

Let Us Worship

Mount Zion RDU Kingdom Group

The Elements of Worship

Outline and Handout #2

The Truth in Worship

In stating to the woman at the well that “the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23), Jesus established at least three premises: first, that there can be true worshippers; second, that there is such a thing as true worship; and third, that there must be truth in worship.

Throughout the book we have been looking at true worshippers. Among the factors that separate true from false worshippers is their relationship to God, their motivation for worship, and their expression of that worship. The Greek word that Jesus used for “worshippers” is *proskunetes* which is the noun form of the verb *proskunien* that is translated as “worship” throughout John 4. But the noun form appears only here in the Bible. It indicates that a true worshipper is one who has such a love relationship with God that he has become a lover; he can “kiss towards,” which is what the verb form means.

True worship must flow from a genuine relationship with God. A good relationship with a church may produce a good worker, but only a warm relationship with God can produce a true worshipper. As someone has said, “Worship is the upspring of a heart that has known the Father as a Giver, the Son as Savior,

Let Us Worship

and the Holy Spirit as the Indwelling Guest.” To this I would add that this knowing must be experiential and current. Warm spirits produce worshipping hearts!

Not only must a true worshipper have a vital relationship with God, he must also have correct motivations in his worship. His goal must be to give unto the Lord rather than to get from Him. Worship which attempts to “soften up” God so as to induce Him to do for us is improperly motivated and cannot be called true worship. The purest motivation for worship is love that bubbles out of the spirit of man like a spring of living water.

Furthermore, true worshippers will manifest accurate expressions of their worshipful feelings. Their love will be poured out in an unrestrained manner when they are in the presence of Christ. They will not allow themselves to be limited by the traditions of men, or bound by the worship ritual of their religious heritage. Neither will they embrace extra-biblical expressions, for they will choose to be Bible-directed in all of their responses.

In speaking of true worship, Jesus may well have been referring to the tremendous contrast between worshipping the true and living God and worshipping idols. While few Americans bow before carved images to worship them as gods, we are a nation of idol worshippers as certainly as any heathen country. It’s just that our idols are more sophisticated than carved logs or molten metal. Some of religion’s most beautiful rituals fall short of true worship, for they are not offered unto God but unto man. Others who worship are deeply involved in self-worship, and self is a very subtle idol, for it possesses that ability to intrude itself into our holiest moments. Paul warned us that, “... in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3: 1, 2, 4).

Love of self and self-indulgence go hand in hand, and the worship of material possessions is almost an obsession with

The Truth in Worship

many, for Americans have had a longstanding love affair with things. Our culture teaches us to love things and to use people to get them, while God teaches us to love people and to use things to bless them. Too frequently, cars, homes, boats, guns, and wardrobes are cherished, treasured, and idolized with emotions that should be poured out in worshipping God. The Psalmist told us, "... if riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psalm 62:10). We dare not Christianize the American dream and teach prosperity as indication of God's approval of our lives, lest we find ourselves worshipping what the world has unsuccessfully worshipped for generations.

Nothing could take us farther from true worship than demon worship. Behind most idols is a demonic power that accepts all of the worship ascribed to idols, whether they are stone or the sophisticated varieties.

America's obsession with the occult is nothing more or less than demon worship; some people now openly worship Satan himself. Even in our Christian churches some persons place such an undue emphasis on our authority over demons that it borders on demon worship. Some Christians talk more with demons than with God, while others know more demon names than divine names. Some believers have read more books on demons than on God, while still other Christians live in terrorizing fear of demons; fear is to the demonic what faith is to the divine. When we are controlled by our fears we become worshippers of the demonic in the sense that we submit to their fear-inspired commands rather than to God's divinely inspired Word.

The list of things short of God that are worshipped by people today would be nearly endless. Some so worship money that they have become "i-dollar-ters" while others worship business, pleasure, power and family.

Whether our veneration is for science, angels, nature, or service it obviously is not true worship, for it does not have the true God as its object. All worship not directed to the true

Let Us Worship

God is ipso facto idolatry.

