

## JOHN 4:19-26

### WORSHIP—WHERE THE MASTER REVEALS HIMSELF

“The [Samaritan] woman said to [Jesus], ‘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.’”<sup>1</sup>

**F**ew church services are designed for worship. I do not make that statement merely to generate controversy or seeking to be argumentative. However, the emphasis in modern church services seems obviously focused on addressing the feelings of those present during the services of the churches rather than leading worshippers to meet the Risen Saviour. Consequently, few Christians know what it is to worship. Our feelings cannot lead us in worship; they will be stirred when we have met God, but they will not lead us to God.

Years ago, A. W. Tozer provided a powerful definition of worship; it is not a dry, dusty compilation of words, but rather it is a definition growing out of the experience of meeting God. Each Christian should assuredly identify with Tozer’s words. Tozer identified the components of worship as consisting of *boundless confidence*, *admiration*, *fascination* and *adoration*.<sup>2</sup> These are not elements that we can generate from within our lives; rather they spring spontaneously from the heart of the individual who meets the Living God. The true worshipper cannot help but be changed by meeting the Living Christ.

Briefly, think of those elements of worship. Meeting the True and Living God, we have *boundless confidence* because we know Him who called all things into being and who gives us life itself. We know His power because He saved us, forgiving us our sin and adopting us into His family. We cannot worship a God we do not respect, and respect is based upon confidence—that we know the One worshipped, certain in His character and actions. That is the God we know and serve—a God who is holy, righteous, just and unchanging.

When I speak of *admiration* as an element of worship, I mean that we appreciate the excellencies of God. We know His character, the aspects of His Being, and we are overwhelmed with awe. One hymn writer speaks of His “uncreated loveliness” and of our “astonished reverence.”<sup>3</sup> Such admiration is almost unknown among modern evangelical worshippers. How could it be otherwise when we worship a God that rarely astonishes anybody? He manages to stay pretty much within our constitutions, never breaks our by-laws, and overall He is generally a pretty well behaved God—very denominational and very much like us. We call Him to rescue us when we are in trouble and otherwise avoid interfering in our lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> A. W. Tozer, **Worship: The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church** (Christian Publications, Inc., Harrisburg, PA n.d.) 25-9)

<sup>3</sup> Frederick William Faber, cited in A. W. Tozer, **The Christian Book of Mystical Verse** (WingSpread, Camp Hill, PA 1991) 4

*Fascination* is yet another vital element in worship. When we come into the presence of the Living God, we are, in Tozer's words, "filled with moral excitement."<sup>4</sup> We are charmed and entranced, excited by the majesty of God. It is not the size of our congregation, the power of our denomination or how influential we have become that excites our attention, rather we marvel at the might and power of our God. We are enthralled by His grace and goodness, humbled by His mercy and awed by His kindness toward us. We will have a proper perspective on who we are and on who God is; we will not be overly excited by our brilliance or our power, but we will be enthralled by the splendour of God's presence.

Worship demands *adoration*—loving God with all the power that lies within us. Adoration speaks of loving God with fear and wonder and longing for His presence—longing that is so intense that it is at once painful and delightful. Such yearning for God will lead us to seek Him, at times waiting in breathless silence, and at other times crying out with intense longing. We will discover the painful cry of the Psalmist:

“You have said, ‘Seek my face.’  
My heart says to you,  
‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’  
Hide not your face from me.  
Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help.  
Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation!”

[PSALM 27:8, 9]

I suggest that worship will exhibit all these elements, and that they will be expressed spontaneously and without effort, when we are in the presence of the Risen Master. This is the reason I say that few church services are designed for worship. If worship occurs in the modern setting, it is more likely that it is accidental than deliberate. We design our efforts at worship around what is convenient for us rather than coming to the House of God prepared to wait on Him. We are more concerned about meeting our friends at the restaurant than we are about being in the presence of God. We are quite prepared to forsake the assembling of ourselves together if a friend or family member should happen into town, convinced that these temporal relationships are of greater importance than is our eternal relationship to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. We are more focused on our recreation than we are in finding rest in the presence of the Great Shepherd who leads us beside still waters so that our souls can be restored.

I am very bold to say that I want more than anything that our meeting place to be sweet with divine presence. I long for the people of God to say upon concluding our times of worship, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven” [see GENESIS 28:17]. Such will not happen until we have divested ourselves of the silly, futile notion that we must generate the right atmosphere, or perform a precisely choreographed liturgy that will induce God to attend our services according to our busy schedules. If we meet God, it will be a surprise, though we will have prepared ourselves to discover His presence. We eagerly come into this house, anticipating that we will meet Him and filled with expectation that we will witness His grace and mercy as we set aside other cares of the day to seek the face of the True and Living God.

