

# A Healthy Church worships God in spirit and truth

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[ 0 : 00 ] And while the boys and girls are going out to their Sunday school, we will read just a few verses in John chapter 4. This is the chapter we're going to focus on together. I want to read for us from John chapter 4 verses 28 to 30 and then verses 39 to 42. I will be reading in English and the words are up on the screen in Korean. And again, let's hear the word of God together.

Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? They came out of the town and made their way towards him. And then down at verse 39, many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me everything I've ever done. So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them and he stayed two days. And because of his words, many more became believers. They said to the women, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the savior of the world. Amen. This is God's word. So tonight, as we join together in worship, we are going to do something that I hope will be helpful. So we as a church have been looking at what we've been calling habits of a healthy church. And in God's providence, very appropriately, tonight we're thinking about worship. And so thinking about the fact that a healthy church is one that worships God in spirit and in truth. Now let me begin with the statement that all of us and all people everywhere are worshipers. I was reminded of this this week. I heard about the story of a former football player in

England called Gavin Peacock, who has become a minister in the United States. He came back to Newcastle. So Newcastle, the north of England. And he was invited to a high school to talk about his faith.

And he began using words borrowed from Paul from Acts chapter 17. He said, young men and women from Newcastle, I can see that you are very religious. For as I walked along your streets, I saw a t-shirt bearing this inscription, football is my religion. Newcastle United Football Club is my God. Great way to start. It's both funny and profoundly sad, isn't it? But it identifies the fact that we all the fact that we all worship. What do we mean by worship. Well, worship is anything we build our life around. That could be a video game. That could be technology. That could be our money.

[ 3 : 40 ] That could be achievement. We worship any person or object or thing when it drives our emotions.

When it shapes our thoughts. When it directs our behavior. When we find ourselves saying, I couldn't imagine living without. Fill in the blank. We are all worshippers. In Scotland, we have been invited as a nation to complete a census so that the government has lots of statistics. Whether a person ticks the faith box or whether people tick the no religion box, we are all still worshippers. But the vital question then is, who should we worship and how should we worship? And John chapter 4 helps us to answer these vital questions. It's an amazing chapter in the Bible and it presents us with an amazing Savior. Here we have the Lord Jesus. And this is probably the longest conversation that's recorded in the

Gospels. But it's a conversation not with a Jewish person. It's with a Samaritan, typically an enemy. Not with a man, but with a woman. And not just a woman, but an immoral woman. And what does Jesus do?

Jesus brings really deep truth, really deep theology, leading this woman to trust in him as the Savior of the world. So I hope through this chapter we will discover that true worship is to Jesus because he is truly God.

And true worship is through Jesus because he is the way to God. So let's begin by thinking about the worship question. If you have your Bibles, you'll see that in verses 19 and 20 of John chapter 4, we have the worship question. Here is one of the hot topics in their religious society.

[ 5 : 59 ] What is the proper location to truly worship God? So you have the Samaritans. They had just the first five books of the Bible. And so for them, the place to worship was Mount Gerasene in Deuteronomy 11.

That was where the blessings of God were called out over the people. In Deuteronomy 27, it became a place where worship happened. But if you were a Jew, then Jerusalem was the center of worship. Since the time of King David, there was that desire to connect the throne with worship. And then Solomon, of course, built the temple in Jerusalem. So this was a really hot topic. Well, look at verse 21 and see the bold, dramatic answer of Jesus to the question of where should they worship. Women, believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

Jesus is bringing the news that he is about to replace it with something new. Where is this new worship center? Where is this new place where we can have access to God? We've already discovered in John's gospel, Jesus saying, it's through me. John chapter 2 verse 19. Jesus said to them, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. And he explains in verse 21, the temple he had spoken of was his body. Jesus has come to replace the temple to fulfill what the temple stands for. Here is the place where we meet with God. Not in a building, but in the person of Jesus. Jesus as Messiah has taken the place of the temple. When is this going to happen?

It's here as well. Verse 21, Jesus says, a time is coming or the hour is coming. Now, if you were to read through John's gospel, you would see that phrase many times. And in John's gospel, when Jesus speaks about the time or the hour, he's speaking about his death and his resurrection and his return to glory, taking the throne as king. And Jesus is saying, in those saving events, that is how we can have access to God. That is how we can know God. Because of what Jesus has done. We can probe the worship question deeper still. There's a question that Jesus asks. Let's call it the husband question. Verse 16. He told her, go, call your husband and come back. And so we need to ask ourselves, why does Jesus ask that question? What is he hoping to reveal as he asks that question?

