

Our Spiritual Need, Part 2

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, there are few things more awkward in life than attending a church with a very different worship style to the one you're used to. Do you know what I'm talking about? Have you ever been in that situation?
- Let's say, for example, you grew up in a non-hand-raising church, a church where worship is very much like regimented, kind of a parade ground where everybody keeps their arms safely at their sides.
- Have you been in a church like that? Maybe you grew up in a church like that. And if that's the case, if that's how worship happened, and then you visit another church that has a very different worship style that maybe is on the opposite side of the spectrum, where people aren't just raising their hands during worship, but shock, horror, some are even moving their feet.
- And you're very uncomfortable and you don't know what to do, because if you raise your hands to fit into the crowd, you kind of feel like a fraud. That's not what you're used to, that's not you. And yet if you don't raise your hands, if you don't do anything, then you're going to stand out like a sore thumb.
- And maybe one of those over-enthusiastic door stewards are going to harass you afterwards, because they're going to notice. And so what do you do? Well, typically we settle for some kind of arms at the sides thing, you know, just a middle ground.
- [1 : 1 2] Or, you know, the very common holding the salad bowl worship style. And so, typically, you settle for a middle ground. Now, of course, you might be a hand raiser yourself, and you might have the opposite situation.
- You might be in a non-hand raising church, and then you also, you kind of, you want to go all out, but you know you can't, and so you settle also for some middle ground. But it's uncomfortable, it's awkward, isn't it?
- And you actually don't get to concentrate on what you're singing at all. And it happens often, because the truth is, every church has its own way of worshiping. Every church that you visit has its own style, and its own approach to worship, which might not be what you're used to.
- And also, churches are different in their worship, not only in how people express themselves, and how people express their worship, but also in the choice of music, what kind of music the church plays, the instruments that are used, the amount of time spent in worship.
- Churches differ widely on these things. And sadly, worship in a church has become quite a battleground. It's become quite a center of hostility between churches, and even within churches.
- [2 : 2 4] People have left churches over their worship, which is a very sad situation to be in. You know, the thing that's supposed to bring us together in common cause actually causes Christians and churches often to split apart.

And so how do we resolve the differences, the very important differences in worship? How do we find out the right way to worship? What is the right way to worship? Is it just a matter of personal taste, or does God have a preference?

Because after all, we are coming to worship God. It's directed to God, and so has anybody asked, how does God want us to worship Him? It's a good question, isn't it? Well, if you've ever wondered that, that's a question that this morning's passage actually answers for us.

How does God want us to worship Him? As I said, it's the second half of the conversation Jesus is having with the Samaritan woman. And because He's a Jew and she's a Samaritan, it's not long before their conversation turns to the topic of worship, and what is the correct way to worship?

Because that topic was as much of a source of tension then than it is today. Specifically for them, not so much the style of worship, but the place of worship was the big controversy of the day.

[3 : 41] Jews held that Jerusalem was the right place to come and approach God and worship, while Samaritans held that it was this place called Mount Gerizim where they had built their temple, which was in visual range of this well.

They probably were looking at the mountain when they were talking. And there were arguments actually from the Old Testament for both sites as the correct place of worship.

The thing is, the Samaritans only read the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, and from that they argued that Mount Gerizim was the place. But the Jews who read the rest of the prophets and the writings, they held it was Jerusalem.

So there was this tension. We could go into the reasons why, but we can do that in Bible study in the week to come. But the question that comes out of this is, what is God's opinion?

That's what the woman is asking Jesus. Where and how does he want people to worship him? And so she asks him because she's kind of picked up that Jesus knows things.

[4 : 41] Jesus knows things that ordinary humans don't know, which we've seen in the last section, last week. And so she asks him, hoping that he can give her the answer, finally settle the argument of the right place to worship.

But listen to how he does answer. It's a very elusive, interesting answer. From verse 21. Woman, Jesus replied, believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

And then he explains why in verse 23. Listen, a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

Okay, so what Jesus is saying here is very important for us. Because he's saying worship isn't about what we think worship is about.

It isn't really about the where or the how, which we tend to get so hung up on. When we think worship, we think it's going to a place, church, and doing a particular thing in a particular style, singing songs.

