

## **The Church, part 22**

(John 4:20-24)

(preached Pine Grove 12/10/17; Sunday PM)

### **Introduction**

Last May we began an in depth look at the church..

We are now 22 messages into our look at the church, and there wont be a 23rd...

In fact, we wont have another normal Sunday night service until 2018..

Next week, Dec 17 we will have a Christmas play and a Christmas dinner

The next Sunday night is Christmas Eve, so we wont have evening service and the next Sunday night is New Year's Eve and we have decided not to meet then as well..

So, that puts our next normal Sunday night service on January 7th, 2018...

For those reasons, it makes sense to finish up this long series and start fresh in 2018..

And unless the Lord directs my heart a different way, my plan is to start in the book of Genesis on Sunday nights...

But for tonight, we need to finish up our look at the church...

And though the church is much more than these 9 characteristics that we have looked at over the past 6 months, these 9 traits give us a fairly comprehensive and most importantly, biblical view of the church...

Now, we need to remember that the church has not always been around nor will it always exist..

In the OT, there was no church...

And in the future heavens and earth, there will be no church...

However, we live in an age after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ where God has established the church to carry His name and message to the world..

In the OT, the nation of Israel carried the banner of God in its unique laws and way of living...

But in the NT era, the church carries the banner of God in the world..

And as God's ambassadors, we are united by our faith in Christ while we also live in obedience to God's word..

And God's word tells us as a church what we should be like and do in this age...

So, these characteristics of a biblical church are our instruction manual on how to best represent God as his people in this age..

Therefore, we have looked at these characteristics of biblical churches in hopes that we at Pine Grove are carrying the banner of God the best way as a church that belongs to Him..

For the past few months, we have seen the importance of preaching, leadership, discipleship, evangelism, membership, fellowship, faith, and giving in the local church...

And tonight, we finish with what may be the most important aspect of a God-honoring church and that is its worship..

Now, when I say worship, our minds probably paint a picture of what worship is..

You may see a choir singing...

You may see people at an altar bowing..

You may see people with hands in the air praising...

And though all of those may be worship, they are not the biblical definition of worship...

You see worship is simply honor, love and adoration given to a superior being..

And the reason I say superior being is that people worship all sorts of people and even things...

Muslims worship Allah.

Buddhists worship Buddha.

Environmentalists worship Mother Nature..

Worship is not necessarily a biblical term, but the Bible calls us to worship God..

We saw this morning in Revelation 22 as John bowed to an angel who rebuked him and told him to only worship God.

But what is biblical worship?

Well, it is honor, love and adoration directed toward the one true God of this world...

You may notice that I often call what we do from 10:45 to 12:00 “big church.”

Many people simply call that worship service but I think that gives us the wrong idea of worship because worship of God isn't confined to Sunday mornings from 11-12...

Worship is happening now as we gather on Sunday nights..

Worship happens on Wednesday nights here..

Worship can happen on Monday or Tuesday or Thursday or Friday or Saturday...

You may also notice that many of my prayers for the church is that we worship God in spirit and truth..

Now, that is a common phrase that most of us have heard but rarely consider what it means, but spirit and truth are the foundations of worship...

So, we should pray that all are worship is in spirit and truth, but what does that mean?

Well, tonight I want to give us a quick overview of God-centered worship both in our lives and in the church..

And I call it God-centered worship because the only real worship is God-centered worship..

Everything else that the world calls worship is simply idol worship...

Whether that is a false god or an object or whatever...

Now, I could quickly get off base in talking about worship, so I am going to use a very familiar passage to keep me on track and to help us think about God-centered worship...

This passage comes from the book of John, chapter 4...

Though we have seen this passage in other messages, it may be the best passage in the Bible on worship..

So, let me read it to us beginning in verse 1, but we will zero in on verses 20-24 for our time together...

