



Text: John 4:1-26 (NASB)
Series: Why Am I Here?
Title: Part 2 -- To Worship God
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"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." John 4:23

God is seeking worshippers – why?

We've been looking at the issue of purpose: why are we here? What is our purpose in life? The bottom line answer, as we discovered last week, is that our purpose in life is to bring glory to God. In the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he repeated again and again that our lives are to be "for the praise of His glory." Paul was reflecting the declared purpose of Jesus whose goal in his life and ministry was to fulfill the plans and purposes of His Father and so to bring God glory.

He identified five main ways in which our lives can bring God glory. We glorify God when we offer him the **worship** of our lives. We glorify God when we **teach** and study His Word so that our lives can be transformed into the likeness of Jesus. We glorify God when we dedicate the gifts and abilities He has given us for **service** to others. We glorify God when we share **the good news** of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us with others. And finally, we glorify God when we engage in caring and supportive **fellowship** with other believers.

This week, I want us to think about the first and most important avenue through which our lives bring glory to God. I want us to think together this morning about **worship**.

John Piper, in his book, Desiring God, asks: "**Is God a second-hander?**" He borrows the phrase from the philosopher Ayn Rand who defined "second-handers" as people who lived on the compliments of others.

We don't like "second-handers." We enjoy people who are secure enough that they don't need to hunt for compliments to shore themselves up. We find the idea that God might "need" our praise repugnant.

Be clear about this -- the God of the Bible doesn't need us:

"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things;" Acts 17:24-25



He doesn't need our worship – he is the source of everything we could possibly give him anyways.

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:36

The opening line of Rick Warren's book, The Purpose Driven Life, is arresting: **“It's not about you.”**

The purpose of all creation, us included, Warren states, is the glory of God.

“The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness,” Warren wrote. “It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.” (p. 17)

If God doesn't need our worship, **why is He seeking worshippers?**

When I first began taking guitar lessons at a music school in Lethbridge several years ago my teacher, a young man by the name of Dana, would give me secular songs with some interesting guitar licks that he wanted me to learn. One of the songs he gave me was popular in the 1980s. It was entitled, “Hole Hearted.” (The song was written by Gary Cherone and recorded by the group *Extreme* in 1990.) One day, I simply read the lyrics attached to the music that Dana had given me. I was startled by the honesty and depth of the lyrics. This is what the song said:

“Life's ambition occupies my time
Priorities confuse the mind
Happiness one step behind
This inner peace I've yet to find

Rivers flow into the sea
Yet even the sea is not so full of me
If I'm not blind why can't I see
That a circle can't fit
Where a square should be

This heart of stone is where I hide
These feet of clay kept warm inside
Day by day less satisfied
Not fade away before I die



CHORUS

There's a hole in my heart
That can only be filled by you
And this hole in my heart
Can't be filled with the things I do

Hole hearted
Hole hearted."

I said to my teacher, "Dana, this guy has perfectly described what in Christian terms we call the 'God-shaped' hole that exists in every heart. It's a hole that can only be filled by a relationship with Him." The songwriter talks about a "you" who alone can fill his heart. I'm sure the songwriter had a human relationship in mind. But human relationships are only a reflection of the ultimate relationship -- the relationship with our Creator who made us in His own image and for his own glory.

This morning I want to introduce you to a **"hole hearted" woman**.

Jesus was on his way to Galilee in the north from Judea in the south when he stopped by a well outside the city of Sychar in Samaria. Remember, we learned last week that the goal of Jesus' life was to bring glory to Father by accomplishing the work he had given Jesus to do. Jesus prayed to the Father:

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You gave Me to do." John 17:4

The Father seeks worshippers and Jesus was looking for worshippers for the Father. At this well in Sychar he found a potential candidate. But what kind of candidate could she be? That this woman was a candidate for becoming a worshipper of God shows us **how intense is His search for worshippers**. To reach this woman, Jesus crossed immense barriers. This is not an accidental meeting – Jesus is on a mission seeking worshippers for the Father. This meeting was part of the work the Father had given Jesus to accomplish.

In seeking this woman out, **Jesus crossed a social barrier. (John 4:9)** This woman was a Samaritan, and Jews and Samaritans simply didn't mix. There were centuries of animosity between them that had kept them at odds with one another. They both knew the **race** rules. But Jesus was seeking worshippers for the Father – and this woman needed to become a worshipper.