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<sup>4</sup> Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church*, op. cit., 27

Though we can prepare to meet the Risen Saviour, it is nevertheless true that when He reveals Himself it will be on His terms and at the time of His choosing. This truth is borne out in the account of a woman who met the Living Saviour on one occasion. She was not looking for Him, nor anticipating His presence. Yet, He surprised her when He revealed Himself. Perhaps we can learn something of worship as we review the events occurring one day when a sinful woman who was not looking for the Son of God met Him and was awed by His revelation.

**EFFORTS TO WORSHIP OFTEN GROW OUT OF IGNORANCE** — “The [Samaritan] woman said to [Jesus], ‘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.’”

The Samaritans “worshipped.” They had, and still have to this day, a liturgy based loosely on the mandates of the Torah. They based their religious practise on specific liturgies such as honouring the ancient Hebrew script, the high priesthood, animal sacrifices, eating of lambs at the Passover and worship on Mount Gerizim as the place of worship the God has chosen. This latter tenet is the point the woman emphasised to the Master.

Let’s go back in our minds to the events that led up to Jesus’ encounter with this woman. Jesus had left Judea to travel to Galilee. The reason for His leaving was to avoid the potential of any perceived conflict between Himself and John the Baptist. The Pharisees were seeking any opportunity to generate conflict in the public mind, and Jesus sought to avoid such conflict. Galilee lay directly north of Judea, with Samaria situated between the two regions. To travel to Galilee, it was necessary for Jesus either to turn eastward and detour through Perea, or travel directly through Samaria. Complicating the issue was the fact that Jews generally despised the Samaritans as mongrel worshippers. The Samaritans claimed to be the spiritual descendants of Moses, and the Jews were equally convinced that the Samaritans distorted the teachings of Moses. Thus, there was enduring religiously motivated conflict between the two peoples, as becomes evident from the exchange between Jesus and this woman.

A little further explanation will assist in understanding the hostility that existed between these two religious groups. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered and exiled in 722 B.C. because the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Assyrians [see **2 KINGS 17:23, 24**]. Remnants of the defeated Israelite kingdom mixed with Persians and other conquered peoples. The paganism that had been adopted by Jeroboam as an expedient against the possibility that the people would again turn to Judah was now mixed with many other religions [**2 KINGS 17:25-41**].

However, with the passage of time, the monotheism of Judaism assumed prominence, but with significant changes. The Samaritans rejected the writings of the Prophets and the Wisdom Literature because they did not want to permit the emphasis on Judea and David’s lineage centred on Jerusalem. Their worship centred on Mount Gerizim, rejecting utterly any approval of Jerusalem as the city chosen by the LORD. In other words, their own social situation predisposed them against obedience to the remainder of Scripture.

After the Babylonian exile of Judah, Zerubbabel urged the rebuilding of the Temple, but Samaritan help was pointedly rejected. You may recall how the Samaritans, among others, asked for opportunity to help rebuilding the Temple, only to be rebuffed when the Jews said, “You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us” [**EZRA 4:2, 3**]. Obviously, this angered the Samaritans.

When Alexander the Great and the generals that followed him controlled Palestine (beginning about 330 B.C.), they chose Samaria to serve as an important base for Grecian rule. In part, this choice was prompted because they found sympathetic anti-Jewish allies there. When the Jews at last had opportunity during the Maccabean revolt, they attacked Samaria (128 B.C.), destroyed Schechem and burned the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. This history ensured smouldering hostility between these two peoples. Lying behind the hostility between Samaritans and Jews were centuries of injustice which served to exaggerate religious and racial animosity. There was no way that either side would trust the other. Jews hated Samaritans; Samaritans hated Jews.

Understanding something of this background, you will understand the hostility in the woman's exchange with Jesus. Though we cannot capture the tone of her voice, we can understand the open hostility that motivated her words. Listen to the conversation, noting in particular the hostility in this woman's response to Jesus. Thirsty from a long journey through Samaria, Jesus waited beside the well at Sychar while His disciples went into the village to see if they could purchase some food. While there, a woman came to draw water. As she prepared to draw water, the Master made a request of her, "Give me a drink."

Now, note in particular how the woman responded to this request for water. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" John adds to assist us in understanding what is going on that "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." I suggest that her response revealed hostility, because she had been raised with animosity toward Jews, and no doubt, she had been on the receiving end of Jewish hostility at other times.