***1 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), 3 He left Judea and went away again into Galilee. 4 And He had to pass through Samaria. 5 So He \*came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; 6 and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about [a]the sixth hour.***  
***The Woman of Samaria***

*7 There \*came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus \*said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman \*said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 She \*said to Him, "[b]Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? 12 You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."*

*15 The woman \*said to Him, "[c]Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." 16 He \*said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus \*said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." 19 The woman \*said to Him, "[d]Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain,*

*and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” 21 Jesus \*said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is [e]spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman \*said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” 26 Jesus \*said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”*

From this passage, let us look at some issues around worship that need to be addressed so that we as the people of God at Pine Grove Church are people concerned with God-centered worship...

Now as Jesus encounters this woman at the well in John 4, he is teaching us much about evangelism and we looked at this passage earlier in this series as we seek to be an biblically evangelistic church..

And biblical evangelism requires us to confront people with their sin, and that is exactly what Jesus does in verse 17 by telling her that she has had 5 husbands and is now living with another man...



Well, she does what many people do when confronted with her sin, she tries to change the subject...

So in verse 20, she changes the conversation from her sin to her confusion over worship...

Now, first of all, this is a smokescreen for Jesus to try and throw him off track, but Jesus is full of patience and follows the rabbit trail and even gives us great truth about worship in the verses that follow...

What we are going to do is simply follow the text beginning in verse 20 and list some truths related to worship in hopes that we get a biblical view of worship from the mouth of Jesus Himself...

The first truth about worship is this...

### ***#1 - Worship is misunderstood.***

Notice what the woman says in verse 20..

***20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”***

I don't have time to go into great detail but Samaritans were people in the mid section of Israel..

When Israel was captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC, many Jews were carried to Assyria but not all...

The ones that stayed behind in the land of northern Israel ended up intermarrying with other non-Jews in the area...

And so the Jews of northern Israel were not seen as true Jews by their southern neighbors...

As a result, the people of northern became known as Samaritans to the people in the south and the Samaritans ended up building their own temple and having their own system of worshipping God..

Well, they also had another distinction as well...

They only viewed the first 5 books of the OT as the word of God...

If it wasn't Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy, it wasn't the Bible...

So, they had their own way of worshipping God, their own temple to worship and their own version of God's Word...

Well, that created problems in Israel that lasted all the way to Jesus' day where southern Jews would walk around Samaria if they had to go north...

It created an intense hatred...

Well, when Jesus headed into Samaritan territory here, it was very unusual but Christ came to offer salvation to all...

Now when he encounters this woman at the well, it is evangelistic...

And part of evangelism at times is helping people answer their questions about God...

And though this lady was trying to get off the subject of her sin, she had a question about God concerning worship..

So it comes out in verse 20...

Hey, why do you Jews (and she was including Jesus in this phrase...)

Why do you Jews worship in Jerusalem and we Jews worship on Mount Gerizim...

Now, we will answer that in a minute but for now just notice that there is debate about proper worship..

In this case, it was debate about the location of proper worship of God...

But at other times, there is debate that surrounds music and style and expression of worship...

And churches split over worship...

And people get angry over worship...

And do you want to know why there is debate about worship?

Because most people see worship as a personal preference, but that is not God-centered worship but man-centered worship..

You see issue #2 with worship is this...

***#2 - Worship is possible everywhere.***

Believers with a right view of worship don't need the right style of music or the lights down low or the hands held high around them...

Because you cant manufacture worship..

Worship does not come from the outside but from the inside of a person...

You see, the woman's question tells us that worship is debated because we think that worship depends on

location or time of day or a certain type of building, but that is not the case...

Now, let's quickly move to Jesus' response to her and find a few more truths about worship...

In verse 21, Jesus begins to answer her question....

***21 Jesus \*said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.***

Now Jesus answer here is clear...

The woman lived in an era where the temple was symbolic of worship...

You see, God cannot be contained in temple or in a tabernacle or in a church building for that matter...

God is omnipresent...

