

Being spiritual is **cool** right now in America.

Culturally speaking.....To be a **spiritual** person is to be someone with **DEPTH**.... Someone who transcends the ordinary commute....and monotony of life. Someone who....through various means..... has come to possess a mystical quality that makes them on a different plain....than the rank and file population that lives for their next buzz or their next promotion..... or both.

- But what exactly does it mean to **BE** spiritual?

Does it come through the type of exercises you do..... or by some special incense you burn while listening to music? Or is it rooted in what you abstain from.... or what ancient guru's you have studied...?

Does it come from going to church? or saying certain words in a prayer? Does it come from achieving a certain level of **MORALITY**....?

Jesus is going to give us the **TRUE** answer of the question for us today as we study the continuation of His encounter with the woman at the well....

True Spiritual Worship

If you were here last week, you recall that Corey taught us that the course of Jesus' life and ministry taken an intentional **detour**.... through a land populated by what His people would have called "half-breed **dogs**." He went there particularly because God had decided (before the foundation of the world) to save a certain woman...and through that woman... to save many people from the town where she lived.

She was a woman of the lowest sort.... (for not only was she a Samaritan – bad enough) but she was also a woman of **ill reputation** for her immoral lifestyle...

(as we saw last week) Jesus points out that her immorality was a transgression of God's holy law...

He prophetically called her on the **carpet**.... in order that she might get gut level honest before God.... and see her need for a Savior....

- Same thing He does for us, right? If He doesn't convict us of our sin..... then we just keep life on cruise control..... staying with **whatever works** to keep us afloat....

After Jesus put His divine finger on the depth of this woman's spiritual need..... here is how she responded:

John 4:19-26

"The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a **prophet**.

Our fathers **worshiped** on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is **the place where people ought to worship.**” Jesus said to her, “Woman, **believe me**, the hour is coming when **neither** on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for **salvation is from the Jews.**

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the **true worshipers** will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for **the Father is seeking such people to worship him.** 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 he comes, he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “**I who speak to you am he.**””

Whether or not you walked in here this morning **feeling** spiritual..... Regardless of whether it has ever been your goal to BECOME spiritual.....

If you are going to KNOW and relate to GOD (at all)....He wants to explain to you today ... the only WAY anyone can actually worship Him.....

True Spiritual Worship

1. Hinges on the **Identity** of Jesus Christ

Who you believe Jesus to be... is of far greater significance than who you understand **yourself** to be....

Who you understand Jesus to be..... is infinitely more important than ANYTHING you have, or ever will study in school.....

His identity is more important than knowing the person you are married to... or may one day marry....

This woman... was just chipping away at the edge of the iceberg...of Jesus’s identity.... when she said to Him:

John 4:19

“Sir, I **perceive** that you are a prophet.”

That is about like you meeting Cam Newton, and saying to him...”Man I think you might be a football player...”

Jesus had put His finger on the very CORE of her sin problem.... so she recognizes that He must be a prophet... sent to speak to her about her **sin**....

What is most interesting, however, is that Samaritans (like this woman) did not believe that God had sent **any** prophets to His people since Moses had died.....

And that there would not be any more **until** Messiah came...

So a little later.....Jesus reveals to her the very truth that had been obscured from the most religious leaders of the day in the Jerusalem temple.....just a few days earlier...

John 4:25-26

"The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us **all** things." Jesus said to her, "**I who speak to you am he.**"

In the original language (Greek) this book was written in..... **WORD order** is determined by what the writer wants to STRESS the most

Original – "Jesus says to her: **I AM.** (the one speaking to you)

Jesus is God made flesh....

Jesus is the Prophet promised by Moses.... He is the **PRIEST** who would intercede for God's people with the sacrifice of Himself.... and here He admits.... He is the **ANNOINTED King**... (Messiah) sent to **rule** over God's people **through His Word.**

If any human being is going to actually **RELATE** to and **WORSHIP** God.... it **ONLY** happens through faith in the full **REALITY** of Who Jesus claims to be...

So, when you worship God through faith in the **PERSON** of Jesus Christ.... when you believe what His Word says that you are a sinner.... and that the stain of your sin... can only be **WASHED** clean.....

By you trusting in the **BLOOD** of Jesus... poured out on the cross..... as He died in **YOUR** place....

Taking upon Himself all the wrath that your sin deserved.....

So that **GOD** becomes satisfied.... that your **SIN DEBT** is paid in full..... His wrath (which your disobedience churned up in Him....was **SPENT** on Jesus)...

So that 3 days later... as God raised Jesus from the dead..... He could gladly **COUNT** you as righteous!

He could now **THINK** of you as **JUSTIFIED**..... as possessing the perfect Life which Jesus lived.... as your own merit before God.....

And that **JESUS** is now seated at the right hand of God,... making intercession for you.... being your **PRIEST**... your mediator.....your **KING**....

You **ARE** worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth.....

I wanted to set you free from thinking you have to ADD on to the gospel... as making you sufficient before God.....

All heresy within Christianity is the gospel + something.....

