

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, October 16, 2011 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Spirit and Truth Worship - John 4:20-24**

**Introduction:** In my 47 years of being a Christian, I've been in all kinds of churches. I've been in big churches, small churches, country churches, city churches, emotional churches and stuffy churches. I've been in First Baptists, Second Baptists, and even one Third Baptist. I've worshipped with the Methodists, the Presbyterians, Church of God's, Catholics, Lutherans, and Pentecostals. I've worshipped with southerners, with Yankees, and even with Mexicans. I've seen all types of worshippers, from snake handlers to foot washers, to bench jumpers. I've heard all kinds of preachers from those who are called stem-winders, hackers, or corn-shuckers, to those who would lull you off to la-la-land. I've been in churches where the people really knew how to worship, and some who didn't have a clue, but thought they did. After being in the kind of services where the people seemed to just be going through the motions, I would come away feeling empty and longing for something satisfying. You see, I long for something more than just Sunday after Sunday of religious entertainment. I long for more than just theatrics. I long for more than just liturgy. I long for genuine worship – the kind where God shows up and His presence overwhelms His people.

In John 4, Jesus gives one of the most telling descriptions of real worship. Here we find the Savior in the midst of a deep discussion with a lady we know only as *"the woman at the well."* As the conversation turns to the woman's own private life, she tries to change the subject to religion.

She looks toward Mt. Gerazim and says, *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."* (20).

Jesus' answer showed the woman that genuine worship wasn't a matter of location, but of motivation. It's not an issue of worshipping at Mount Gerazim, Jerusalem, or a gymnasium. Worship is an issue of the heart.

Jesus said *"true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."* He went on to tell her that *"God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and truth."* (23-24).

Now let me stop here and point out that the word *"spirit"* here does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but rather the human spirit. Jesus is talking about looking for people who have a heart for worship. So with that in mind, let me ask you...Do you want to be a *"true worshiper"* – one who worships from a heart of *"spirit and truth?"* Do you want to be the kind of worshiper the Father is looking for?

I pray that as we examine what the Bible says about genuine worship, we'll truly develop a heart for worship and practice worshipping *"in spirit and truth."*

This morning, I want to point out some of the more common misconceptions about worship, then I want to share with you some of the marks of genuine worship.

**1. Misconceptions of Worship.**

One misconception of worship is that:

**A. Worship Can Only Take Place in Church.**

When you hear the words *"worship service,"* do you first think about what takes place on Sunday mornings at 11 AM? Certainly, that is a common view, but it is not necessarily the only environment in which worship can take place. In fact, some of the most memorable worship times I've experienced, didn't take place in church. They've taken place in coliseums, in convention centers, and outdoor pavilions. One took place in a bus parked in a driveway. We were returning to my brother's house where we were all staying from my first Youth Evangelism Conference, and before we got off the bus, worship broke out. People were testifying to God's presence in their lives, and we were praising God and singing, and fellowshiping like we'd never done before.

Another time of genuine worship occurred in a home. We were sharing as a youth group about what *koinonia* means - real intimate fellowship, and how it can't happen as long as we stand behind the masks we wear. One by

one, people began to take off their masks, and real worship broke out! It was sweet!

What I'm saying is that if we define worship as encountering the presence of God and we realize God is ever present with us, then we can worship any time or any place... driving in your car, sitting at your desk, or walking in the park. It doesn't matter where!

In fact, Scripture after Scripture testifies to the fact that worship isn't just confined to just corporate services. **Psalm 119:164 (NIV)** says, *"Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws."* The truth is, unless we learn to worship God everyday and anywhere, our worship on Sundays may just be for show. Another misconception about worship is that:

### **B. Worship is Always an Outward Expression.**

The fact is, people can express worship to God in many other ways than just outwardly. Some sit quietly with bowed heads and worship. Some cry. Some close their eyes.

Of course, the outward expressions of worship can be just as genuine. Some shout *"Amen"* or *"Hallelujah."* Some lift their hands. Some sing, some laugh, some even dance. The Bible commends all these expressions and more.

You see, we're all different. We worship differently. My expression of praise to God may be different than yours. Personally, I like to close my eyes and blot out all distractions. But you might like to raise your hands, or shed tears, or just meditate. Or, you may one who shouts or sings and makes a joyful noise! One thing is certain: *We cannot worship God when we are judging each other.*

Someone has said, *"True worship is not only about singing, praying, or preaching. They all contribute toward a great expression of worship, but the essence of worship is when one's heart and soul, the core of one's being connects with the Spirit of God."* Another common misconception about worship is that:

### **C. The Worship Leaders Are the Focal Point.**

Once a little boy was listening to his parents as they were going home from church. The parents were complaining about the song selection, the off key soloist and the boring sermon from the pastor. Remembering his offering, the boy said, *"All in all, you have to admit it was a pretty good show for a quarter."*

Some folks judge the church based on how well the worship leaders did or didn't do. The Music Minister messed up. The choir was out of sync. The soloist was off key. The Pianist or Organist missed their cue. The Sound tech couldn't stop the feedback soon enough. The pastor's message was too loud, too soft, too long, too short - well, I've NEVER heard that one! But the point is; if we're thinking only about those things, we're not worshipping!