Not only was there a racial barrier, but there was a **gender** barrier as well. Men and women did not speak openly in public in that culture. This Samaritan "woman" was well aware of that barrier, but Jesus was seeking worshippers for the Father.



What he saw was not a Samaritan or a woman but a thirsty person who had been created by God to be a worshipper – and so Jesus offered her living water that would satisfy her thirst forever.

In seeking this woman out, **Jesus crossed a moral barrier. (John 4:18)**

Jesus encountered this woman, alone at the well at “the sixth hour” (John 4:6) which according to the Jewish day meant noon hour, the heat of the day.

Women usually went in groups to the wells to help each other raise the water from the depths and for protection from wild animals and the unwanted advances of men – but this woman was alone. She had come in the heat of the day, either because she was trying to avoid the other women of the town or because they had been avoiding her!

The reason she was alone is evident -- she was a repeat **adulteress**. She'd had five husbands and the man with whom she was currently living wasn't her husband. The other women of the town rejected her as a threat to their own marriages or simply as a **failure** with whom they refused to associate.

When Jesus raised the issue of her marriage record, the woman quickly attempted to deflect Jesus onto theological issues, but Jesus simply followed her – notice that the issue of her adultery never came up again! The point had been made. She understood that Jesus knew things he couldn't have known unless he was a prophet, a man with a special connection with God, a man who had things to say.

Jesus saw a woman whose **thirst** was far deeper than anything that a jug of water could satisfy. He was a woman who needed to become a worshipper of God. She had been trying to fill the **hole** in her heart with relationships with men – but what she needed was a **relationship** with the Father. She had been trying to satisfy her thirst with water from a well outside of town – but what she needed was the water of the Spirit of God that would spring up within her.

Why does Jesus pursue her to become a worshipper? Because worship is all about finding our heart's true home. It's all about filling that need for a relationship that satisfies our hearts. It's about filling the round hole in our soul with the peg for which it was created – with **God**.

God has made us to be worshippers who find our satisfaction in Him.

Or as John Piper puts it,

God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him.



Why does God seek worshippers? It isn't because He needs us. It's because we need Him.

Think of it this way:

- What is the most loving thing that God could do for us? The answer would be: give us **His greatest gift**.
- And what is His greatest gift? It's **Himself!**

But how does this all relate to worship? Let me ask another question:

- What is my appropriate response to His greatest gift? **Worship.**

God is the ultimate good; He is the ultimate love; He is the ultimate peace & joy; He is the source and end of all creation – He is it! In seeking our worshippers, He isn't looking to compliment Himself; He is looking to complete us, His creation.

He is seeking worshippers for **His glory** and for **our good**.

Do you know how long He's been seeking worshippers?

A.W. Tozer wrote in Worship: The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church: "God wants us to worship Him. He doesn't need us, for He couldn't be a self-sufficient God and need anything or anybody, but He wants us. When Adam sinned it was not he who cried, "**God, where art Thou?**" It was God who cried, "**Adam, were art thou?**" (© 2004 Preaching Today.com)

He's been seeking us since the first day we walked away from Him.

And he is seeking worship of a particular kind. Jesus tells this woman at the well some of the most important truths about worship that we can find anywhere in the Bible.

"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 that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*." John 4:23-26

What kind of worship is Jesus looking for?

First, he's looking for authentic worship

"Those who worship Him must worship in spirit" John 4:24

I think that when Jesus directs us to worship "in spirit" He is primarily referring to the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. Some people prefer to take it as a



reference to the Holy Spirit. But really, the two interpretations are not that far apart.

John Piper points out that in John 3:6, Jesus connects God's Spirit and our spirit in a remarkable way, when he says "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

"In other words," Piper wrote, "until the Holy Spirit quickens our spirit with the flame of life, our spirit is so dead and unresponsive it does not even qualify as spirit. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So when Jesus says that true worshipers worship the Father "in spirit," He must mean that true worship comes only from spirits made alive and sensitive by the quickening of the Spirit of God." (Desiring God, p. 82)

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that the physical location of our worship really isn't important to God – but the location of our hearts is crucial!

Jesus warned his contemporaries with words from the Prophet Isaiah (29:13) that their heart location was the real issue:

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." "
Matthew 15:8-9

The NAS translation of Isaiah 29:13 captures the essence of the last phrase:
"their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote," Isaiah 29:13

In other words, they were only going through the motions of worship – following the ritual, but their words and their hearts had been disconnected. Their mouths were speaking truths about God, but their hearts weren't in it!