Besides all of this, Jesus said that a true worshipper would worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, italics added). Communion with God must be on His level. Since He is truth by nature, the one prerequisite for entry into God's realized presence is a true heart. "Let us all come forward and draw near with true (honest and sincere) hearts in unqualified assurance and absolute conviction engendered by faith" (Hebrews 10:22, TAB).

Not only must a worshipper be truthful in his approach and communion with God, but worshipping will reveal the truth to the worshipper. It will unfold to us truth about God, because we learn more about a person by being with Him for one day than by reading about Him for several months. Then we will learn the truth about ourselves as we see ourselves as God sees us.

In Matthew 15:21-28 we are told about a resident of Canaan, whom Mark calls a Syrophenician, who seems to have heard that Jesus was going to visit the area of Tyre and Sidon. She practically met the boat at the shore, and the moment she saw Jesus she cried, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (Matthew 15:22). She may have heard that blind Bartemeus was healed by yelling a similar cry or that two pairs of blind men, on widely separate occasions, had been restored to sight by crying this plea, for somehow this formula seemed to crop up repeatedly in the stories that had come out of Jerusalem. It had always seemed to work. Until now, that is. For no matter how earnestly, loudly, or passionately she cried this formula, Jesus "answered her not a word" (Matthew 15:23).

The actions of the disciples proved that she had been heard, for they pled with Jesus to send her away to get rid of the disturbance. But instead of complying with their request, Jesus replied: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of

Israel" (Matthew 15:24). In this one stage whisper, spoken loudly enough for the woman to plainly hear, Jesus unmasked the deceit and hypocrisy of her petitioning. She had been claiming a non-existent relationship with Christ, for in imploring Him as the "Son of David" she was apparently claiming to be an Israelite, a daughter of David. This was untrue, since the Gospel writers clearly identify her as a Gentile. But because she did not feel that Gentiles had any claim upon Christ, she masqueraded as a daughter of Israel who had covenant claims on the "Son of David." All this pretense got for her was total silence.

When God gives us the silent treatment, it is usually because we, too, are claiming a nonexistent relationship. We, like her, pick up formulae that have worked beautifully for others and cry them religiously, whether they work or not. But unless we have the relationship that goes with the formula it will not work.

How many who have never been born again pray, "Our Father which art in Heaven?" Carnal Christians use the prayer language of the true bride, while the rebellious plead with God in their hour of trouble with the same expressions as the submitted saints. This will always be met by divine silence. God does not respond to hypocrisy, since He is truth by nature, hence we are instructed to "... draw near with a true heart ..." (Hebrews 10:22, italics added). Any form of deceit will deny us an audience with God. Someone has said, "Either live it or don't lip it."

Nevertheless, we go on giving lip service to the words that meant life to our fathers and to the founders of our denominations, often unaware that we have only the liturgy, not the life, of these men. We have expressed the words as fact for so long that we are unaware that they have become a fable, or we have claimed a nonexistent faith for so long that we cannot recognize our fraud. What can bring us out of our guile back into His grace? Worship in spirit and in truth!

Immediately after Jesus unmasked this imposter, she came

Let Us Worship

"and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me" (Matthew 15:25). Very likely, she prostrated herself before Him, perhaps even grabbing Him by the ankles and kissing His feet. She completely submitted herself to Him and poured out both her worship and her plea for help. And it worked. It always works! Worship is a door opener that gives the supplicant access to God. If we can claim no covenant that will afford us entrance to Christ, we can open the door to His presence with worship. When our faith has failed and we falter in our approach to God, we can always fall back on worship, for worship is a consistent door opener, to both the converted and unconverted alike, for all men have been invited to worship God. God declares, "shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 66:23). John saw a great company in Heaven singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, ending it with these words: "... all nations shall come and worship before Thee" (Revelation 15:4). Worship will open the door to God for anyone.