[ 9 : 24 ] And I think here Jesus is probing to help the women to see her longing. She seems to be someone who is longing for security. She has had five husbands. Now she's living with another man. It could be that she is longing to find her meaning and her identity in a particular relationship. So we can say this woman clearly is a worshiper, but she has chosen the wrong object of worship. Choosing another person rather than the living God. Now there's a wonderful little phrase in John chapter 4 verse 4, where we read, now Jesus had to go through Samaria, or Jesus must go through Samaria. And that's not John saying there was only one road, there was only one way that Jesus had to go.

He had to go through Samaria. This is God's plan for Jesus. That he would come to this well at this point to meet this woman, to show her her sin, to reveal her need, and to bring her the love of God and the hope of God. That was his plan. The Father's plan, the Father's timing. To show her the longing in her heart that just wasn't being met. And to show that he can meet it. Now how does he do that? He does that, we can talk about the water question. So we've had the location question, the husband question. There's a water question that begins in verse 7. Here is Jesus, fully God and fully human, sitting at a well in the heat of the heat of the day, and he asks because he is thirsty, will you give me a drink? But as the conversation moves on, he goes from his own thirst, to her thirst and her longing, to then show that

Jesus is the answer to that longing. And he does that, because he speaks of himself as the one who brings living water. Verse 10. If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. That's a wonderful phrase. The Old Testament prophets spoke about living water. In Jeremiah 2, God uses that image of himself to speak of the goodness and the grace that he would have provided for his people, but his people chose to follow idols, broken cisterns. Ezekiel chapter 36, there is the image of this water that washes sin.

In Ezekiel 47, there's this wonderful picture of water flowing out from the temple and bringing life as it goes. Jesus comes bringing life from God. And so this whole conversation is in one sense Jesus saying to the women, you are worshipping, but your God is too small. You have been and you will be disappointed.

[ 12 : 49 ] Come to me. Come to me. Come to me and be satisfied. Come to me and find eternal life. This conversation reminds us that true worship is to Jesus because he is God and he gives

eternal life.

And true worship is through Jesus because he gives access to God and he sends the Spirit. Just before we move on, it's really good for us to be able to learn from Jesus here in the sense that we have a model in this conversation. What do we see Jesus doing? We see Jesus pulling down cultural barriers.

speaking to a Samaritan, speaking to a Samaritan, speaking to a woman, speaking to someone known for being a sinner. Why? Because of his desire to share good news. Because he wanted to show the love of God to this woman. And isn't that something that we have so many opportunities to do here in our city?

21st century Edinburgh, as Keith was already praying, we're a multicultural city. And we too have this invitation to cross barriers to share good news.

But you know, it's good for us as well to learn from this woman. To learn to put God first.

[14:23] Maybe especially for young people, it's important to learn to put God first. Not sport, not our achievements, not our hobbies.

All of those things, they come and they go. We're invited to aim for eternal joy to worship the God of the universe.

I think there are lessons for us in our families as well. For us as parents perhaps. To reflect, is worship a key value in my house?

Is the legacy that I want to pass on to my children the legacy of faith? As much as we want them to be happy and successful, to have a good education, do we want them to know and to worship and to love the living God?

Through knowing Jesus. And there is certainly lessons for us from this woman as local churches.

As we gather as two different churches, where is our joy found?

[15:33] Where is our satisfaction found? We're invited as the people of God to find it in the worth of Jesus. Worship is about worth. To recognize he is the son of God.

He is the savior of the world. He is our mediator. He pleads our cause. He prays for us. He is our friend who's always with us. And to find our joy in the work of Jesus.

To never move away from the cross. To realize our forgiveness, our eternal life, our adoption, our justification. All of those found in his work for us in dying and then rising to forgive us and give us new life.

So that's the worship question. What I want us to do now is to spend a few minutes looking at verses 23 and 24 and this phrase that comes up two times about worshipping in spirit and in truth. Let me read verse 24 for us. God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in the spirit and in truth.

[16:44] Now, there is an important question we need to ask ourselves and it's this one. Which spirit is John's gospel talking about?

Is this spirit with a capital S, the Holy Spirit? Or is this spirit with a little s? Meaning our heart, our inner self. And you will find, so we read from the newest version of the NIV and it speaks about the Holy Spirit.

But you will find other versions of the Bible and they will speak about our inner self, the spirit. Now, I would suggest that as we read John's gospel and as we hear Jesus, those two are linked.

They cannot be separated. Let me take you to one place. John chapter 3 verses 5 to 8. Here's a previous conversation Jesus has with a man called Nicodemus.