[5 : 49] Jesus says, no, no, worship, true worship is actually about something much more important than the where and the how. True worship, as Jesus puts it, is about what he calls spirit and truth.

That's how he defines what true worship really is. And it's people who worship in that way who God is looking for in this world. That's quite something.

And if that's true, if God is looking for people who worship truly in this way that he's talking about, then it's our job this morning to put down our phones and Facebook and whatever games you might be playing and to concentrate on what this is saying and to find out just what on earth Jesus means by worshiping in spirit and truth.

Because if that is who God is looking for in this world, then there's really nothing more important than making sure that that is describing you and me.

And so to do that, we're going to look at each of the three main words used in that phrase. That's how we're going to tackle this. When Jesus is to worship in spirit and in truth.

[7 : 03] To understand what he means, we need to go in depth into those words. So put your thinking caps on and get ready to go into depth. We need to understand what he's saying properly so that each of us can ask ourselves, are we at St. Mark's the kind of worshippers that the Father is seeking?

Are we? Well, let's have a look. Firstly, worship. The word worship. What does worship actually mean? Let's think about that. What does it mean to be a worshipper of someone or something?

Well, literally, the word worship, it's quite easy to understand where it comes from in the English because it means worth-ship. That's literally what the English word worship comes from.

Worth-ship. It's to acknowledge the worth of something or someone. It's to acknowledge their importance in your life. So it's not just a religious word. In fact, we use it in secular society.

We use the word worship to refer to people in important positions. Did you know magistrates in South Africa, the correct term is to refer to them as your worship?

[8 : 10] Because let's be honest, if you're a criminal standing in a court before a magistrate, that magistrate is important in your life at that moment. You can't deny. They get to decide your fate.

And so by you acknowledging their importance in your life and by you submitting to their authority in that courtroom, you are effectively worshipping them. And that is an act of worship. You are giving them worth.

You are saying, okay, I'm going to listen to you. You're important. You get to decide whether I go to jail or not. Even though you might not be breaking into jubilant song and raising your hands in the courtroom, you are still recognizing the value of that person and their influence on your life.

Because that is what worship really means. It's not just singing. It's much more than singing. It's any acknowledgement of something that's important in your life. And so what do you worship?

Think about that. What do you express importance in your life about? What do you acknowledge as important in your life? What people?

[9 : 15] What things? And of course, that can be expressed in many different ways. How you value something can be expressed in a lot of ways apart from singing, which is what we normally associate worship with.

But I hope you see it's much more than that. In fact, in the Bible, do you know the most common expression of worship? It's not singing. Singing is part of it.

But the most common way in the Bible that people express their worship of something is in sacrifice. You see, when Israel gathered to express their importance of God in their lives, what did they do?

They made sacrifices, didn't they? They made sacrifices to show God and to show each other that God is valuable to them, more valuable than the things they're sacrificing, which were very expensive, by the way.

That's how they show that God was worth something to them by sacrificing. But it's not just them. It's not just ancient Israel. If you think about it, that is the primary way we express our worship of anything in our lives.

[10 : 21] We show that we value something or someone in our lives by how much we're willing to sacrifice time and money and effort for that. You know, sure, I can say with my words that I value something or someone.

I can say that I value my spouse, for example. But unless I show that in sacrifice, in actually giving my time and effort towards my spouse, then my words mean nothing. I can write a card saying, my love, I adore you with all my heart.

But if I'm actually spending more time and energy on my car than on my spouse, then that's what I actually adore. See, so the words of worship mean nothing unless it's backed up and proven by sacrifice in our daily lives.

And so I ask you again, what do you worship in your life? What do you give yourself to most? What do you give time and effort and energy to mostly?

What absorbs you and your resources? What do you worship, really? It calls for a lot of self-reflection, doesn't it?

[11 : 31] Each of us need to sit back and think, what do I actually worship? Yes, I sing songs to God on a Sunday. As Christians, we say we worship God because we come to church and spend time in worship.

But do we really? How much do we sacrifice to him during the week? Because that is how worship is truly seen. That is how we see whether what we say on Sunday is true or not.

See, worship is more than singing. Singing is really just lip service if worship isn't sacrificial as well. And that's why Paul writes in Romans 12, 1, for example, Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, because this is your true and proper worship.