Refusing to be baited, Jesus responded to her provocative answer, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." I would suggest that the woman was intrigued, but it seems more likely that she was still hostile toward this Jew seated beside the well. Thus, she responded, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

This provided Jesus with the opportunity to instruct her, capturing her full attention when He attested, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Now, her interest was definitely stirred. Thus, she said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." I suggest that for the first time she has dropped her hostility and betrayed genuine interest in what has been offered.

Notice what happens next when Jesus instructs her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." It is right back to the hostility. I do not believe her answer was merely tentative when she answered Him, "I have no husband." Rather, she was trying to avoid painful exposure of her lifestyle. However, Jesus exposed her life when He said, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

It was at this point that the smouldering anger flared and flashed again as the woman attempted to start an argument. If she could change the direction of this conversation, she would be justified in terminating what was undoubtedly painful. Therefore, she responded to the Master, "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" [account from JOHN 4:7-20].

Think of that! She wants to start a theological argument with the Master—He who gave the Word! “Look, you Jews have it all wrong. You think we should worship in Jerusalem. However, we are followers of Moses and we worship on this mountain,” undoubtedly pointing to Mount Gerizim. It is similar to the arguments that occupy so many professed Christians today. “Only Baptists go to heaven!” “Baptists worship is dead; we Pentecostals worship in the Spirit!” “Anglicans have the sense of majesty that other Christians envy and wish they could capture.” “We Presbyterians are scholarly unlike those ignorant evangelicals.”

However, we do well to hear in a fresh way Jesus’ response to this attempted diversion: “Woman, believe Me, the house is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know.” Jesus refused to be drawn into an argument of the superiority of Judaism versus Samaritan worship. He affirmed the superiority of Jewish worship when He testified, “Salvation is of the Jews.” However, He was quite positive in asserting that such distinctions would shortly be immaterial.

Where you choose to worship, the liturgy you opt to use for worship, and even the association you choose is ultimately irrelevant, because it will shortly pass away. Paul could say, “We know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” [1 CORINTHIANS 13:9-12].

I am not saying that we should not work hard within our denomination or within our own congregation—we should! I am saying that there is an unhealthy tendency to make these transient aspects of our identity of greater importance than the One whom we claim to worship. Consequently, we defend the building in which we meet, being fully prepared to destroy brother Christians because they do not value our beloved institutions. We defend our denominational identity, convinced that we are superior to all other peoples who worship the Son of God; and we are prepared to despise fellow believers because they do not think as we do or salute our flag. We defend our congregation as better than any other congregation, though it has been years since we last knew that we had been in the presence of the Risen Saviour when we met for worship.

Battles are fought over whether we must have a worship team in order to worship, or whether we must confine ourselves to singing hymns from the hymnal with a music leader. Churches have divided over such vital theological truths as whether there should be one cup or many cups for the Communion Meal. Did they not realise that their actions testified that they knew nothing of communion with the Risen Saviour? Churches have fought hard battles over such deeply significant questions as whether they could use a band to accompany the songs of praise or whether they needed an organ to worship. Tragically, such battles ensured that God received no praise from the blind guides who fought battles that ultimately were meaningless.

**TRUE WORSHIP IS IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH** — “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.”

Little words change the tenor of what is said. Jesus said, “God is spirit, and those who worship Him *must* worship in spirit and truth.” This verse holds out the distinct possibility that much of what we offer as worship fails to meet the requirement to worship in spirit and truth. Perhaps we fail to worship because we do not know what it means to worship in spirit and truth. Perhaps we fail to worship because we do not want to pay the price to worship in spirit and truth. Perhaps we fail to worship because we do not know God who is spirit.

One vital truth that must be communicated is that we do not have two aspects to worship that are acceptable to God; we are not called to worship in spirit and also to worship in truth, as though there were possibly a dichotomy between two separate but equally important concepts. There is one preposition, indicating that we are called to worship in spirit and truth, an inseparable concept. If we worship in truth, we worship in spirit; if we worship in spirit, of necessity we worship in truth.

One truth should stand out—worship that is separated from truth is no worship at all. In the context of much of modern worship, worship that seeks to stir the emotion without foundation in the written Word of God must fail as worship. You may recall one portion of Jesus' high priestly prayer as recorded in John's Gospel. Let's review that portion of Jesus' prayer—prayer that was offered for His disciples, including all who would come after the twelve.

Jesus prayed, "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." Now, take careful note of the seventeenth verse: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" [JOHN 17:6-17].

God is true, but His Word is truth. Christ Jesus our Lord is true, but His Word is truth. As David prayed on one occasion, he uttered a truth that emphasises God's character: "And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true" [2 SAMUEL 7:27]. When God has spoken through His Word, we may be assured that what is delivered is true. It is a testimony that the Psalmist maintained in the Psalms. David wrote:

"The sum of Your word is truth,  
and every one of your righteous rules endures forever."