All TRUE Spiritual worship....is very **SIMPLE**.....

It takes place THROUGH actively believing... trusting in.... the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you believe that.....(as we said on New Years day)... you now worship in the NEW Temple.....

You are **no longer** a stranger or an alien... but you have been adopted into the very household of God!....

And that ought to make you **HAPPY!** The Spirit makes you THANKFUL.... as **that** GOODNESS of God becomes your operating system....

And you want to worship all the more.....in the CAR... in your conversations at work... or at school..... you want to FELLOWSHIP with others who are happy in the gospel!

So that... you find within your heart.... a DESIRE.... to **turn away** from sin.....

and to Present your body before the LORD.... as a living sacrifice.... ready to do whatever He asks....

Because He has died for you..... your only fitting response is to want to LIVE for Him.

Romans 12:1

" I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual** worship."

That's the essence of true... Spiritual worship.....

It ONLY happens through **faith** in the TRUE reality of who Jesus is...

The lady here at the well.....does not yet GRASP that reality.... so she asks Jesus a **RELIGIOUS** question... She still thought that worshiping God was a matter of going to the right **PLACE**....

John 4:20-22

"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "**Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.**

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."

- 1) She had **bad doctrine**....
- 2) Her bad doctrine was the result of not believing **all** of the Scripture.....
(therefore she worshiped in ignorance)
- 3) Her not believing all of the Scripture was the result of something like a church split.

Some 900 years earlier....

(map)

After Solomon's death.....The ten northern tribes revolted from being under the reign of Rehoboam (Solomon's son) and formed the Kingdom of Israel....(Northern Kingdom)

Remember that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea.... He was a **Jew**....

But he had grown up in Nazareth...and had now come into the land of Samaria to meet this woman...

Samaritans had never been taught to believe or esteem any part of the Hebrew Scriptures other than the first 5 books (Pentateuch – LAW)...

BECAUSE, the first King of this new northern Kingdom..... decided that he did not want Israelites crossing the border to go down to Jerusalem to worship.....

So they conveniently concluded that God REALLY meant for them to worship on Mt. Gerazim....(which was in plain view of where Jesus and the woman are now sitting)...

And they also concluded that all the rest (of what we call the OT) was **invalid**.....

Because all of the rest of the OT pointed to Jerusalem as the PLACE where God would cause His Name to dwell...

And the PLACE where His people would come.... (under the OLD agreement) to worship Him...

So...its understandable.... that this woman says.... if I am going to think about **getting right** with GOD....

- I first need to know WHOSE religion is right....**ours** or yours?

often happens today when a married couple begins to be convicted of their sin...whose religious practices are CORRECT anyway... the ones you grew up with or mine?

Jesus sets her free with some good news.....

True Spiritual Worship

2. Is not a Religious Activity

I am using the term religion here.... to refer to the understanding that the worship of God is mainly an **external** act. It is a FORMAL activity..... that you do....maybe one day a week..... or maybe you do it every day at a certain time....

Maybe you pray certain prayers.... or go to a certain place..... or abstain from certain foods...

But it is a DISTINCT... **outward** activity that you PERFORM **for** God.... in hope of earning His favor....

Religion by nature produces hypocrites... because no one can serve God in the power of the flesh...

Religion is a **SEPARATE**... slice of your life.... which you feel you HAVE to do.....Religion is a **DUTY**.

When we lived in South Florida.... several of our neighbors were Muslim. They always talked about it as “the religion..” It is a good religion... ..but then they would go on to talk about the more **lively** parts of their life.....

You may not be Muslim.... but I’ll venture to say that is the way **some** of you relate to God....

You go through (what you believe to be) just the **right formalities**.... in order to get him off your back.... or at least **feel better** about your standing with Him.....

PROBLEM:

- Your heart never finds any **satisfaction** in religion.... because religious activity is **incapable** of producing satisfaction in the human heart.....

It always leaves you feeling like you have **not done enough**....

So unless there is strong cultural or family pressure..... people will eventually ABANDON religion....and TURN to the world for happiness.

Maybe that describes you?.....

It certainly described this woman at the well...

We already saw last week that she had gone after happiness and fulfillment through **sexual immorality** with many men.

And it had left her **desperate**, lonely and **ashamed**.....

JESUS had come to her.... as He has come to you today.... to declare good news!

That the HOUR has come...for **TRUE** Spiritual worship!

Because.... the ONE through Whom all true worship comes... is now in your MIDST!

The ONE to whom all the cultic and religious practice of Israel pointed forward to is now standing here talking to you! (Jesus said)

John 4:23

"But the hour is coming, and is **now here**, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."

Did it ever occur to you....that no matter how good it makes people feel to SAY that all paths to God are the same..... that we can all pick and choose and come to God on our own terms...

That **GOD** might have a very specific way He wants His people to worship Him?

That the DESIGNER of this incredibly complex system of biology and ecology and sociology.... that we call planet earth.....where EVERY single atom fits perfectly into place.... in perfect proportions....

That **HE** might also have a perfect DESIGN for how REDEEMED sinners like us should Worship Him?