And there he says to Nicodemus, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the spirit. There, the Holy Spirit.

[17:54] And then in verse 8, the wind blows wherever it pleases, you hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

So that's a great image. Edinburgh has many things. One thing it certainly is, it's a windy place. We feel its effects but we don't see it.

And Jesus uses that image to say, that's how the Spirit works. It works in our hearts. You can't see the Spirit but you see his effects as he transforms lives, giving life in the kingdom of God.

And so, in a very real sense, true worship is only possible with the Holy Spirit. In John chapter 4, back to our chapter, in verse 10, Jesus speaks about the gift of God.

And it's really interesting then to look at the book of Acts and to discover that both Jesus and the church use that phrase to speak of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 1 and 2, Acts chapter

8 and 10, the gift of God refers there to the Holy Spirit who will come to live in the hearts of his people.

[ 19 : 13 ] So when God is living in our hearts, that's when we can and we will truly worship. So, worship in the Spirit and truth absolutely makes sense because we cannot truly worship without God transforming our hearts.

But it's also true to say that worship in Spirit and truth works. Makes sense. Talks about our real self, our inner self. In other words, to truly worship God, we cannot just go through the motions. and we know that from how Jesus talks because we often see Jesus in the Gospels being so critical of the people that were acting as if they were really religious, but their hearts, Jesus said, are far from me.

Being religious, but no real love for the one true God. Jesus has some of his strongest words of criticism for those. Now, there's a Puritan by the name of Stephen Charnick and he had two images to speak about this, this worship that's just going through the motions.

He said, it's like actors in a stage play. Perhaps we haven't been to the theater, but we can think about television or movies. We watch an actor play a role and we know that's just a performance.

[ 20 : 40 ] That's not the real them. And so it is if we're singing the songs, if we're turning up in church, but our hearts are not really in it.

Charnick had another image. He said, imagine a graveyard and imagine a beautiful statue at the head of a grave. So much skill and so much beauty, but under the surface there is death.

And the point is there is no faking it with God. It becomes clear in Scripture that God hates false worship.

And he sees our heart, so he sees false worship. And what he wants is worship in spirit and in truth. So where does this kind of true worship come from?

Well, it comes, first of all, as a gift of God because it comes from the Holy Spirit. So we are to ask God for the spirit of worship.

[ 21 : 52 ] We are to ask God for the Holy Spirit to change our hearts. To ask the Spirit to show us and to show us again the wonder, the glory of the Lord Jesus.

So it comes from God's gift. But this true worship also comes from our gaze. It comes from us choosing to look to Jesus. To look to Jesus to see his glory.

Here is God in the flesh. Here is Jesus, the Son of God, displaying his great love, God's great love to the world.

Here is Jesus bringing us the grace of God. God's great love. Because one thing that the Bible always invites us to do is to identify with, not the hero in the story, but in this case the woman in this story.

Because when we are honest, all of us are guilty of false worship. All of us have that habit to make idols that we set up in our hearts.

[ 23 : 01 ] All of us stand deserving of the judgment of God. All of us stand in need of God's grace to understand that for us to enjoy living water, Jesus must drink the cup of God's wrath for us at the cross.

So that's worship in the spirit or worship in spirit, but the full phrase worship in spirit and in truth. So let's think about that. What does that talk to us about?

Well, there was a leading tech CEO, a chief executive, who said a couple of years ago, I believe in God, but each person has to define that on their own.

Now I wonder if we recognize that attitude in our society. Everybody is free to make up their own truth, including the freedom to make up our truth about God.

Again, let me speak to the boys and girls for just a moment. Thinking about your life compared to somebody old like me, one of the things that's very different is you have so much choice.

[ 24 : 20 ] So I grew up in the days when television had four channels and then there was five, whereas you live in the day of Netflix and Amazon Prime and Disney Plus.

I remember having a range of cereal to choose from in our local supermarket that probably ran to 12, 15 boxes. You have a whole aisle.

We had Lego sets that were just bricks. Until the early 90s when Space Lego came and changed the world, you have every kind of Lego imaginable.

Choice is nice. Choice is good. But here's one thing from God's Word. We are not free to choose what we think God is like. We do not get to make up what God is like.

We need the Bible to teach us. We need God to reveal himself and that's what he's done in the Word of God and through his Son. But what happens when people try and worship without God's Word?

[ 25 : 28 ] Well, one thing that certainly happens is that people invent God in our image. Let me have a God that suits our times. Let me have a God that suits my feelings or instead of worship being all about God and his glory, it becomes all about me.