It is only fair to point out, however, that this door opener to Christ automatically becomes an open door, allowing Him to get to us. Immediately after this daughter of Canaan began to worship Jesus, He began to probe into the depths of her heart. "It is not meet to take the children's bread," He said, "and to cast it to dogs" (Matthew 15:26). "You've claimed to be a daughter of Abraham, but in the eyes of Abraham's children you're nothing but a dog." These have always seemed like harsh words, but they were spoken by the world's most perfect gentleman. Christ was not condemning her, He was merely unveiling her to herself. He was causing her to not think more highly of herself than she ought to think (see Romans 12:3). J. B. Phillips translates this verse:

"Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all."

Our Lord was merely helping to adjust this woman's self-

The Truth in Worship

concept, and He did it while she was worshipping. As she was exalting Him in worship, He was exposing her worthlessness. While she spoke of His Majesty ("Lord"), He spoke of her hypocrisy. His goal was not to depreciate her, but to help her appreciate her true relationship to Himself, until she did, He could not respond to her without condoning her falsehood. But if she would accept His appraisal and respond accordingly, He could and would minister to her need. Truth can relate to truth.

Isn't it when we are worshipping that God reveals us to ourselves? It was so with Isaiah, for he, who was likely the most godly man of his generation, when caught up into God's presence cried out:

"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Isaiah did not have this awareness when in the courts of earthly kings to whom he is reputed to have been a tutor, but when worship brought him into the presence of the heavenly King, he not only saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, "high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1), but he saw himself defiled and dirty. It is only when we are in the presence of heaven's Majestic King that we gain a true picture of ourselves. Compared with another, we may look great, but contrasted to Him, our artificial glory is revealed for what it really is.

So the Lord's response to the woman's worship was to call her a dog. How did she handle that? She said: "Truth, Lord" (Matthew 15:27). For until we acquiesce to His appraisal, communication with Him is ended. He has revealed our position and our condition; the next move is ours.

Admitting the truth that she was as separated from a covenant relationship with Christ as a dog is beneath his owner did not devastate this woman. She wisely changed her style of approach to match His estimate of her and gained everything

Let Us Worship

she desired. She merely said, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Matthew 15:27). "If I am a dog, don't deny me a dog's privileges!" No greater principle can be learned than to approach Christ consistent with our true natures. If we're "a dog" and our natures have not been changed by a divine transformation, we can sit up, wag our tail, and lick the hand of the Master. If we're an infant in Christ, we can make pleasant "gooing" sounds and smile a lot. If we're a toddler, we can crawl to Him, pat Him, and say "da-da." But for a mature saint to do this would be ridiculous. Mature saints should approach Christ as a Christian adult.

We need not await a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ..." (Matthew 17:5) before coming to God. We can come just as we are. He can cleanse us as surely as He cleansed Isaiah, and change us as completely as He changed Nebuchadnezzar or Saul of Tarsus. We merely need to respond to Him as we are and from where we are, and it is worship that opens the door for this revelation to come to us.

It is, indeed, worship that brings us into a right relationship with God and with ourselves, and this revealed truth about ourselves can help us to stop staring at what we were and to start seeing what we are becoming in Christ Jesus. This will enable us to trade condemnation for cleansing and introspection for acceptance. We can see ourselves as Sons of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus.

Truth is costly. "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23) is wise admonition. The truth about ourselves can be especially costly, but worship that costs us nothing obviously has little or no value to us. What is a proper price tag to be put on worship?

***Take Notes and Fill in the Blanks When
prompted by the Facilitator(s)***

- As defined by Judson Cornwall in “Let Us Worship”, WORSHIP is an _____
_____, a _____ God, a
pouring out of the _____ in
thanksgiving, praise, adoration, and love to
the God who created us to whom we owe
everything we have and are.

When Jesus tells the Samaritan woman in John
4, “the true worshippers shall worship the

Father in spirit and in truth”, he established at least three premises

1. There can be _____
 2. There is such a thing as _____

 3. There must be _____
- True worship must flow from a _____ relationship with God.
 - True worshippers must also have _____
_____ in their worship.

All worship not directed to the true God is

_____.

God is TRUTH by nature, the one prerequisite

for entry into His realized presence is a

_____.

If we can claim no covenant that will afford us

entrance to Christ, we can open the door to His

presence with worship.

_____ unveils the truth

of who we are and the truth of His love for us.