That the ONE who sent and crushed His only SON in our place might have a purpose behind **HOW** He intends for you to relate to him,.... that goes beyond... anything man could possibly come up with?

God DECIDED.... to create a family of TRUE worshipers.... by bringing them into relationship with His PERFECT Son.....

- So that through faith in the gospel..... they could be in complete **HARMONY** with Him as their Father.

Think about that for a minute.... the curse of SIN turned everything upside down.... it left us looking towards earth for what only God can do....

It distorts and taints everything in reality.... UNTIL God sets us free from sin in Christ Jesus.... so that we can be UNITED with God as our Father.

True Spiritual Worship

3. Connects us with our Father!

Some of the most heartbreaking stories I hear as a pastor.... are the stories of how some earthly fathers treated their children..... who are now adults.... and who still feel **estranged** from him.....

Often I will read or hear of men and women who have finally attempted to CONNECT with their Dad.... only to feel afterwards.....even more distant than they did before....

- Piper illustration (difference between Dads)

GOD wants us all to know... that while our earthly fathers often do the best they can.... and often failed at doing even that.....

That GOD designed you, and made you His child, so that He alone could SHOW you how a Father treats a Son.....

And He shows you that as you DELIGHT in His goodness as His worshiper....

John 4:23

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will **worship the Father** in spirit and truth, for **the Father is seeking** such people to worship him."

One of the things that I tell my kids.... is that we can talk about ANYTHING... and I won't condemn you.... I only want them to completely HONEST with me...

In an infinitely more significant way..... God your Father.... desires that you ENJOY His goodness....in complete **transparency** before Him.....

= In spirit and in truth.....

In fact, the whole REASON He sought you out..... by bringing you the gospel..... the whole reason He drew you to Himself..... is so that you could be part of His family.... that gets to delight in the infinite goodness of your FATHER.... forever.

- Did you ever consider that? That **all** the earthly activities you spend your time doing.... will perish with you when you die?..... except one.....

You who believe the gospel.... will **keep on** worshiping the Living God (in spirit and in truth) right on into eternity.....

The closing of your physical eyes in death will only be a **temporary pause**.... before you resume PRAISING God on the other side.....in Spirit.

So... as you think about worship..... think about it as **THE** activity you were made for....

Your Father has sought you to be His worshiper so that you can enjoy HIM.

In the OT... God's people related to **Abraham** as their father..... but not God....

But Jesus, God's only Son, comes telling us that no one really knows the Father except the Son... and all to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him....

Through YOUR faith in Jesus..... God likewise becomes your FATHER....

So that Jesus teaches to CONNECT with GOD through prayer He says:

Matthew 6:5-8

" "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when **you** pray, go into your room and shut the door and **pray to your Father** who is in secret. And **your Father** who sees in secret will reward you. "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for **your Father** knows what you need before you ask him."

That is **TRUE** Spiritual Worship!.....

Believing the gospel (that God sent His Son to make you His child)... so that you can relate personally and intimately with Him... as your GOOD and all protective FATHER.

It is living connection...brought about as the Holy Spirit of Truth.... reveals more and more about the character and person of God... through you taking in the Pure Spiritual MILK of His Word!

1 Peter 2:2-3

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure **spiritual** milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

God designed true spiritual worship to be fulfilling because through it, He unites your WHOLE being with Himself.

Remember the greatest commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, all your **soul** and with all **strength** and with all your **MIND**...

True Spiritual Worship integrates your whole being with God...

- **Renewed Mind** – through ingesting the milk of the Word.

– becomes renewed as (by the grace of God) you feed on the pure spiritual milk... and taste the goodness of the LORD... as you discover how SOLID a foundation He has given you in Christ Jesus...

- **Transformed Heart** – your affections become devoted exclusively towards God's goodness.

– increasingly becomes DEVOTED to and affectionate towards Christ... because of the LOVE of God poured out upon you through Him...

- **Satisfied Soul** – *through experience of being the Temple of God's Spirit*

– becomes increasingly SATISFIED...you desire to live more and more as the temple of the Most High God being filled with His Spirit....so that your joy can be made full...

- **Body** - *becomes a subservient instrument for carrying out God's will*

.. ... in your family... your church and your world... You learn to crucify the desires of the flesh because your soul is not EMPTY anymore..... like it was when you were in the flesh.

True Spiritual Worship integrates your whole being with God...

God desires this for you because He has made you in His image..... He has RECREATED you in Christ Jesus.... so that your very nature could be united with His in fellowship.

John 4:24

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The reason we don't put plaques or statues or paintings up here and ask you to bow down to them.... or pray to them....

Is because God is not BOUND by anything material.... He is SPIRIT.... because He is EVERYWHERE all at the same time.

All of creation exists WITHIN God.....

Yet... He has deposited His Holy Spirit in your soul..... so that you can transcend all of the garbled stench of a world cursed by sin.... and CONNECT with your Father....

In Spirit and in Truth.

There aren't any other options....

God has made US His people for this very PURPOSE.