

The worship of the future

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Preacher: Rev.Prof. F. Dalrymple-Hamilton

[0 : 0 0] verse 1. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a homeless swallow and nest for herself, where she may lay her young.

At your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God, blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise, verse 10. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God and dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield. He bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in you. And then to John's Gospel, chapter 4, verse 16, following.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, Go call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You are right in saying, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and him who you have now is not your husband.

This you said truly. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain. And you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus said to her, Woman, Believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem you will worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know.

[2 : 3 1] For salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For such the Father seeks to worship him.

God is spirit. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. God is spirit. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ.

When he comes, he will show us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he.

May the Lord bless the earth's readings. May we be to his praise and to his glory. May we be to his glory.

The next verse says this. He had to pass through Samaria. That's a very significant statement.

[4 : 0 5] He didn't have to go by Samaria. Indeed, no Orthodox Jew would have gone through Samaria for reasons that we'll discover in a minute. The normal way of going from Jerusalem was to go east to the Jordan Valley, right up to Beth-shan, and then into Galilee.

But this scripture says he had to pass through Samaria. It's normal when preachers preach their sermon that right at the end they come to words of application.

But I'm going to break that tradition and say to you that there is a word of application here. And the reason that Jesus broke with Orthodox Judaism in going through Samaria was that he had in his mind and in his heart to speak to this woman and to win her for the Christian gospel.

But there are two other barriers, boundaries, boundaries that Jesus overcame in this action.

The first of these boundaries is that he spoke with a woman. Now to us that's quite normal.

[5 : 46] But not in the Judaism of our Lord's time. No woman, no married woman, would go outside of the house without her husband.

Any woman found on the streets by herself would be there for entirely different reasons. So he broke the boundary.

He spoke to a woman. The second aspect of this is that she was a Samaritan.

Now who are the Samaritans? In 2 Kings chapter 18, you find that the entire northern part of Israel is carried away to Assyria, never to return.

These are the people that Amos and Hosea and others ministered to. And instead of the people of Israel dwelling there, the Assyrians brought their own people.

[6 : 58] And it is they who live there now. It is they who lived in Galilee. It is they who intermarried with anybody who remained of the former Israel population.

So as far as the Orthodox Jew is concerned, these people are unclean. They are unlovable. And here's your second word of application.

Who are the unlovable people today? Are they Samaritans? No, they're not. But they're the people who readily are outside our remit of thinking.

They're the drug dealers, the drug addicts, the homeless, the destitute, the prostitutes. These are the unlovable people.

And what this gospel calls us to do, and I take this to myself before I speak to you, is to break the boundary of respectability and win these people for the gospel.

[8 : 20] First of all then, an appreciation of worship. She says, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. And you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

So to understand what's going on here, let's go back a few verses to verses 5 and 6. And there we get the locality where all of this is going on.

So Jesus came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well.

This city called Sychar is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament. It is, however, near the biblical city of Shechem.

Shechem is 30 miles from Jerusalem. So you could understand how Jesus would be wearied with this long walk.

[9 : 33] It was generally reckoned that if you were going from Jerusalem to Galilee, you were looking at a journey that would take you two or three days.

And here we are at Sychar. We're here at Jacob's well. And there's no mention of Jacob's well either in the New Testament, in the Old Testament. But there is a reference to Jacob camping in this vicinity in Genesis 33, verse 18.

Now, there are two different terms in Greek that describe to us the nature of this well. And they occur, both of them, in this particular narrative.

The first term is called pegi, which means a fountain, or a natural spring. And that's what this well was. The second term is ferar, and this means a shaft or a pit.

Both of these designations are accurate because you can go to this well today. It's one of the best attested archaeological sites in Israel.

[10 : 45] And if you go there and want to get to the bottom, you are looking at a drop of 135 feet. This is where Jesus began this conversation with the woman in which he gave the command, go, call your husband, and come here.

She responds to this by saying, he responds to this by saying, the fact that she said, I have no husband. You are right in saying, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and he whom you have now is not your husband.

This you said truly. And mark this, there's no element of legalism in the way that our Lord deals with this woman. So she goes on.

The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. So she now tells him that she's a worshiper of God. She says this, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

What she's talking about is the tradition that the Samaritans had. In the book of Deuteronomy, you will find there is a law repeatedly stated and stated and stated again the place which the Lord will choose for the sanctuary.

[12 : 28] It's called the law of the one sanctuary. The Jews understood this to apply to Mount Moriah where the temple had been built towards the north side, northeast side of Jerusalem.

You can still see that today except that the Dome of the Rock occupies the site. But the Samaritans said, No, it's not Moriah. It's a mountain in the north of Israel called Mount Gerizim.

And it's at the foot of this mountain that this well is to be found. So our concept of worship, you see, is bound by the tradition in which she was brought up.

The worship of the past. The worship of the patriarch Jacob. Because the Samaritans believed that it was really in this northern mountain that people were meant to worship God, this Mount Gerizim.

They erected a temple. But it was destroyed by one of the predecessors of Herod the Great in BC 129. So the historical tradition refers to the past.

[13 : 53] But then she goes on and says, You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

And she's clearly thinking here of the Jerusalem temple with all its splendor of its sacrifices, its Levitical choirs, its priests who were dressed in the finest of raiment and all the rest of it.

And she probably expected that Jesus being a prophet from Judea would agree with her. But this is what he says.

