

In Spirit and Truth – The Proper Attitude Jn. 4:20-24

Introduction:

There are typically two extremes when it comes to worship.

- 1) Emotionalism (Do whatever you want as long as it “feels good”)
- 2) Legalism (Do exactly what is required and check off the list as you go – no emotion or meaning behind anything involved)

Notice the setting of these words of Jesus.

Today we will notice some things that will help our attitude towards worship.

- 1) Throughout this lesson, we are going to be looking back a great deal at Israel because of the great lessons that we can learn about worship from them.
- 2) Remember: it is a conversation about Jewish worship that Jesus is discussing in our text.

I. Our worship must be God-centered (4:21-24).

- A. The focus of our worship is not man.
 1. No less than four times in this passage Jesus says that we are to worship the Father.
 2. From the beginning, man was commanded to worship God.
 - a. **Ex. 20:3-5** - You shall have no other gods before Me. {4} You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; {5} you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.
 - b. **Ex. 34:13-14** (after Israel has worshiped the golden calf, God renews His covenant with them) - But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images {14} (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),
 - c. God gives Israel numerous warnings throughout Exodus and Deuteronomy about serving false gods when they come into Canaan.
 - d. **Mt. 4:10** (Jesus quotes from **Deut. 6:13, 10:20**) - Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”
 3. When man becomes the focus of our worship, we are missing the point of worship.
 - a. Throughout the New Testament, we read of those that tried to worship man instead of God.
 - 1) **Acts 12:22-23** (Herod appears before the people of Tyre and Sidon) - And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” {23} Then immediately an angel of

the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.

- 2) **Acts 10:25-26** - As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. {26} But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."
- 3) **Rev. 22:8-9** (When John sees the glory of heaven) - Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. {9} Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

b. We are to worship God, not man!

- B. When we worship the Father, we have the promise of His presence.
1. Israel was very aware of the presence of the Lord.
 - a. **Ex. 3:5** – Moses is told to take off his sandals, because the place that he stood was holy ground (it was holy because of the presence of the Lord).
 - b. **Ex. 19** – Israel is told not to go up Mt. Sinai because it was the place where God was.
 2. The psalmist encourages us to come into the presence of the Lord.
 - a. **Ps. 95:1-2** - Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. {2} Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
 - b. **Ps. 100:2** - Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.
 3. Christ promised to be with His disciples.
 - a. **Mt. 18:20** - For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.
 - b. This is the same promise to us today.
 4. Throughout the New Testament, we see the presence of God in the early church.
 5. If we really believed that we were in the presence of God as we worship, would we act the way that we do?
 - a. If Jesus were leading the singing, would we sing our best?
 - b. If Jesus were praying, would we say "Amen" at the end?
 - c. If Jesus were preaching, would we be more apt to pay close attention?
 - d. **Question:** if you could physically see Jesus in our presence as we worship, would you have to change what you do in order to be pleasing to Him?
 6. When our worship is God-centered, we have the promise of His presence.
- C. When we consider what God has done for us, it ought to be easy for us to worship Him.

1. **Js. 1:17** (physical blessings are from God) - Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights,
2. **I Jn. 3:1-2** (Called “children of God”) - Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. {2} Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.
3. **I Jn. 4:10** (forgiveness of sins through Jesus) - In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
4. Because of these blessings (especially the blessing of eternal life), gathering with the saints for worship ought to be the easiest thing that a Christian does during the week.
 - a. When we consider what God sacrificed for us, it ought to be easy for us to give ourselves completely to Him in worship.

God should be the center of our worship!

II. The place of worship is insignificant.

- A. To the Jews, the place of worship was very important (remember: the context of these words of Jesus was about Jewish worship).
 1. The Jews were commanded to worship at specific places.
 - a. **Ex. 3:12** – God tells Moses that they will worship and serve God on Mt. Sinai, or Horeb, when they come out of Egypt.
 - b. **Deut. 16:16** - Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses:”
 - 1) The Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the Passover
 - 2) The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost
 - 3) The Feast of Tabernacles
 - c. By reading of the history of Israel from Judges through II Chronicles, we know that this place was Jerusalem.
 2. All the way from the beginning of Israel to the time of Christ, Jerusalem is the place where the Jews were to worship.
- B. To the New Testament Christian, the place of worship is not important.
 1. This is not to say that we can worship with a denomination in whichever way that we choose.
 - a. It does mean that we can worship outside of Jerusalem.
 - b. As long as we are worshiping “the Father in spirit and truth,” we can worship anywhere we choose, provided that we are worshiping with the saints.
 - c. The building is a place that is expedient (useful in following the command to meet).
 - 1) A courthouse is acceptable.
 - 2) Someone’s private home is acceptable.
 - 3) Meeting at the riverbank is acceptable.