Don't get me wrong. God deserves our best. I'm thankful for great music and sound boards, and grand pianos. I'm thankful for capable and trained folks to lead us, but genuinely worshipping God takes the premium off performance and puts it on praise. Another misconception about worship is that:

### **D. The Congregation is the Audience.**

If you learn one thing about worship, I hope you learn that those on the platform are not the focus and you are not the audience. We are all on the platform. We all play a part. In a play, you have the actors and directors. The director guides the actors. In worship, those of us on the platform are the directors. You are the actors. But God is the audience.

Have you played your part today? The question is not, *"How did the choir do?"* or *"How well did the pastor preach?"* Rather, the question is, *"Did I worship God today in spirit and truth?"*

Secondly I want to share this morning the:

## **2. Marks of True Worship.**

There are several identifying characteristics that ought to be evident every time we gather as a body of believers and do what we call *"worship."* The first is the mark of:

**A. Activity.** One mark of true worship is that it will always be active, never passive. You see, true worship is not just a spiritual *"warm fuzzy"* you get on Sunday morning. True worship is God's people actively responding to Him. Real worship doesn't just make you feel good, it moves you to action!

In Genesis 35:1-2, God told Jacob to move to Bethel and build an altar of worship there. As a result their worship Jacob and his family put away their idols. So we see that true worship will get you **Cleaned Up!**

In Exodus 24:7, the people of Israel heard the Word of God and worshipped and committed themselves to obedience. So we see that true worship will also cause you to **Get Up!**

In Nehemiah 8, when the scribe read the Word of God before the people, v.6 says, "*Ezra praised the LORD, the great God. and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen, Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*" Vs. 9 says "*For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the law.*" So we see that true worship will also move you to **Fess Up!**

When is the last time you really worshipped to the point to where it caused you to lay down a sinful habit, or moved you to tears, or come to the altar and repent? Worship is not a spectator sport. Worship is not something done **to** us or **for** us but something done **by** us. Another mark of true worship is:

**B. Centrality.** Worship has always been the central point of the church. In **Acts 2:46 (NIV)**, we read about the early church, that "*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.*" Worship was central to their everyday life.

Paul told the believers at Ephesus to: "*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.*" **Ephesians 5:19 (NIV)**. Worship was central even in their everyday conversation.

The ministry of the church is to WORSHIP, preach and teach the WORD, WITNESS & WORK. Our problem is we get them out of order. Often, we run around trying to work for God so much that we fail to take time to worship God. Remember Mary and Martha? (**Lk.10:38-42**). Martha was busy WORKING, and wanted Mary to stop WORSHIPPING and help her! But Jesus told her that there was really only one thing worth being concerned about, and that was worshipping Him. Mary has discovered it, and He wasn't going to take it away from her. We don't need to be so worried about so many things that we forget the most important thing. So let's stop worrying about all the other things that goes through our minds during worship time, and let's make worship the central focus of our Sundays. Finally, another mark of true worship is:

**C. Renewal.** Worship involves music, but it's not **all** about music. Worship involves preaching, but it's not **all** about preaching. Worship involves fellowship and giving and prayer, but it's not **all** about those things. Worship **is always about** one's spirit connecting with the Lord and adoring Him and being refreshed and renewed in His presence.

Worship charges my spiritual batteries. Occasionally, I have an opportunity to attend a preaching conference or a convention. That worship time is always so powerful. I don't speak. I don't plan the service. I just worship. I get renewed by the spiritual power I receive at those events.

There are a lot of things we can compare to true worship. For example, Worship is like A NUTRITIOUS MEAL. We can feed off God and be strengthened until the next meal.

Worship is like a PIT STOP in a race. You race lovers in the church; I don't have to tell you the importance of bringing a car into the pits on a regular basis. If drivers didn't "*pit*" their cars they would never finish the race, much less win. If I don't worship God regularly, I'll run out of spiritual energy.

Worship is like ROMANCE IN MARRIAGE. God has given married couples the privilege of being intimate with each other. You can be married without intimacy but it is a pretty cold existence. In the same way you can be a Christian without intimacy with God through worship but you will never have the full Spirit-filled life God wants for you.

**Conclusion:** Jesus is looking for worshipers who don't just go through the motions, but go in the presence of God. He's looking for worshippers who's hearts are guided by His truth.

Jesus is not looking for pew sitters, but praise givers! He's not looking for spectators, but participators – He's looking for people whose hearts are touched, and whose lives are changed. He's looking to connect with YOU! Have you connected with Him?

Jesus looking for someone who will take that first step of real worship by giving their life to Him. **Romans**

**12:1 (NIV)** says that giving yourself to Him is “*your spiritual act of worship.*” Are you willing to take the first step?

Jesus is also looking for someone here today to take that next step toward Him. Maybe someone here today has walked away and now you can't feel that closeness in worship you once had. Are you willing to take that next step closer to the Lord?

Finally, Jesus may be looking for someone here this morning who might be close to taking your last step here on earth. This may be the last worship service you'll ever attend. This may be the last message and the last invitation you'll ever hear. This may be your last opportunity to get your heart right with God. Don't walk away from it. But come and take that sure step of salvation. Come and take that step of peace and assurance.