He is everywhere at all times, yet God directed Israel to build a tabernacle and then a temple as symbols of His presence with them...

Yet neither of them fully contained the presence of God..

Now, the hour that Jesus is speaking of here is the moment when the Holy Spirit comes after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension...

You the great truth of the NT era and the church age is that the Spirit of God indwells the believer...

The book of 1 Corinthians clearly states that our bodies are temples of God..

In other words, worship in this age isn't centered on a location in Gerizim or Jerusalem..

Worship is possible anywhere a believer goes...

A Christian doesn't need a temple to represent the need to worship God...

A Christian doesn't need s temple to remind him to worship God..

The Christian has the Holy Spirit that provokes him to worship God...

So, truth #3 about worship is this..

***#3 - Worship comes from within and not without.***

Let's move to the next part of Jesus' answer in verse 22...

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

You see, the Samaritans had the word of God but they only had a portion of it in the first 5 book of the Bible...

They had knowledge of God but their knowledge of God was lacking severely..

The Jew on the other hand had all the knowledge of God because they affirmed all the Scriptures at this point in history...

And the point here is this, and it may be the greatest truth of worship and the most misunderstood truth of worship in our area of the world...

But..

***#4 - Worship is based on truth.***

In 2017, this is the most ignored aspect of worship..

There are churches filled with people that “worship” without knowledge...

There are churches that pack the place but the Bible’s truths are never explained, solid truthful songs are never sung, and people never hear much truth if any...

Yet, they leave feeling like they worshipped God...

Nothing could further from the truth...

You cannot worship God apart from learning truth about Him...

However, churches learned a big secret long ago that allowed them to exist for years without ever having to preach truth...

And it is this...

If you can cause people to experience some sort of emotion, they will think they worshipped and they will think that God is pleased...

So churches spend millions on sound, lights, proper seating to move people's emotions ...

And pastors spend way too much time on tear jerking stories rather than studying the word of God in hopes of moving people's emotions...

And the simple reason is that people wrongly see worship as only emotion...

However, Jesus would say that part of worship is understanding and getting to know God better...



You can't worship a God that you don't know, yet millions of so called Christians flock to church that never help them grow in their knowledge of God but only seek to move their emotions...

And those churches explode with people who are worshipping a God that they dont really know....

It a sad reality but it is a reality nonetheless...

Let me tell you what worship based on truth can look like...

You are in preaching as we are going through the book of Revelation and you notice how the new heavens and new earth will be beautifully put together....

And you realize that God doesn't have to do that for you..

You simply see His goodness overflowing to you in eternity, and you simply say in your heart...

“Thank you Lord for doing that for me.”

And you just meditate on the goodness of God despite your disobedience to Him...

That is worship, my friend...

It is your thankfulness and love coming out of your heart to God...

You may not even say an Amen or stand up or raise your hand or talk to anyone about it, yet guess what?

It is worship...

The same is true for hymn singing...

You may have had a difficult week waiting on test results from the doctor or you have had a difficult week financially...

But Sunday morning has come and you get up to sing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

And you simply begin to think of the truth of God's faithfulness in the lyrics of that hymn...

And you don't need low lights or loud speakers to worship in that moment...

You don't need the musicians to play it 15 times over and over...

You simply sing the truth of the words of that great hymn and you worship God because you are directing your adoration of God's faithfulness to Him..

That is worship my friends...

And it is not based on the environment around you, it is based on the truth within you...

You cant worship apart from knowledge...

Now, let's finish up with Jesus' final words to this lady in verses 23-24..

***23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 God is [e]spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."***

Truth #5 about worship...

***#5 - Worship occurs in the spirit.***

In case you have heard me wrong, let me clear this up...

Worship is spiritual..

The reality of worship is that the truth we hear touch the spirit within and the product is God-centered worship...

Now, we have to be careful with this because having your emotions moved is no guarantee of worship...

I spoke of lights and songs that play over and over and preachers with sad stories that churches often use to elicit an emotional response in hopes of generating worship...