There are many different forms of worship recorded in Scripture – songs and prayers, shouts and silence, lying prostrate on the ground and jumping for joy, standing with hands raised upward or head bowed downward, sometimes with music, sometimes without – there are many different elements of Biblically authentic worship. But we can do all these and be distant in heart. Worship isn't about "style" so much as about "heart."

People respond in different ways to worship – our spirits aren't all the same. This battered old hymnal represents to me that I am, according to Gary Thomas category, a "naturalist" when it comes to worship. I used to take this along with me on canoe trips. I always tried to find some private time when I could get away from the rest of the group, find a sunny rock or a beautiful forest clearing, and spend time in worship. Thomas identifies at least 8 other ways in which people draw near to God.



And worship brings all kinds of responses. A writer observed an elderly woman in church, standing with her eyes closed and her hands raised in prayer and praise. A three-year-old standing on the pew in front of her turned around and gave her a high-five! For that little child, and for that senior woman, that was authentic worship!

Some time ago, I was talking with a worship leader from another church. I agreed with much he had to say but at one point in the conversation we got to talking about authenticity in worship. In contrast to what he understood as “authentic” worship he referenced a church he’d been in whose worship was fixed, he said “in about 1983.” When he said that it struck me how easily we confuse “authenticity” with style. “1983” is a style identification that reflects the musical forms and song choices available at that time. “Authenticity” is an internal measure of the hearts relationship with the Lord. It seems so often that as we handle things of the spirit we tend to set them in forms that are just leaking pots, unable to retain the wonder and beauty of the authenticity of the heart.

We get so caught up in “style” issues, but it’s about “spirit” issues – is our spirit responding to the Spirit of God? Is our heart moved? The Bible defines a whole range of emotions that are attached to worship from stunned silence to brokenness to longing to delight! (See John Piper, Desiring God, p. 86-87)

Matt Redman has written a song that has become very popular. It’s called “The Heart of Worship.” The chorus of the song says:

**“I’m coming back to the heart of worship,
And it’s all about You, all about You, Jesus.
I’m sorry, Lord, for the thing I’ve made it,
When it’s all about You, all about You, Jesus.”**

I was interested to read the origin of the song as Rick Warren tells it in his book. Apparently, the pastor of Redman’s church felt that they had become too focused on songs and so for a time, he banned all music in their worship until they learned how to worship using other means. It was out of that experience that Redman wrote those words. Here is the verse:

**“When the music fades, All is stripped away,
And I simply come;
Longing just to bring something that’s of worth
That will bless Your heart.**

**I’ll bring You more than a song,
For a song in itself is not what You have required.
You search much deeper within, Through the way things appear;
You’re looking into my heart.”**



When God looks into our hearts when we worship, what does he see?

Second, He's looking for accurate worship

“Those who worship Him must worship in ... truth” John 4:24

Worship that pleases God involves heart and head, emotions and thought.

John Piper wrote: “Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full of artificial admirers (like people who write generic anniversary cards for a living). On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine.” (Desiring God, p. 82)

Jesus makes a doctrinal statement to this woman at the well. She attempts to deflect Jesus by saying “I know that Messiah is coming ... When that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” (John 4:25) In other words, she says, I don't want to get into this true worship issue right now!

But Jesus shocks her! “I who speak to you am He.” (John 4:26) This statement is the only time in his life before his trial before Pilate that Jesus openly declares that fact that He is the Messiah. And he uses that incredible “I Am” form of speech that we find throughout the Gospel of John. Jesus' self-identification as “I am” references God's self-revelation to Moses in the wilderness where God told Moses that his name was “I Am Who I Am.” (Exodus 3:14) When Jesus used this same identification to his unbelieving Jewish opponents, they understood him to be making a claim at deity and they sought to kill him. (John 8:58-59) To this woman at the well, Jesus literally said, “The one speaking to you, I am.” He clearly declares that He is the Messiah and even more, that he is God – this is profound doctrine!

Worship rooted in true doctrine is worship that brings glory to God.

Marshall Shelley, an American Christian writer, wrote: “Early in our marriage I gave my wife a terrific anniversary gift: a rain gauge. At least I thought it was a great gift. Susan, after all, is a farmer's daughter and keeps close watch on the weather. I envisioned her delight and nostalgia while tracking our back yard precipitation. I congratulated myself on my creativity.

Guess what? Susan was not impressed: “A rain gauge – for our anniversary?!” The rain gauge is now a family joke, a classic example of a gift enjoyed by the giver but not the receiver.

