

11.17.2024 Sermon

Worship that Reveals God

John 4:19-25 | Matthew 28:19-20

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

worship definition, spirit and truth, Jesus' teachings, Kairos moments, church unity, worship utility, Samaritan woman, adultery story, worship in action, overcoming differences, church traditions, worship journey, God's will, spiritual growth, worship examples

SPEAKERS

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Good morning... we'll see how this works, and I'm looking for who Pastor Hannah is. She's trying to explain herself. Now we're going, "No, no, we'll handle it when we get home." This is my wife, by the way. We play like that. We've been together now for 30 years, married for 30 years, and have known each other for 32. Uh huh, I know she's the one with the memory issues. I was smitten by this woman from the very first sight. So, it's there, there's a whole other sermon in that, but we'll stay focused for today.

We are people, right? So, in church, we talk about all types of things, including our love for one another, our existence in this life, our desires, and traumas of this life. So, talking about having a spouse that you love belongs in church too. Um, uh, but I digress. Is everybody okay today? Everybody doing good, having a good week?

So, for those that are visiting, one of the things that I usually try to go back and remind people of, you know, who are we as Cornerstone and how do we approach the Bible? How do we approach coming together, being together, and exploring God together? Because one of the things about us is that we accept that we all have come from different backgrounds and traditions, and that we also accept that all those different backgrounds and traditions have something positive embedded in them, and we want to make sure that we hold on to those and at the same time build where we can to get better together. And so, we call ourselves center set, and I'll explain it this way, as an example.

Do you guys remember that as a child, growing up and playing the Whisper game? You remember the Whisper game where there's a story, and the story is first told by an individual,

but not to the crowd, but just to one person, and they whispered it in that person's ear, and it is that person's role to take what they've heard and pass it to the next person. And this goes on and on throughout the room, and then you get to the last person, and you ask the last person, what is the story? And they tell the story, and usually it's not right. And the room bursts into laughter that that's what someone believed the story is right.

Why do I bring that up? Because in Christianity, we were not there when the first word was spoken, and we are always on guard that what was whispered in one person's ear and cascaded to the next was it right? Because the whispers have been going on for thousands of years. So how do we maintain Jesus the Christ's correct story? That's what we're all searching for. So, for those that are up here speaking, we speak with conviction, but also concern that we don't pass on to you inadvertently a story that was whispered to us sincerely, but that is incorrect, so we join together with all of our doors, and we exist in tension together so that we can get the story right.

So, this is a journey every Sunday together of what is the story. We hold it loosely, even though we speak sincerely. We are centered on Jesus the Christ to find the story. Amen. So, I'm going to need your help. And, I mean, you gotta keep your thinking caps on. This isn't a check-out time. I'm sorry. This is in that time. This is, let's think about this time.

Alright, so we are, as we've talked about in a series regarding worship and what is worship in our lives? What is worship in the world? What does worship do? And is it more than just what we do in a church service that has music, it has raising of hands, it has melodies, and all of those things. Is it more than that? And we have collectively said, yes, it's more. And so, we want to continue to build on that, more today.

And so, if you'd go with me, I'm going to start with a couple of texts. It is first we'll go to John four verses, 19 through 25 and then we're going to jump to Matthew 28:19 through 20. So first, John four verses, 19 through 25, it says, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem; you worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is here, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks such as these to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know the Messiah is coming, who is called Christ. When He comes, He will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he." Now jumping to Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have

commanded you; and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the Age." The reading of the word.

So, these are two very, very familiar texts that have their own independent focus. In church tradition, they generally try to shape our thoughts in two very different ways, and I'm going to try to pull it together. My thought is, in the first text, it says that Jesus will teach us how to worship. It'll it, there's this, and then the last it says, "Go and teach you what I've taught you. Go and teach others what I've taught you about worship to all of my disciples," and I want you to keep in your mind you are the people Jesus is thinking about. You are the disciples that Matthew is referring to. So, the first text is about the Samaritan woman who Jesus is talking to at a well, and as he's talking to her that well there, you know, this is a scandalous thing if you think about the time where unmarried women didn't talk to unmarried men in public, especially at a well, these things, these things don't no, no, they going to have you at the altar praying over you. That was the times. And so, it was so scandalous when the disciples showed back up, they were like, "Whoa," but they're afraid to tell Jesus and call Jesus out, "Hey, by our traditions, you can't do this Jesus, right?"

We kind of skip over that part because we just want to get to the piece that's applicable to our lives and that we enjoy. That is, I no longer have to worship—whatever worship means—in a specific temple, in a specific city, under a specific leader, because I am none of those things. So, we are happy about that section, but we'll circle back to the scandal later.

