Jesus. Amen."