You must remember to check why are your emotions being moved...

Is it in response to truth about God or is it simply because I have had an emotional few days...

There are plenty of people who cry in church and run the aisles in churches and say amen in church but never as an act of worship to God...

You see, the Samaritans were the emotional worshippers...

They had elaborate services at the temple at Mount Gerizim that were designed to move people emotions...

While the Jews in Jerusalem were the thinkers who never had any emotional response to the truths they knew about God...

God is not pleased with either one...

God-centered worship is worship based on truth that moves our spirits to love and adore God...

There are plenty of churches with emotional people, but often that emotion is not directed to God...

People do all sorts of things in churches that is called worship of God but it is often done to draw attention to themselves...

Remember that true worship points to God and never to you...

Yet I see that principle of worship violated all the time in some churches...

Both in the pulpit and in the pews...

A final truth about worship is simply this...

### ***#6 - Worship is desired by God.***

Look back at what Jesus says at the end of verse 23..

The Father seeks true worshippers of him...

In other words, worship isn't optional...

In fact, those who not truly worship God need to examine if they are truly saved...

God wants true worshippers but it also true that true worshippers want to worship...

## **Conclusion**

To end our night, let's think about what all of this truth about worship means for us at Pine Grove or for any church for matter...

***We can encourage worship but we can't create worship.***

It is clear that clear that worship can happen anywhere at any time for the Christian, but a prime opportunity to worship is when we are gathered as a church..

And when we gather, it is important that we encourage worship of God..

So how do we do that?

Several thoughts here on a practical level...

First, truth must be presented in the pulpit and in the song choices...

My desire each week in preparing 3 sermon is to uncover truths about cause that move your spirits to worship Him..

I can tell stories to aid in that..

I can offer illustrations to help you see those truths..

But the focus of my preaching must be the truth of Scripture and not my story-telling...

I have no desire to be worshipped as a good speaker, but I have every desire for you to worship God by what I offer from His word...

And while the preaching is the primary source of truth, we must sing songs of truth about God...

The worship of God is never in the melody but in the truth of the words sung....

Second, we must as a church remove distractions to worship..

Look I understand the nature of a fallen world...

There are going to be crying kids at time at church...

There are going to be restroom emergencies..

There are going to be sleeping people...

There are going to be the cares of world that pull us all away from worship at church...

But we must do everything we can as a church to eliminate the distractions from worship each time we meet..

So we offer a nursery and child care to help our parents here the truth and worship free from the busy hands and hearts of little ones..

We try to present an environment in worship that is orderly...

God tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:40 that all things in the church must be done decently and orderly...

So, we as church leaders speak of how our worship services are structured to enhance your worship of God...

They are churches that are unstructured and according to their words, "led by the Spirit," but they often become places of chaos and disorder and I assure that is not from God...

Our job as leaders is to encourage your worship of God and though we have plenty of work to do in some areas, we always want to keep that high on our list of things to do..

Now with all that said on the practical ways to encourage worship, we as a church must also realize that we can't create worship...



All the nurseries and all the order and all the care that we put into worship will not overcome the greatest obstacle to worship and that is us as people...

If we are not hearing the truths of God because we are daydreaming or sleeping or thinking about lunch or work, worship cannot take place..

If we are wanting our emotions moved but haven't moved our Bibles off our shelf, then worship cannot take place...

If we are wanting better chairs or better music or better lighting or more hands in the air, but we have sought to learn better and greater truths about God, worship cannot take place...

You see, you can head to the prettiest church and hear the greatest sermon in the most worship encouraged environment but if you don't love God more because of all those things, you haven't worshipped...

Worship can happen anywhere but it must happen somewhere..

And that somewhere should certainly include the church..

At Pine Grove, we must always place great importance of having the truth of God move our spirits to worship the Lord...

Because that is the kind of church that God wants and those are the kind of worshippers that the Lord desires..

Let us pray...