



St. Michael's Church

CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MAY 6, 2018

1 CHRONICLES 16:23-31

JOHN 4:21-16

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

It was the most beautiful visual I had ever seen. I will never forget walking into the Sagrada Familia, a Cathedral like basilica in Barcelona, Spain. Imagine if you will, a Cathedral designed by Dr. Seuss: crazy lines and angles, colors that wowed your eyeballs, 200 foot ceilings, and dozens of pillars shaped like the bony legs of Jesus on the cross. Designed by Antoni Gaudi, and started in 1882, it's not scheduled for completion until the year 2026! Even though it's only 70% complete now, the colors and vast expanse made my heart soar.

It's a similar feeling every time I enter this sanctuary! Why? I'm transported into a world beyond myself, a world of Worship. Spaces that remind us that we are not alone. Jesus is present and in charge, and Heaven is a stone's throw away.

Such buildings also remind us what worship means. Worship is two words: Worth and Shape. In worth-shape, we find our highest worth, our true significance, and our true purpose, in Jesus. Worth-Shape...as we find our highest worth in Him, Jesus shapes us into his image.

Worth-shape led hymn composer Jack Hayford to write, "Worship shapes the worshiper into the image of the One worshiped!" C.S. Lewis built on that when he said, "Our joy will never be complete until it is expressed in worship." And this is the point of John 4, which I'm going to unpack in a minute. So, worship, our eyes moving heavenward, is essential for our lives and a win-win right!

So why is it that worship is increasingly taking a back seat in our country? I want to quickly give you seven startling facts, seven wake up calls about worship in our culture today.

I gathered this information from Gallup and several sources that track such trends.

1. Only 17% of Americans regularly attend church every Sunday
2. People who used to attend church every week are now attending 3 times a month
3. Those who attended twice a month are now attending once a month
4. Those who used to come once a month are now coming maybe 6 times a year...we are a distracted people!
5. Fewer and fewer youth are attending church as parents are not making worship a non-negotiable anymore.
6. Fewer and fewer millennials are attending church. (Millennial defined as one between the age of 24 and 41) 59% of millennials who grew up in churches have left the church!
7. Leading finally to the fact that 3,000 churches are closing every year in our country.

These are the reasons our culture is becoming unhinged! Without worship, we are anchorless!

It therefore could very well have been a millennial Jesus is talking to at the well that day in John 4. Earlier in chapter 4, Jesus asks the woman at the well for a drink and gets into a conversation with her about faith. Let me pause here and tell you how radical this conversation really is! Jesus is talking to a Samaritan, the most hated race to the Jew imaginable. Second, she's a female, and a female living in sin for goodness sakes! Rabbis were forbidden to ever greet a woman in public, much less a woman living in sin. A rabbi wouldn't even speak to his own wife, daughter, or sister in public! The Pharisees would literally shut their eyes when passing women on the streets which would often cause them to trip or walk into walls! It's one of the reasons that Pharisees were nicknamed "The Bruised and bleeding ones!" Speaking to a woman was the end of their reputation. Not Jesus...he hangs out with her! Jesus was a champion of women's rights! Know this about Jesus: He pours out love and truth on the least, last and lost! Not just to sentimentally love them, but to give them powerful truth. So Jesus cuts right to the chase with her, piercing all small talk when he says, "You've had five husbands and the man you're with now is not your husband. I know all about you." The woman replies, "Okay Jesus, you must be a prophet," and then she does what many of us still do - Changes subjects! But Jesus would not be misdirected. He presses in because He knows HER highest need, and OUR highest need, is WORTH-SHAPE. So Jesus looks at the woman and says true worshipers worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.

To understand why worship is our highest need, I need to unpack these two words, **SPIRIT AND TRUTH.** I'm going to unpack them in reverse.

Truth transforms our minds and intellect. **Spirit** transforms our heart and emotion. Combined they change our lives through worship. One without the other is false worship. And we have to get this right on earth because this is what we will be doing in heaven! To really understand **truth** let me take you back to verse 22. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "You Samaritans WORSHIP what you don't know. We Jews WORSHIP what we DO know." Let me explain this. The Samaritans accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. They rejected everything else in the Old Testament, meaning they threw out all the Psalms, all of the prophets - all the readings that predicted Jesus the Messiah! Therefore the Jews believed that the Samaritans had a false religion because they believed in only a quarter of the Old Testament. It's why Jews hated Samaritans. It's why Jesus said, "You Samaritans worship what you don't know because you don't know the **truth** of the Old Testament and therefore you don't know me!"

Quick pause here, this is why our Biblical literacy is so important. Jesus could very well say this about us! You Christians don't know me because you don't know the New Testament! I think of the English woman who was angry at her priest for rejecting the death penalty. The woman said to the priest, "I believe in capital punishment because the Bible says, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!" Which of course it does in the Old Testament. But when Jesus came and preached the Sermon on the Mount, he had a very different message. Jesus said, "You have heard it said: Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek also." We like the Samaritans, can have a false worship if we don't know the **whole truth** of Scripture! Worship in Spirit and in Truth!

