

SERMON TEXT: John 4:16-26

SERMON TITLE: The God Who Seeks Particular Worshipers and Worship

Main idea: God is seeking the true worship to which He Himself provides the only access, so God is seeking worshipers to whom He gives that access.

Introduction: One of the most important conversations that has ever taken place about worship, occurred in a private interview between the Second Person of the Trinity, and an outcast who was a known adulteress. Jesus has initiated a conversation about Himself, and what He has come to do. But the conversation has just gotten uncomfortable, so she changes the subject—or so she thinks! Because proper worship is actually all about who Jesus is and what He came to do.

1. The Woman's **WHERE** question, v19-20 (though stated as a statement) Things that this adulteress knows (that put her ahead of most of what people identify as the church in our place and time).
 - a. There is a right and wrong way of worshiping God
 - b. God cannot be contained or communicated in anything that man produces (cf. 1Ki 8:27)
 - c. The Christ's mission will include the inauguration of true worship
2. Jesus's **WHEN** answer, v21-23
 - a. The currently correct answer isn't that important, because it's about to change!
 - b. The One who is worshiped has adopted a people, "Israel is my firstborn son, let My son go that he may worship me." This, of course, implies that the tabernacle (and later the temple—what God calls "the place in which I choose to put My Name") was not a mistake.
 - c. "Salvation is of the Jews"—the Tabernacle wasn't just the right place; it served a purpose. It was a copy of that true earthly worship to come, that would truly be in Heaven, when the Priest would pass through the heavens with blood, having sanctified the worshipers and even the holy things in glory, for the purpose of worship. THIS is salvation as Jesus describes it here—not the mere canceling of guilt, but the qualifying and establishing of worship.
3. Jesus's **WHO** answer, v23. The Father seeks such worshipers.
 - a. The generosity of this seeking in creation.
 - b. The unfathomable grace of this "seeking" in redemption. "You can't get there from here" NOT just because of geography, but because of guilt and stain.
 - c. The necessity of this seeking—behold Jesus Himself here, as THE image of the Father, seeking a worshiper! Why? Because she couldn't be one until He atoned for her and made her new. Why was Samaria so ripe for the gospel in Acts 8:4-8, 25? Was it not due to this seeking? IF you want to worship God rightly, the very first thing that must happen for you is to see this necessity and have it satisfied.
4. Jesus's **WHAT** answer, v24. The worship that we **MUST** offer ("it is necessary" cf. 4:4). Worship that is in Spirit and in truth.
 - a. Spirit. Because "God is Spirit." Not just that we must worship with our whole self, and especially our inner self (though that is true). Not even just that we must worship God sincerely and genuinely (though that is also true). But that we must worship God by means of God Himself. The true worshiper must be indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. He has sent His Spirit into our hearts (Gal 4:5-6). By Whom we know His love (Rom 5:5). By Whom we pray (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). By Whom we sing and are taught in singing (5:18-21). By whom the Scriptures were written (2Tim 3:16). By Whom preachers are helped (Luke 4:14-18; Acts 1:8). By Whom hearers are made alive to hear (Ezek 37:14; John 3:3-8).
 - b. Truth. Not that the tabernacle and temple worship were false, but that they were temporary. Shadows of a true reality that was to come (Heb 8:1-5). That reality was all about Jesus. Jesus the temple. Jesus the sacrifice. Jesus the priest. Jesus the preacher. Jesus—both the Mediator and leader of the worshipers AND God who Himself is worshiped. So that there is only one true worship—that which Jesus Himself has commanded on earth, because Jesus Himself leads it from heaven. When He abolished the shadow from before, it was in favor of the TRUE worship that He leads from heaven—NOT that we might invent "worshipful" things on earth.

Conclusion: "If you knew the gift of God and Who it is" who says these things to us. The passage concludes "I myself AM"—the One who is speaking to you. "I AM"! Why zealously reject the evil of all that is manmade in worship? Why zealously cling to all that is good in what Christ has commanded in worship? Because Christ Himself is God who came, seeking worshipers whom He would redeem to offer this very worship. And the resurrected Redeemer sits even now in glory, leading this worship! And the question is—are you one of these redeemed worshipers? And will you yield all your ideas about worship, and joyfully embrace Your Redeemer's way of worship? Will *you* worship in Spirit and in truth?