One word I hear a lot of these days is *authentic*, as in ‘we seek authentic worship.’ Usually this means we're trying to create an experience that helps



worshippers feel something. Nothing wrong with that, but if our focus is only on our experience, we may be giving God a rain gauge.

Are we offering in worship a gift we enjoy and figuring God will like it? A real gift, real worship, means knowing what's important to The Receiver." (© 2004 PreachingToday.com)

Do we know what's important to God in worship? What's important to him is a heart that is moved by the wonder of who God is and what He has done for us.

Finally, what kind of worship is God looking for?

Third, He's looking for living worship

"Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father"
John 4:21

Please note, I didn't say "lively worship" – I said "living worship." Worship can be lively if it's authentic but "lively worship" can also be inauthentic.

It's important to note that Jesus' instruction about worship is given at the side of a well, not in a synagogue or temple or even in the circle of his disciples – Jesus is talking about worship in the midst of life!

This was a radical principle in Jesus' day. This past Christmas season I was speaking with one of our congregation who had been to Jerusalem with a tour. Their guide took them to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, the last remaining remnant of the temple of Solomon. People come there to pray, often leaving prayers on scraps of paper forced into the lines between the massive stone blocks. The guide told the group, "this is where God hears prayer." Sadly, he was still under the impression that holy places were more important to God than holy people. Jesus message to the woman of Sychar and to us is that holy people who carry the Spirit of God with them wherever they go have replaced holy places as the focus of God's attention.

A well was the centre of life for a community. It was the centre of physical life for the community – no water, no life! It was the centre of social life for the community – it was the place people met and talked together.

Worship doesn't only what happen inside places dedicated to worship. It takes place in every area of our lives! As Rick Warren puts it, "**Worship is not a part of your life; it is your life.**" (p.66)

King David wrote in **Psalm 34:1** "**I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.**"



The Apostle Paul declared that everything we do can be done to God's praise and glory: **"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** (1 Corinthians 10:31) Paul also calls believers to give God a daily offering of worship **"as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God"**
Romans 12:1

Worship doesn't begin at 9:15 or 11:00 on Sunday morning. It begins at 8:30am Monday morning when you begin work or 9:00pm Saturday night at the hockey game or 2:30pm Wednesday afternoon when you're doing the laundry or 7:30pm on Thursday night when you're performing in the school play.

What we do in worship throughout the week as we seek to live to bring God glory prepares us to bring glory to God in worship on Sunday.

Rod Cooper, pastor of Galilee Baptist Church, tells his story of growing up on a farm:

"When I was about 10 years old, I had the privilege of getting up at 4 a.m. to get the cows so we could milk them. As we came in for breakfast, I would smell the beginnings of this soup my mom used to make. She would put in hunks of beef and carrots and peas and potatoes and all kinds of good stuff. And you'd begin to smell it.

I remember coming in at lunch thinking that was what we're going to have. I'd go over to get some, and she'd say, "No, son, you can't have any yet. You'll have to wait till tonight." We would work hard all afternoon.

And as we came back for the evening meal (that's the only time my dad beat me into the house), we would sit down, and my mom would set this huge cauldron of soup on the table. She would put this ladle in the soup, and the steam would rise off of it. And she would put it down into the bowl, and you could put your face over it. We would take our spoons and dip in there. It was wonderful.

I remember asking my mother, "Why is it that we had to wait all day on this soup?"

She said, "Son, it needed to simmer so we get all the juices out of all the ingredients. And then they're all mixed together; that's what brings forth that good aroma. And when you taste it, you're getting the best of what's in each ingredient."

That's the way I look at worship. Sunday morning is a culmination of a people who've been simmering all week in the presence of God. When we simmer every day in the presence of God and then come on Sunday morning and mix all of it together, there's an aroma and a smell of the grace and the goodness of God that lifts up to heaven. And God pulls off the lid and goes, "Mmm, that's my



people in Galilee Baptist Church.” That’s worship.” (© 2004 PreachingToday.com)

Is God pleased with the aroma created by our “worship stew” at First Baptist Church?

God wants all of all of us. And he wants us to present ourselves fully to Him in worship. In both the Old and New Testaments, the measure of our worship of God is this:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

As we prepare to commune with the Lord around this table, let’s ask God to help us take stock of our worship.

Do I worship with all of my heart, my soul, my mind and my strength? With everything I have? Or am I holding a part in reserve, just for me?

Invitation to Prayer

Songs of Communion

Communion

Before the Throne of God Above

Benediction