There needs to be worship in truth, by which we mean worship that lines up with God's revelation of himself. We find that in the Bible and we find that in his Son, the Lord Jesus.

And John's Gospel has already told us that. John chapter 1, verse 18, no one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son who is himself God, and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

And then we saw in John chapter 2, Jesus is how we come to truly meet with God. And then here in chapter 4, we find so many indicators that Jesus is God because only God can give the gift of eternal life, and that's what Jesus says he has come to do.

And look at the very end of this conversation, look at verse 25 and verse 26. The women said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming, when he comes, he will explain everything to us.

[ 26 : 54 ] Then Jesus declared, I, the one speaking to you, I am he. Two things to notice. There is Jesus explicitly saying, I am Messiah.

I am the king God promised to send. One who would rule forever, one who would save his people. But Jesus does more than that.

when Jesus says, I am he, he is deliberately claiming the Old Testament name of God. He is saying, I am your God and I am your savior.

And so any worship that is in truth must understand that about Jesus. So worship in truth is worship to Jesus because he is truly God.

and it is worship through Jesus because he is the only way to God. And so there is a challenge for us individually, there is a challenge for us as churches to worship by the book, to worship according to the Bible and to worship the God who is revealed in the Bible at a time when truth is relative for so many, when truth is disliked by so many.

[ 28 : 16 ] We must stay faithful. So to put this whole phrase together as we're called to worship in spirit and truth, for true and not false worship, we need both a true vision of God, revelation, and a true love for God.

New heart as the Spirit's working in us. We need the truth of the Bible and we need to treasure the God of the Bible. We need to know Jesus as Lord and to love him. as Lord.

And in this we need to pray. We need to pray for ourselves. We need to pray for our churches. We need to pray for our preachers.

And we need to pray for our city and for the nations of the world that we would see worship in spirit and in truth. One last thing to say.

as the story moves from conversation back to the town and then back to Jesus. One last lesson. Worship involves head, heart and hands.

[ 29 : 21 ] It involves truth, it involves love and it involves action. One of the things the Bible says, all of life is worship. It's not just what we do here, it's what we do out there.

It's how we live our lives. And look with me very briefly at this woman's story. Verse 28. Amazing. Having gone to the effort in the heat of the day to go and get water.

Verse 28. Then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town. She'd found better water. She'd found living water. What does she do? She comes back to the town.

She freely confesses her sin. Come see me, a man who told me everything I've ever done. She points her town to Jesus. Could this be the Messiah? And so because of her, the town began to go out to meet with Jesus.

And look at the impact of her worship. Verse 39. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me everything I've ever done.

[ 30 : 27 ] Look at verse 42. They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we've heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the saviour of the world.

So because she testifies that Jesus is the saviour, many more come to trust in Jesus too.

Here's a woman who's doing Romans 12. She's presenting her body as a living sacrifice. This is her spiritual worship. She shares what she knows of Jesus so others might come to hear and believe.

Friends, this is a wonderful chapter from God's word reminding us that Jesus has come as saviour of the world. And we will shortly share the Lord's supper to remind us of the cost of our salvation. Jesus has come so we would know the truth and that truth would set us free. Jesus has come to give the spirit that spirit might live inside us, fill us with love and joy in for Jesus that we would share with others so that all of our life would be worship, that we would recognise truly Jesus is worthy of all glory and that we want others to know the same.

May that be true of you, may that be true of me, may that be true of the churches that we represent as we come to recognise that a healthy church must always worship in spirit and in truth.

[ 32 : 09 ] Now let me close with a brief word of prayer before we come to the Lord's supper. Lord, our God, we thank you for this wonderful chapter of the Bible and for the way it reveals to us the heart of the Lord Jesus.

Thank you that he was willing to spend time with this woman that everybody else was happy to ignore. Thank you that her country and culture, that her lifestyle was no barrier to her receiving good news and living water.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to value Jesus so much that we would be looking for opportunities to take that good news to others.

Lord, we pray that your spirit would be at work in our hearts, constantly changing it, filling our hearts with more and more love for Jesus.

us. We pray that you would give us that desire to read and to study and to hear your word being preached so that our worship would be in line with your revelation, with your truth.

[ 33 : 35 ] Lord, we pray that you would give to our churches this true worship. Protect us from false worship that's just going through the motions and doing our duty.

Protect us from false worship and not truly teach what the Bible says. Help us, we pray, for our own sake and for the sake of the city around us and for the nations of the world.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, we come to share together the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is for all those who have put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, those who are members of God's church, and those who are aware of their constant need of God's grace.