[PSALM 119:160]

These words echo his testimony elsewhere in that same Psalm.

"Your righteousness is righteous forever,  
and your law is true."

[PSALM 119:142]

If we are to worship, we must identify with that which is true. If we identify with the "fad du jour," we will always be chasing a phantom that cannot be captured.

For a moment, I invite you to think of worship in spirit and truth. If we worship in spirit and truth, we will know who are authority is. If our authority is a matter of how we feel, we have no authority at all. If our authority is the fluid approval of this dying world, it will mean that we are forever chasing a will o' the wisp. If our authority is the most popular social view of the moment, or the latest scientific theory, or the most prominent political philosophy of the day, we will discover that we have no authority because it is constantly changing.

On the other hand, if our authority is Christ and His Word, we will be standing on the Rock that cannot be shaken. What matters is not what I think or what some other person thinks, what matters is what God has said in His infallible Word. I fear that the contemporary churches are so compromised in their stand that they are incapable to delivering truth today. We are silent because we are fearful of offending the world by demanding righteousness, and so we fail to call sinners to repentance. We are fearful of being labelled as hateful, so we quietly tolerate the most flagrant violations of biblical holiness. We do not want to challenge the rights of wicked people, and so we refuse to hold one another to account. So long as we are beset by such timidity, we cannot truly worship in spirit and truth.

Of course, if we worship in spirit and truth we will have a definite theology. I do not mean that we will be inerrant, but we will have a solid understanding of who God is and what His will for us is. Consequently, we will speak frequently of His character. We will distrust man because we know ourselves—that we are utterly incapable of impressing God. Knowing the depravity of man, we will focus on God's electing love and His merciful grace. We will know that no person is saved without the work of the Holy Spirit quickening the life. We will focus on God's persevering love—the fact that He keeps those whom He calls. Then, in confidence, we will worship in spirit and truth.

If we know God, our priorities will be transformed. In the Community of Faith, the world's agenda will no longer be a priority. Rather, we will labour to know the will of God and to do that will as He has revealed through His Word. It is not that we will neglect the social aspects of the Gospel, but they will assume their rightful place subservient to the redemption of lost people. Then, we will worship in spirit and truth.

When we worship in spirit and truth, we will witness great changes in our lifestyles. Entertainment will no longer assume the priority over our lives, over our leisure hours, over our moments, as it does now. Titillation of the senses grows less and less demanding as we walk in the presence of the Living Son of God. As matters stand in this day, every school activity, every social activity, every possible public event imaginable is scheduled for Sunday mornings. Tragically, Christians acquiesce and comply with the unrighteous demands of this fallen world. Even when these are not a problem, we grumble at giving time to worship. For the average evangelical Christian, sixty minutes, or seventy or eighty, is the sum total of their commitment to Christ and to His people in any given week. To worship in spirit and truth is to permit God to change our lives, making us sensitive to His divine will.

It would be easy to pass by the need for a pure sexual ethic if we will worship in spirit and truth. Perhaps I would not have needed to say anything in another era, but sex has become a major concern for us in this day. Our preoccupation does not mean that we are more fulfilled or more satisfied. Marriage is under assault and we cede the field to the world about us as we retreat from one position of purity to the next lowest position. Marriage was given by God to be a source of joy and a means of strengthening worship for mankind. God meant for marriage to be the union of one man to one woman so long as both should live. Yet, we have changed that so that we commit ourselves to one another so long as we "love" one another.

Perhaps we have never read the words of Malachi that were penned over four hundred years before the Advent of our Lord. Speaking for the LORD God, the prophet Malachi wrote, “You cover the altar of the LORD with tears as you weep and groan, because he no longer pays any attention to the offering nor accepts it favourably from you. Yet you ask, “Why?” The LORD is testifying against you on behalf of the wife you married when you were young, to whom you have become unfaithful even though she is your companion and wife by law. No one who has even a small portion of the Spirit in him does this. What did our ancestor do when seeking a child from God? Be attentive, then, to your own spirit, for one should not be disloyal to the wife he took in his youth. “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and the one who is guilty of violence,” says the LORD who rules over all. “Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful” [MALACHI 2:13-16 NET BIBLE].