In the Gospel of John you'll find there are many sayings that are introduced by the term woman. And people who look at the Gospels and are not sympathetic to them say it's a terrible way to address a lady.

In actual fact the correct translation isn't woman but madam. Madam, believe me the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem you will worship the Father.

[15 : 07] This is not what she expected. This is something new. There's a new dimension being talked about here that she'd never ever thought about. So let's go on.

The development of worship. You worship what you do not know said Jesus we worship what we do know for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for such the Father seeks to worship him.

And he introduces it by saying this the hour is coming and now is.

A new dispensation is coming. And you will find that this phrase the hour is coming and now is is actually used twice in the gospel of John.

Here the hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for such the Father seeks to worship him. And in the next chapter verse 25 he says truly truly I say to you the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear it will live.

[16 : 39] So what's he talking about now? Not just a new dimension of worship but a new hope for the future.

He's talking about the resurrection because he goes on in the some more verses in chapter five do not marvel at this for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

So here are two aspects of this new age that's coming. A new age of spiritual worship and a new age that will give people hope beyond the grave.

The resurrection of life. But what we have to understand is that both of these things are to be realized in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

John 14 6 he says I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father but by me.

[18 : 05] In other words he's saying here I am the one that creates the initiative for you and me to worship God.

It's equally true that the truth of the resurrection is also to be found in Jesus. He said at the grave of Lazarus I am the resurrection and the life.

He who believes in me though he die yet shall he live. So the person of Jesus is coming to introduce a new dimension a new dispensation and how rich it is.

God is doing and telling her this is to make her aware of a new dimension of living which has nothing to do with the traditions of the past but on his living person.

Notice how he describes them in verse 23. the hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers they are guided by the living presence of Jesus who has risen from the dead.

[19 : 30] And if you want to know what that was like go to the Acts of the Apostles right at the end of chapter 2 and day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their houses they partook of food with glad and generous heart praising God and having favor with all the people.

So the worship of the early church was magnetic in its character. And so the result was the Lord added to the number day by day those who were being saved.

So why is it that the worship of the early church was magnetic? Why did it have such an effect on the ordinary people? And the answer is this, that the worship of the early church, its ministry, its gospel, the way they went about it, was meeting the needs of the people in a way that the established religion of the temple never did.

And if we want to take this to heart, we take it to this building. This building will meet the needs of people who are untouched by established religion.

Jesus goes on and he says to the woman, for such the father seeks to worship him.

[21 : 08] And indeed, when the woman goes, in verse 28, the woman left her water jar and went away into the city and said to the people, come see a man who told me that all I ever did, all that I ever did.

Can this be the Christ? They went out of the city and were coming to him. Verse 39, many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

So when the Samaritans came, they asked him to stay with them and he remained there a further two days. They said to the woman, it is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

So the purpose of Jesus coming into the world is to find the lost and save them. But it's also to seek out worshipers for God the Father.

We have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world, 1 John 4.14. At the scene of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, the Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost.

[22 : 36] Jesus Christ is on this planet today and he seeks worshippers. If you are ever in Peebles and you go into the sweet shop in the high street, it's actually owned by one of the elders of the inner lead in Paris church.

And you look up to the right and there's a little panel and it says, Carpenter from Nazareth seeks joiners.

He seeks worshippers. Finally, God is a spirit. This is the liberty of worship. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

So, Jesus deliberately chose to go to Galilee via the province of Samaria so that he could win this woman to salvation by his life and ministry.

The woman left her water jar and went away into the city and said to the people, come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?

[23 : 59] So, this woman had been transformed from whatever state she might have been in to being an evangelist to the city of Syca.

And this had taken place because the Lord had revealed to the woman who he was. Verses 25 and 26, the woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ, when he comes he will show us all things.

Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Now, see what's happened in this conversation which Jesus had with this Samaritan woman.

She's been repeating to him what she's been taught from her youth. Messiah is coming. her and the truth of that tradition and the truth of that tradition is that he, standing in front of her, is the Messiah, carried out by the ministry of Jesus and the Spirit of God speaking to that woman.

Now, that is precisely what we're about in the preaching of the gospel today. We present the claims of the risen Jesus to those who will listen to our message in the very same way that Jesus did when he spoke to the Samaritan woman.

[25 : 43] That is why we have a challenge. And the challenges there in Mark's gospel go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.

It's a message for all peoples, all nations, and for all who will respond to it. And when Paul writes to the letter to the Romans, he gives you a series of questions in Romans 10, 14.

How are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?

And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? And the answer to these questions is given, again by the apostle, quoting Isaiah 52, verse 7.

As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news. And from this series of questions, and from that scriptural statement, he now comes to a conclusion, and it's a very important conclusion.

[27 : 09] Faith comes from what is heard, heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.

So in other words, when we preach the gospel, the power of God is in it to create faith, belief in the possibility for the person who's outside of Christ that life could be so much better.

That's what is happening here. This verse reinforces what we say about the ministry of the gospel. He writes to the Corinthians and he says this, the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

The power to do what? The power to bring you into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. The power to say to you, your sins are forgiven.

And he goes on and he says this, it pleases God through the folly of what we preach to save those that believe.

[28 : 31] So the hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him.

God is spirit. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And so we worship God, not based on the traditions of the past, nor on the established religion still in our midst, but we worship God as we are led by the spirit of God.

Those who worship him must worship him in spirit. and the truth. Amen.