Before we share, I want to read together words that you'll see up on the screen from Ezekiel chapter 36.

[ 34 : 47 ] Ezekiel chapter 36, and we'll read verse 25 to 27, where we read, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.

I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Jesus came to establish the new covenant. Through his life, death, and resurrection, and by sending the Holy Spirit.

And now for those of us who are in Christ, we have the spirit living in us, so that we have a new heart and a new power to obey the commands of God.

Now through this new covenant, our sins are forgiven, and the spirit of God is given to us to help us live in trust and obedience.

[ 36 : 08 ] As we share the Lord's Supper, it is a reminder of the cross of Jesus that secures for us all the benefits of the new covenant.

covenant. And also, the Lord's Supper is a beautiful reminder of our unity as the body of Christ. That as we share the Lord's Supper today, let's remember that this is a taste, a first taste of the feast to come in eternal glory.

So let me explain for the sake of our visitors how we have been receiving Lord's Supper recently. So you'll be directed to come down from the back row by row, and you'll see there are bread, there's bread and wine and little cups on either side.

If you can take one of each, take them back to your seat, hold on to them, and we'll eat and we'll drink together, and then when we're finished you can just leave your little cups on the pews and we will collect them.

[ 37 : 23 ] So again, as we prepare to do that, we will sing. We have a hymn to help us to reflect as we come to collect the elements of the Lord's Supper, when I survey the wondrous cross, and as we begin to sing, you'll be directed to come down if you're sharing the Lord's Supper with us.

Amen. When I surveyed the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died, my riches gained, I count love, and poor contempt, all know my pride.

Forbidden, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God.

Oh, the vain things that charm emuls, I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled out.

[ 39 : 53 ] Did earth such love and sorrow made or thorns composed so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine, there were a present far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Amen. j oh I thank you here, bye.

Amen. Amen.

[ 42 : 22 ] Let me read for us from 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 23.

These words of institution. For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread and gave thanks.

Let's take a moment to pray together. Lord, it is true that we're the whole realm of nature ours.

That would be an offering far too small. As we consider the work of Jesus, your Son, the Holy One, on the cross.

Taking our sin on himself. Suffering spiritual agony as he felt forsaken by his Father.

[ 43 : 33 ] Taking on himself the just judgment of God for our sin. Though he knew no sin. That we might be declared righteous.

That we might be forgiven. That we might have new life. That we might be adopted into the family of God. Lord, we are so thankful for what this bread and wine represents to us.

The life-giving, sacrificial love of the Lord Jesus. And may we be conscious of his help and his presence and his grace.

As we gather at his table. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread.

And when he'd given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[ 44 : 43 ] So let's eat together to remember. Amen. And in the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So let's drink to remember and to proclaim. And now our closing hymn is the hymn, In Christ Alone.

And then afterwards, Jacob will come and we will receive the benediction from him. So let's stand and let's sing God and Saviour.

Amen. In Christ alone.

[ 46 : 09 ] In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my life, my strength, my soul.

This cornerstone, this solid ground From through the fiercest rod and store What high so low, what best so peace When fears are still, when striving cease My Comforter, my all in all Here in the love of Christ I stand In Christ alone, who took on flesh Fullness of God in helpless pain This gift of love, this righteousness

Scorned by the ones He came to save Till on the cross as Jesus died The rest of God was satisfied For every sin on Him was laid Here in the death of Christ I live There in the ground His body lay Light of the world by darkness sway Then burning forth in glorious day Off from the grave He rose again

And as He stands in victory Sin curse has lost His grave on me For I am His and He is mine Bought with the precious blood of Christ No guilt in life, no fear in death This is the power of Christ in me From life's first Christ in final breath Jesus commands my destiny No power of land, no scheme of man

Can ever pluck me from His hand Till He returns or calls me home Till He returns or calls me home Here in the power of Christ I'll stand No power of hell, no scheme of man Can ever pluck me from His hand Till He returns or calls me home Here in the power of Christ I stand This is the word of God

[ 50 : 26 ] In 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 13 ■ ■■ ■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■ ■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■■

■■ ■■■ ■■ ■■■■■ ■■ Again, everybody for gathering together to worship So encouraging two invitations One that was planned Come and share some food with us We're looking forward to that

But also Wednesday From 6 o'clock till 7 o'clock We have a praise and prayer event We love to have people gather To worship and to pray with us For one another and for our city So if you have an hour on Wednesday

Please join us Thank you Thank you Thank you .

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 53 : 27 ] Thank you.

Thank you.