So even in the New Testament, worship isn't singing. Worship is sacrifice. And so the first thing we've got to do this morning is rethink what we understand worship to be.

If we're going to understand this phrase Jesus uses about worship, we need to redefine worship in our minds. Because typically we're programmed to think worship equals singing, but it's not.

[12 : 40] And we've got to ask ourselves, what do we really worship in our lives? Is it really God? And what we find out when we reflect on ourselves, let's be honest, is that often it's not God that we are worshipping mostly in our lives.

Even though God gives us everything we have, even though God gives us the life we have every day, And he gives us every breath, and he gives us our food, and he gives us our opportunities, And he gives us everything.

And so he should be the most valuable thing in our lives. Yet, as Romans 1 tells us, Romans 1, What we tend to do is we worship and serve created things rather than the Creator.

That is what the Bible says is our tendency of all of us. We tend to focus our time and energy and effort and thought on things that God has given us, Or people that God has given us, rather than the God who gave them to us.

So why do we do that? Why is our tendency to worship created things rather than the Creator? Why don't we give God the worship he really deserves in our lives?

- [13 : 47] Because let's be honest, none of us really do. Well, the reason is quite simple but surprising. And we find it in verse 24 of this passage. Have a look.
- Jesus says something strange. He says, God is spirit. Let's just stop there. God is spirit.
- And that leads us to the second word we need to understand this morning. Spirit. What does it mean that God is spirit? And how does that affect or impede our worship of him?
- You see, in the Bible, spirit, as an adjective, Refers to anything that is not able to be perceived by our physical senses. Invisible. Untouchable.
- You can't see it. You can't perceive it physically. You know, when we talk about a person's spirit, what are we talking about? We're talking about that non-physical part of them.
- [14 : 45] Because everybody has a non-physical part. Something that can't be measured, right? Something that can't be seen. Or touched. Because, you know, a person is far more than just what they are physically.
- Someone once worked out the value of a human based just on the materials and chemicals in our bodies. And, you know, it comes to something like 2,000 rand.
- Just over. That's how much you are worth just physically. When you count up all the oxygen and magnesium and potassium and stuff in your body. Just over 2,000 rand.
- That's not a lot, is it? By the way, the biggest proportion of that 2,000 rand comes from the potassium in your body. The most valuable part of it. And so, if you want to become more valuable, just keep eating those bananas.
- But, of course, we know that's actually not what determines a person's value, is it? A person is far more than just what we are physically.
- [15 : 45] There is a non-physical part of us that makes us who we are. That science can't measure. That you can't dissect on the operating table. And that is our spirit.
- That is the spiritual part of us. Which is as real, as important as the physical. More important than the physical. Because if you're just a body lying on a gurney, dead.
- You're really not valuable at all, are you? No, it's the spirit which makes you who you are. The unseeable, the non-physical, but the important and real part of you.
- And so, for Jesus to say God is spirit. What he's saying is that God is completely non-physical in his essence, in his nature. In other words, God can't be perceived or measured by our bodily senses or by science.
- And he can't be accessed through physical means. Like this woman, this was this woman that Jesus was talking to. Her problem was thinking that God can be accessed by going to a particular physical place.
- [16 : 50] But Jesus says, no, he can't. Because he's not physically accessible. He's not physically perceivable. God is spirit. But that is why we struggle to worship him.
- Think about it. Because he is spirit. You know, it's easy to worship physical things. Things that we can see. Things that we can perceive. And we can perceive their value in our lives.
- But we struggle to give as much worth to God who we can't see. We forget about him. He doesn't seem to have an imminent role in our daily life. Because he's not right in front of us physically.
- As much as the physical things are that distract us. And take our attention. And take our energy and resources. And so it's because God is spirit that we actually struggle to concentrate on him and worship him.
- And that is why Jesus says what he says in verse 24. God is spirit. And so his worshippers must worship in spirit.

[17 : 52] Or in the spirit. Depending on your translation. In other words. Only when God's Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life.

And brings you into real relationship with God. Which is what his spirit does. Only then when you have that spiritual connection to God. Through his spirit. Are you really able to worship him?

Are you really able then to give him the worth and the value that he deserves in your life? It's the Holy Spirit that gives us the ability to rightly value God. Because he is spirit.