The second part of this set of scriptures, Matthew, is a common set of scriptures that we talk about going out and evangelizing, right? Whether that is to our neighbor, someone down the street, or overseas, it's our foundational piece of why we go out and talk to others and share with them the Good News that we have found. The challenge or the delicate balance there is sometimes we take that as, "Oh, we know enough about Jesus. We've arrived in our understanding." And if you, the listener, would just do what I tell you to do, everything will be alright. I know enough, and that's the danger because we're losing track that at any given moment, all of us are teachers and students at all times. We are both teacher and student because we're trying to focus on Christ, take away the whispers that have been given to us, and operate as Jesus would command us to do.

So, I want you to have in your mind, as we go through the rest of my time here with you today, the thought that Jesus taught us how to worship and how Jesus did worship. He talks about doing what I've told you, what I've commanded you, and what you've seen me do. How did Jesus do this thing? The second is to have in the back of your mind that you know, I'm probably more of a student than a teacher. In my life, I probably have way more to learn than to teach, and this is why I love people that are still older than me. Because the more I learn, the more I need to know, right? We are students.

And the third part is to be careful of the whispers that we hold so true that when something new comes to our mind and in our world and our existence, there is a reflex in our society to always push back, and we don't question, "Was I whispered to wrong? Was the information I was given accurate?" So that's a lot to hold on to over the next few minutes. So, let's get into it.

Other speakers have taught you about the definition of worship. I want to jump into that just for a moment. Worship has all these different elements to it and includes that number one is a part of everything you do in life. Worship is different from praise. Worship is different; it's more like faith, right? Faith kind of opens the door from when you don't know. Worship is what we do in order to get from the unknown to the knowing, right? It's that thing we do in the interim. It is this activity and communing with God about what's going on around us that we do not understand that gets us to understanding. That gets us to overcoming that gets us from to changing the world around us. Worship exists in every part of our life. It involves us submitting some of our will to the will of God. And that first starts with knowing the will of God through our prayer, through our meditation, through reading the Word, through communicating with others. The main part is that purpose, and then we respond to that purpose and move forward. Right?

So, these are some of the things that other speakers have all shared with you about the definition of worship. I love even some of the examples that the speakers were giving. They were talking about, I think Sandra was making a comment regarding Chloe's beating the drum, or playing the drum that God exists in our life as that nice, consistent, rhythmic beat as the chaos that is our lives is playing over the top, right? There's this loud chaos that's always going on or trying to happen in our lives. But God is that nice, consistent, understood, understated, calm. That's God, right?

So, then this scripture that Jesus talks about in John says, here's the other part about worship. There's only one way to get to worship, and that is through spirit. Now, I don't want to get too mythical on some of you because I understand all of our different traditions talking about the spirit is sometimes taboo, but the word is in the Bible, is you? Are you okay with me going there? Alright. So, the Spirit just talks about our inner character, who we are at our core. It is the thing that you can't see. It is the thing that I do even when I don't want to do. It is what I am almost wired into doing, right? It is the thing that when I'm under pressure, I will respond a certain way. Now you're getting at my spirit. It is the thing that I do when I don't care about pleasing people anymore. It is the thing that I am that I try to hide from you.

Do y'all hide things from people? It is what we complain about that you don't know about me. So, when we talked about loving somebody for a long time, and when couples don't make it through situations, one of the common complaints is they don't understand me, so they don't love me, and you're like, "Well, wait a minute. Y'all live in the same house. You know what food

you eat, how you really smell. What are you talking about, right?" Your spirit, that to that, is the way we worship. God is in that space where we worship God, and it is in that space where God wants you to call out to me, and it's so hopefully we're starting to understand how do we worship and where do we worship?

Therefore, the activities of our life, they flow out of our spirit, but the activities are not our spirit, and they are not worship. You get that part. Worship flows out of your spirit, but they are not your spirit, and the activities are not worship. It is the activities of intent of the spirit, right? So, well, that is foundational. Why is this important in the first place? Is this just some church thing, some religious thing that people get up and talk about on Sundays that has no use when I walk out the door. And as I said before, no, worship has a utility. Worship has a use. Go ahead and let that sneeze out. Sorry.

It is not just a nice Christian thing or a religious thing. Worship creates moments that God moves. Worship creates space in our lives for what we call Kairos moments. All Kairos moments are is an alignment of situations that allow change to happen, change that you couldn't have created on your own. For example, in this first story of John, it talks about Jesus going from Galilee to Judea. It says he had to go on this path. This is a curious statement and a curious path because they went through Samaria. When you study the times, Jewish people would not take this path; they didn't like each other. They talked about each other. There were all these paths between these two cities, and if you were Jewish, you didn't take this one, but it said Jesus had to take this path. There is no time constraint on Jesus. All got admitted by noon tomorrow. There was no one chasing Jesus at this time. The other paths were not dangerous to travel. They were well known, but for some reason, both Jesus and disciples said, this is where we gotta go.