Jesus then takes it up a notch saying, "We Jews worship what we **DO** know - SALVATION IS FROM THE JEWS!" What Jesus is saying here is that only through the TRUTH OF THE Jewish Messiah would the whole world find salvation. It's why we read from the Old Testament book of 1st Chronicles, which quotes David saying, "Sing to the Lord, all the earth; Proclaim His SALVATION day after day. All the gods of the nations are but idols--But the Lord made the heavens!" Which means it should be impossible for any Christian to be anti-Semitic! Salvation is from the Jews! There is no other bloodline.

Worship is about worshiping the truth. Jesus is truth. He says so 10 chapters later, "I am the way, the truth, the life, no one goes to heaven but through me!" Not through the Buddha, not Mohammad, not the dollar bill. Worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth! Which means the more we know the truth of Jesus through Scripture, the more authentic and enlivened our worship becomes! Therefore, Bible literacy is not an option! Worship demands our intellect and concentration. Like the prophet Jeremiah who said, "*When your Word came to me, I ate it because it is my joy and my delight.*"

Worship the Lord in Truth and Spirit...

Truth transforms our minds and intellect. **The Spirit** transforms our heart and emotion.

One without the other is false worship. A Christian mind without a Christian heart is nothing. We must think clearly, but we must feel deeply. Not just a mind thing, but both! Therefore, worshiping Jesus in Spirit. What is Spirit? Not a human spirit, but God's spirit. It is the Hebrew, *roach*, meaning breath or wind. Worship happens in Spirit every time we allow the Spirit of God to flow through our hearts and emotion. Which is why when we worship, our hands, like those in the ancient church, should not be here, but here. Receiving what Jesus died to give us, Himself!

Let's try this...please stand and let's go old school. Put your arms like this... When Jesus said worship the Lord in Spirit, He meant...open and allow His Spirit to come through our open palms right into the heart! Allowing the Holy Spirit to do two things:

1. To flow through us like a river, by giving him our worries and anxieties.
 - a. Giving Him all the junk that accumulates on our shoulders, all the things we think are up to us!
 - i. Giving away that which crushes us, all the worry and anxiety
 - ii. and in return receiving new oxygen into our hearts.
2. And secondly, allowing the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin and show us truth!

The role of the Holy Spirit is to show us our sin and therefore our need that only the Truth of Jesus can fulfill! The Holy Spirit comforts the afflicted and often afflicts the comfortable! This posture will single handedly reduce the every increasing suicide rate in our country! We must release to the Spirit. **Worship in Spirit AND in Truth.** Truth without spirit is dry and dead. Which is why John Piper writes: "Put it together, Mind AND Heart, Intellect AND Feeling. That's Total worship! Where Insides are transformed!" So, Worship is not just going through a liturgy to check it off! Worship that doesn't change us isn't worship.

How does the woman respond? She says well, "I can't wait to talk to the coming Messiah about all this.!" Jesus then blows her away when he says three words that would change her life, and ours, "**I AM HE.**" Lady, this is no dream. I am Spirit. I am Truth.

My friends, all of our life should be spent in Spirit and Truth! Opening our minds to the truth, and our hearts to the spirit, in our cars, in our workplaces and Sanctuaries. Listening to the truth through the Bible on our commute, and listening to the Spirit through Christian music on your walks! Worship is a non-negotiable!

But one more concept. Worship often comes alive when we are serving in it. Spirit and Truth often pops when we get out of our pew and serve in worship. Isn't it interesting when Jesus meets this woman, he doesn't offer her a gift, but He puts her to work!

Woman, get me a drink...! This is why Billy Graham said, "THE HIGHEST FORM OF WORSHIP COMES WHEN WE ARE SERVING." This is why it is my prayer that everyone of us make communal worship here a non-negotiable every Sunday. And that all of us attending this particular service would somehow be serving in this worship service monthly as a Greeter or Usher, Reader, Chalice bearer, Chorister, Acolyte, Acolyte Shepherd, Audio Visual agent, Altar or Flower Guild member, or Prayer minister. When we are engaged in worship through service, Spirit and Truth come together in amazing ways! It's also one of the ways we say, "Yes, we are committed. This is my family and with family comes responsibility!" Why? Because ultimately our worship isn't just about us! It's about Jesus the one we glorify and his work **through us** to others!

Back a final time to the woman at the well, verse 39, we read, "Many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the testimony of the woman." Worship changes the worshiper into the image of one worshiped, for the sake of saving the life of another.

I end with this. As your shepherd it's one of my daily duties to read the obituaries. Last week I came upon one of the saddest obits I had ever read. I don't know Tristan Atkinson, his family or faith. All I know is that on Sunday, April 22nd, his obituary read, "Tristan Atkinson, aged 39 CEASED TO EXIST after an heroic fight with pancreatic cancer." He may have been a believer, but those chilling words "Ceased to exist" implies this man thought THIS world was all there was. What a horrible way to live and die!

Worship in this incredible sanctuary, or Sagrada Familia or under a tent reminds us that we belong to Jesus. He is in charge. All we have to do is surrender and say blow through me Jesus with your Holy Spirit and truth. I trust you. Remake me into your image, that others, THROUGH YOUR SPIRIT, would be saved.