2. As the early church grew, it spread throughout the whole world.
 - a. Remember Christ's command to the apostles.
 - 1) **Acts 1:8** - But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
 - 2) The idea was that the church was going to start in Jerusalem, but it was going to spread.
 - b. The apostles fulfilled this command.
 - 1) **Acts 2-7** – The church in Jerusalem and Judea
 - 2) **Acts 8** – The church in Samaria (Philip)
 - 3) **Acts 10-28** – The church throughout the world (Peter and Paul)
3. As the New Testament church, we cannot confuse the place of worship (the building) with the object of our worship (God).
 - a. When all things are said and done, this building is nothing more than a well-placed pile of bricks.
 - b. God does not dwell in a building.
 - 1) **I Kgs. 8:27** (Solomon dedicating the temple) - But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!
 - 2) **Acts 7:48-49** (Stephen in remembering Solomon and quoting from **Is. 66:1**) - However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: {49} "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest?"
 - 3) **Acts 17:24** (Paul talking with the Athenians in the Areopagus) - God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.
4. The thing that makes this place special is the fact that when we gather together to worship God, we are in His presence.
 - a. It is the people that is important, not the place.

III. We must prepare ourselves to worship.

- A. Jesus refers to "true worshipers" (**4:23**).
 1. By implication, if there are true worshipers, there are also false worshipers.
 - a. Jesus spoke of false worshipers in **Mt. 15:1-9**.
 - 1) The Pharisees had questioned Jesus because His disciples did not wash their hands according to the tradition of the elders.
 - 2) They were accusing the elders of sinning.

- 3) Jesus condemns them because they had placed their traditions above the word of God.
 - 4) **Mt. 15:7-9** - Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: {8} “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. {9} And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”
- b. Only the true worshipers are going to be acceptable before God.
2. The difference is the manner in which the worship is offered.
 - a. “True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”
 - b. False worshipers will worship either with the wrong attitude or in the wrong way.
 - 1) In other words, they worship to please themselves instead of God.
 - 2) They are not concerned with the true purpose of worship.
- B. If we are going to be a true worshiper, we must prepare ourselves for worship.
1. We prepare ourselves by loving the word of God.
 - a. Notice what the word is to us.
 - 1) **Eph. 6:17** - And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;
 - 2) **II Tim. 3:16-17** - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, {17} that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - b. Do we love to hear the word of God preached?
 - c. Are we familiar, because of our own study of God’s word, with the text that is being talked about during the sermon?
 - d. As a preacher once said, the gospel should only be new to those who have never heard it before.
 - e. Part of loving the word of God is knowing how God wants to be worshiped.
 2. We prepare ourselves by making sure that our minds are in the proper place when we worship God.
 - a. We clear our minds from things of the world.
 - b. This is our time to focus on God and worshiping Him.
 3. We must prepare ourselves to participate.
 - a. If we have a leadership role, we prepare for that role so that the focus can remain on God.
 - b. We sing with understanding the songs that are lead.
 - c. We follow along with the Scriptures that are being read and discussed.
 - d. We think back to the cross during the Lord’s Supper.
 4. The idea of preparing ourselves for worship is a lifestyle that we live.

- a. When we are focused on pleasing God throughout our lives, not just on Sunday, we will be prepared to worship Him.
 - b. True worshipers are prepared to worship.
- C. It is only when we put our whole into worship that we can get something out of it.
 - 1. Many times, we hear someone say that they did not get anything out of worship.
 - a. The question to ask them is this: “Did you bring something into worship?”
 - 2. The law of “you reap what you sow” applies to many aspects of life, including worship.
 - a. If you bring nothing to the worship service, you will get nothing out of it.
 - b. However, if you come expecting to gain from the worship that is offered, you will benefit greatly.

Conclusion:

We must have the proper attitude in our worship.