If we do not worship in spirit and truth, it may be that we are unwilling to go against the tide, challenging the world. It is easier to conform to the expectations of the world about us than it is to stand against evil and to stand with Christ. It is easier to train ourselves to tolerate evil than it is to risk our relationship with unsaved family members or godless friends who oppose the cause of Christ. So, we choose to seek emotional gratification rather than standing on truth to ensure that we worship as commanded by the Master. We seek approval of the world rather than seeking to honour the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. We do not believe that “friendship with the world is enmity with God” [see JAMES 4:4], and so we fail to worship.

I dare not ignore the possibility that if we do not worship in spirit and truth it is because we have never known God. There is only one answer for the person who says she has no confidence that she has been redeemed. Such a one must commit herself to the Saviour. If this is your situation, go to Him, admitting your sinful condition and asking that He receive you. He has never turned away anyone who comes to Him in faith. Jesus has promised, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out” [JOHN 6:37]. Would you not agree that His words offer hope and comfort for anyone, including you?

Among the most comforting words to be found in all the literature of this world are these: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” [JOHN 10:27-30]. This is a most gracious promise; and it is given to you, if you are willing to receive it. Then, if you know Him, you will worship Him in spirit and truth.

**IN WORSHIP CHRIST REVEALS HIMSELF** — “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.’” The woman to whom the Master spoke had heard that Messiah was coming. Perhaps she had heard the words of Moses that pointed to Messiah’s coming as they were read from the Samaritan Pentateuch. You will no doubt recall the promise given to Israel. God promised, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him’” [DEUTERONOMY 18:15-18]. Therefore, the woman knew Messiah was to come, but she knew nothing of that One who was to come or of the purpose of His unveiling.



It was at this moment that the Master revealed Himself, “I who speak to you am He.” Jesus revealed Himself as the fulfilment of prophecy, the promised Messiah. Thus, as we worship in spirit and truth we will meet the Living Saviour, Jesus the Messiah. In a previous message, we focused on a truth that Paul delivered to the dysfunctional Corinthian congregation. “If ... the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you” [1 CORINTHIANS 14:23-25].

The thrust of the Apostle’s words is that as the people of God seek the presence of the Master, declaring His will and pointing to the truth He has caused to be written in His Word, outsiders are convicted because they witness the reality of the Risen Son of God with His people.

A man named Saul from Tarsus met the Risen Saviour as He journeyed toward Damascus to inflict persecution on those who followed the Master. He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” though he already knew the answer. Nevertheless, the voice he heard told him, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” [see ACTS 9:5]. After that, he knew the Master and he met Him in worship. Just so, you, also, can meet the Risen Son of God as often as you come to worship, if you seek Him.

As outsiders, we are surprised by the revelation of Christ the Lord. He reveals His love for us through His sacrifice at the cross. He reveals the scope of that love when His Word declares that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son” [JOHN 3:16]. He reveals the continuing nature of His eternal love when He invites all who are willing to receive life to come, saying, “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires to take the water of life without price” [REVELATION 22:17].

Then, having received that love, having received the forgiveness of sin and adoption into His eternal Family, the Master reveals Himself as we worship. As we worship in spirit and truth, we meet Him again and again. Let me say very pointedly that if we do not meet the Risen Master when we gather, we have not worshipped. We do not fling liturgies heavenward hoping that somehow our efforts will impress God. However, if we have prepared ourselves to meet Him, and we come before Him in anticipation of His presence, we will worship in spirit and truth. Then, we will meet the Risen Saviour.

Did you prepare to meet the Saviour before you came this morning? Did you invest time in considering His will for your life during the busy days of the week just past? Did you ask that He would be glorified when you met with His people today? Did you present yourself to do whatever He may appoint you to do? Have you looked for His presence among His people as you listened to the words of Scripture as they were read? As you sang the hymns of Zion? As you prayerfully sought mercy and grace for others during our times of prayer?

If you did not meet the Risen Saviour this day, it is not too late to do so. Jesus is even now present among His people; He seeks your response to His presence. What is evident in the response of the Samaritan woman is that having met Jesus, she was forever changed. She hurried back to the town and spoke to anyone who would listen, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ” [JOHN 4:29]. What a wonderful testimony is found when we read, “Many Samaritans from that town believe in Him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me all that I ever did’” [JOHN 4:39].

And so it will be true for us that the surest evidence that we have met the Living Christ will be that we will no longer be the same people—we will be changed. We will have the glow of heaven on our brow. We will declare His mercies and trumpet abroad the marvels of His grace. We will speak of His glories. We will call people to righteousness. It will no longer concern us whether we are trained or accomplished; what will matter is that we have met the Master because we have worshipped Him. The surest evidence that we have met the Master will be that we tell of His glories. The surest evidence that we have not met Him is that we do not tell others of His might and power.

Have you met Him?