As a result of going on this path, there was this chance encounter with the woman at the well by herself, the scandal. In that moment, Jesus strikes up a conversation with this woman about her life. In this conversation, the woman is convinced that there is something new and different about Jesus. She goes back to her town, tells her town about this Jewish guy named Jesus, and said, "Come and talk to him yourself." As a result of that encounter, the whole town believes in Jesus. There is a Kairos moment. There's a shifting in this time that now something that could not have happened now happens because of what Jesus's obedience to God in the moment, which is submitting his will. "Let's go the normal route to God's will. Let's take the less traveled path, so that we can now reclaim people, so that now others can truly see God, so that now people can know that God fulfills promises." It is a Kairos moment, where then everything changes. This is also worship. This is Jesus-type worship. It is about changing moments in time. It is about God being seen. It is not about how loud I get or how melodic my voice is. It is my daily actions on can now God be seen? And that is as a disciple of Jesus the

Christ is our call today. Do we and are we creating moments that God is seeing? Do we engage one another that it's not about us? It is God being seen.

I have had the fortune and misfortune of being a Black man in corporate America, and some of you know what that means, that sometimes I'm disrespected without people knowing I'm being disrespected, and then later on, people will say, "you go to church. I'll fill in my less melanated brother." What that means is something happened in a meeting where people believed I didn't have the authority to do what I was I did, and they challenged that authority, and instead of giving them the energy they gave me, which was disrespect and dismissal, I rose above the moment and still proved my point so that I maintain my dignity and showed them what needed to happen, and that is how we worship. You maintain your principles and dignity at all times.

But trust me, you don't let things go. That shouldn't happen, right? So, let's say, "Well, wait a minute, that's kind of sound like you. James, no, I use Jesus on this one. Come with me." So, we talked about the Samaritan woman, but I want to take you to the woman caught in the act of adultery, right? So, there's some disrespect happening here because, and I say it this way, because they caught her in the act of adultery, and they bring her to Jesus, and said, "Jesus the law says, do A, B, and C to a person that is caught in this that is the law." But Jesus paused and turns and gives him the stone and says, "You without sin, cast the first stone." Right? Why? Because the last time I checked or back in my day, it took two to tango. So, we are not going to allow disrespect. We're not meaning to her, the one that was brought to be punished. We're not going to allow that, if you're not going to apply a principle.

Our worship demands that we see things the way God sees them. What happens next? What is our call as a church today? I want to get back to a path here. I apologize; let me explain. In our lives in 2024, in the 21st century, in Western society, there is a call for the church to be united. It's been in the church since Jesus prayed it while he was on the cross: "God, make them one as we are one." Unfortunately, in our world today, the forces that separate us are relentless. There is always a push to make you different from me, and me different from you. Now, I'm going to bring this home here in a second. David, join me for a second. Stand right here. And also join me because I want to get this in your mind—what the world does versus what Jesus does and what Jesus and God ask of us. So how would you explain us? You can relax; they've got to talk. Church members, what else? Three beautiful people, right? White man, okay. White man, white, okay. Anything else? Age different. One woman stuck with two men, whatever, I'll be the rose between the two thorns, okay. But I get it. I get it. Sorry. I get it. No, no, no, no. They're trying to be nice, I know.

And so, we're getting the church answers, and that's okay because we know that once we walk out of here, we all start getting divided. We start getting divided by everything imaginable. No hair, hair, haircut short, glasses, no glasses, tall, short, dark, light, and it shows up everywhere,

and it is relentless. And once you separate us, it's easy to divide, it's easy to attack, it's easy to overcome. It is easy to other you, and once I other you, I separate myself. When someone harms you, I just want to protect myself because I have also been separated. I have also been labeled. So, then my goal goes from supporting what God wants, which is all of us together, making something new, to protect me. Protect me only.

But how do we change this unrelenting push? To make sure it doesn't come up and hug me, and isn't concerned about what I'm concerned about, and doesn't see my trauma, right? That's the goal, because when we come together, we accomplish what Jesus is asking for us to do. And there is no power on this earth that can fight against the pressures that we are now seeing, to come against each other, then worship. This is the only tool we have to apply to this moment that is the 21st century of unrelenting separation that even in the church, this is so unique.

So, I ask you all, will you worship? Will you see the traumas of others? Because in our society, differences have consequences. I say, differences have consequences. So, the reason Jesus didn't see the Samaritan woman as different but united with her under our ancestors is because as long as it was the Samaritan in the Jew not only do we not talk, you now don't even have access to God. You don't have access to a Savior, and then the woman caught in the very act. You don't get mercy like this guy got mercy, you get stoned. There are consequences for allowing differences, and if we as a church don't see this and engage it, we will continue to allow those consequences to destroy. Our worship has a utility. It is our tool. It is what Paul called our weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty. They change the world around us. They create Kairos moments where even the world that we see today, that separates under everything possible, can now be brought together.

You all can have a seat. Thank you for your help. I think our Reverend Sophia had said in her sermon, if you notice in a magnifying glass, what you focus on gets bigger and everything else fades to the background. So, I want you to engage those church answers you gave, and you focus on those, because then that will be magnified, and then all the things that people tell us are different will start to fade into the background. They will become insignificant. And that is important. So, our differences fade away. So, the consequences of our differences also fade away. Amen, amen.