And he is inaccessible physically. You need to be able to access him spiritually. Through his spirit. And only then can you really worship him. Only then can the words that you sing on a Sunday actually be true.

When you have the spirit dwelling in you. And working in you. And directing your thoughts and attention to God. And so how does he do that?

[18 : 53] How does the spirit bring us to know and truly worship God? Well that leads us to our final word we're going to look at this morning. Which is truth.

Jesus says we need to worship God not just in the spirit. But also in truth. Because the two go hand in hand. If God is spirit.

And so he is not accessible to us through our senses. We need God to reveal himself to us if we're going to know and worship him at all. Right? If we stand Sunday morning and sing the words on the screen.

But we don't know God. If God hasn't revealed himself to us. That is all just lip service. It's all just words. We need truth about God in order to truly worship God. So we need him to reveal himself to us first.

So how does he do that? Well he's already revealed himself to us in many ways. Creation is one of them. We look around. We see the sunset. We see the mountains. We see the stars.

[19 : 55] God is revealing himself to us. We know there must be something behind all this. If we think logically. Which many people don't. But when we do think logically.

We can't but want to seek and worship the creator who made all this beautiful creation. But we don't know anything about him just by looking at creation.

We don't know his heart. We don't know who he truly is. And so we tend to stop there. And end up worshipping the creation itself. Because it's much easier to do that.

Because we do know the creation. We don't know the creator. And so we tend to focus on and worship what we see. What we do know. But we need more from God if we're going to know him and truly worship him.

And that's why he's revealed himself to us. Not just in creation. But in scripture. That's why he gave us the Bible. That's why he inspired apostles and prophets to write this.

[20 : 53] This is not just the words of men. And this is God who has used people to write down these words to reveal himself to us in a way that creation never can. In a way that we would never be able to know God through just our own senses.

And as we read scripture. For example in our evening service. Which I encourage you to come to. We're going through scripture.

We started at Genesis. We're going to end at Revelation. I don't know in a couple of years. But we're just reading through scripture. And then we're understanding it. We're working together to understand what it means.

And every time we look at it in the Old Testament. No matter what it is. It is telling a coherent story. The Bible is one coherent story. And you know what it is the story of? If you had to sum it up.

It's the story of how God saves sinners who don't deserve to be saved. How God saves people. How God saves you and me from his wrath and judgment.

[21 : 53] From our sin. That is what the Bible is the story of. And so what we discover in the Bible that we can't discover with our own senses.

Is that God is a God who saves. God is a God who saves sinners like you and me. Because look what else Jesus says to this woman in verse 22. And this is quite interesting.

He says. Verse 22. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know. For salvation is from the Jews.

Salvation is from the Jews. Meaning that it's through the Jewish people that God chose to reveal his desire to save people.

His desire to save sinners. He's revealed through the Jewish people. Ultimately. Of course. By the primary Jew.

[22 : 51] That all Judaism points towards. Which is Jesus Christ. His son. Coming to fulfill all the Jewish prophecies. And then dying for us so we could have our sins forgiven. That is how God has revealed his salvation.

But do you notice in this verse. What's interesting. Is knowledge about God. We worship what we know. How do you know. Well because salvation came through the Jews.

So knowledge. Comes through understanding salvation. We know God. We only know God. Truly when we. When we experience salvation from him. We can't know God apart from his salvation.

Because he is defined by. His salvation of sinners. That's who he is. And we'll never truly know his character and his heart. Unless we understand his salvation.

That is what Jesus is saying. Because it's in Jesus of course. And how he saves us. By dying in our sins.

[23 : 47] That we see God in all his glory. If you want to know God. Look at the cross. Because it's on the cross of Jesus Christ. When he gave himself. Sacrificially to die. For sinners who didn't deserve it.

And yet at the same time. God the father. Judged all sin. That we see. On the cross alone. We see. The perfect justice of God. Meeting the perfect mercy and love of God.

Which you find nowhere else. And so it's on the cross of Jesus. That we see God in all his glory. And we get to know him. It's in Jesus. And what he did.

That the unknowable God. Becomes knowable. That's why Jesus came to earth. To make the unknowable God. Who is spirit. Who we can't detect. With our senses.

To make him knowable. And show him to us. In his full glory. So that we can worship him. And so we can't worship God apart from Jesus.

[24 : 44] We can't worship God apart from looking at the cross. And understanding what happened there. And trusting that. And where do we get to know that?

Where do we get to look at the cross? Is there one here that. No. No. I can't see one. Where do we look at the cross? Where do we look at Jesus? In the Bible. It's as we open the Bible.

That we see. God in all his glory. So that we can worship him. And so. That is the key. To true worship. Not whether we raise our hands. Or not.

Not. The music we play. Or how fast the tempo is. Or whether they're drums or not. Which I highly recommend. But that's not the point. You see. Worship is not about all that.

And that's not how we come to experience God. We can have the best instruments. In the world. We can have the best musicians. In the world. Which we've got close to. Besides the drummer. And we can have.

[25 : 39] We can have lights. And sounds. Like many churches have invested millions. In their lighting. And they've even got smoke machines. But that is not how we come to experience God.

At all. We experience God in the Bible. That is where we experience. God. God. And that is. That is where we learn about him. So that we can truly worship him from our heart.

In the Bible. As we read the Bible. And discover God. In all his glory. And that's why it grieves me. I once went to a.

A church service. And I was grieved by the end of it. Because it sang songs for about 50 minutes. And it had a 10 minute sermon. Sermonette. And that grieves me.

Because what we see here in this passage. Is that true worship. Comes from opening the truth about God. True worship must be. Based on truth. And that's why. If we're going to worship God.

[26 : 34] We've got to spend time in his word. That's why at this church. We spend so much time in God's word. Because that is how you come to experience God. Nowhere else. But that's not just on Sundays.

As well. But in your daily life. You experience God. Not through sitting and meditating. And watching the birds in the trees. And feeling warm fuzzies.

You experience God. As you open his word. And get to know him. And what he's done for you. That is how you truly experience God. Through his word.

And nowhere else. You wonder why you struggle to worship God. On Sundays. Maybe that's because you keep the Bible closed. Mondays to Saturdays. Jesus says.

A time is coming. And has now come. When the true worshipers. Will worship the Father. In the spirit. And in truth. For they are the kind of worshipers. The Father seeks.

[27 : 29] They are the kind of worshipers. The Father is seeking. Present tense. So God is right now on a mission. God is right now in the business. Of seeking true worshipers. In this world.

God doesn't want people. Who just sing songs to him. He wants people who have tasted his salvation. And gladly. In response. Give of themselves. Sacrificially to him.

That is who he is seeking. How many of those people will he find here at St. Mark's? I wonder. And he is seeking. Those true worshipers.

Not only here. But there. Out there. In the world. In Plumstead. In the Southfield. God is seeking people. Who come to value him. And who he truly is.

In their lives. And I have got to ask you. Do you want that? Do you want. People out there. To worship God. Do you really want that? Well. Because if you worship God.

[28 : 25] If you truly know God. And have come to worship him. As the most valuable thing. In your life. You can't but want other people. To come experience that. Because that is what worship actually is. Worship.

When we worship something. When we experience. Something amazing. We want to share that with other people. We want other people to experience. That same thing.

And so do you want God to be worshipped. By other people. Do you want him to be worshipped. By the people out there. Well if that is ever going to happen. Then they need to know. About his salvation in Jesus Christ.

That is the only way. They will ever come to worship him. When they hear the truth about him. So are we going to take it to them. Are you going to take it to them. Do we really desire.

For God to be worshipped. And are we going to make. The sacrifices necessary. For that to happen. No matter how costly. They are. Well let's pray.

[29 : 24] That that would be the case. As we go into a new week. Let's pray. Yes Lord. We thank you for. Again for Jesus. And this conversation. He had with this woman.

Through which we can learn. So much about ourselves. And about what it means. To truly worship you. We do ask that you would help us. To know you. To open your word on a daily basis.

So that we can know you. So that we can worship you in truth. Lord help us. To be convinced. Of the great delight and joy. In worshipping you. Help us. To remember that we were made.

To enjoy you. And worship you. And so we pray. That you would help us. To look to Jesus. Help us to know Jesus. Help us to trust. Jesus. And when we come back.

Next week. On Sunday. To sing songs. Would we be. Worshipping from our heart. Not just. Paying your lip service. Help us Lord.

[30 : 21] To truly value you. As the most important thing. In our lives. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.