

It's Necessary

United As One in Worship ... During Difficult Times

Scripture/Text:

John 4:23-24 (CEB)

But the time is coming – and is here! – when true worshippers will worship in spirit and true. The Father looks for those who worship Him this way. God is spirit and it is **necessary** to worship God in spirit and truth.

Preached @ the Virginia Annual Conference – June 16, 2022 (Hampton, VA)

Beloved, I want to thank you and our live-streamed family for being here this afternoon and to thank Minister Gerald Ricks and the House Band for leading us in worship. When I was praying and discerning about the annual conference theme – I could not get the theme of “**worship**” out of my head.

I believe if there is ever a time to bring believers together to worship during these **difficult times** – the time is now!

I believe if there is ever a time to **re-center the Church** on worshipping God – the time is now!

I do not have to call the roll – on the unsettling events happening around the world; from mass shootings, the Jan. 6 – Insurrection Committee Hearings, the war between Russia and the Ukraine, the hatred that plagues our country now and our denominations finds itself in a phase of disaffiliations.

As I was studying, on the topic of **worship**, I ran across the Contemporary English Bible Translation of John 4:24 and it reads, “...God is spirit and it is **necessary** to worship God **in spirit and truth.**” I have read this passage of scripture many times – but I had never seen the CEB translation using the word **necessary**.

First, I googled the word **necessary**. Necessary means -- “**absolutely needed, essential, or required to be done.**” And then for exegetical correctness, I called my friend Dr. Kim Russaw, Associate Professor of OT at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, who furthered explained that the Greek word in John 4:24 is pronounced “day” which

is usually translated as “**must or necessary**” in our Contemporary English Bible. **This word carries a sense of urgency and necessary-ness.**

Therefore, after to talking Dr. Kim, I begin to ponder that:

Oxygen is **necessary** for us to survive.

Drinking milk or taking calcium supplements is **necessary** for us to build and maintain strong bones.

To drive a car it is **necessary** to get a license.

To practice law it is **necessary to pass the Bar.**

And our text this afternoon indicates that it is **necessary** to worship God **in spirit and in truth.**

Dr. Melva Costen, Professor Emeritus of Worship at the ITC, in Atlanta, GA taught me that Christian worship is acknowledgment **of and response to the presence and power of God** as revealed in Jesus the Christ through the work of the **Holy Spirit.**

She further emphasized that worship is the **celebration** of all that **God has done, is doing and will do.** Descriptive words that are

associated with the understanding of worship include praise, adoration, thanksgiving, reverence, gratitude and submission.

“Worship” in Latin is translated as **“worth-ship”** or **“worthiness.”**

It is the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for God and its purpose is to honor and exalt our Lord and Savior.

Worship is a declaration that God is in the midst of **all** that is happening in our world today. It may not seem or feel like it; but the Bible reminds us that God **“... will never leave us or forsake us.”**

Worship is giving of our entire self – our thoughts and our emotions for God to use. However, what we call worship is too often **“entertainment”** and we evaluate the **effectiveness** of worship by how we **feel**. Worship is never about us. When we come to God in worship – we should proclaim that God is worthy and worthy to be praise!

Let us quickly examine the text, and see why it is **necessary to worship our Lord and Savior**. Jesus journeying with the Disciples is naturally weary by 12 noon and Jesus sits beside Jacob’s well; when the **unnamed** Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Jesus in an instant

engages her in conversation. **There are 2 factors that are important:** the woman belongs to a race despised by Jews and seen unclean and Jesus risks a scandal by talking to such a woman in public.

When asked the first question about “drawing the water,” she did not realize she was in the presence of the **“living water.”** When asked the second question about her current husband – she admits in a flippant manner -- that; **“I have NO husband.”**

Prophetically, Jesus corrects the Samaritan woman and then explains to her that **“true worship,”** of God does not require one to be Jewish or Samaritan or to worship in the temple or on the mountain.

Jesus speaks in verse 23 that “... True worship requires **spirit and truth** and God is seeking those who want to worship God this way. Beloved, **without the spirit there is NO truth.** Because we are worshipping in our own knowledge; our own imaginations, our own desire and our own truths.

Verse 24 makes a clear point that God is spirit. “According to scholars, God is not simply a more complex physical being or a limited

creature; nor is God impressed by our man-made rituals or outward show of religiosity. God desires the **“heart”** of the worshipper. All that God ask is that we turn our hearts toward God and come to God without pretense. **Beloved, you may ask – how do we have true worship?**

First, true worship does not matter where or who you worship with.

It was Dr. Martin Luther King that stated in 1963; “it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11 o’clock on Sunday mornings and unfortunately that assertion remains true today.

True worship is more than a cerebral exercise.

We must surrender and submit to God in worship. When you surrender; you get out of the way of God; and God’s presence becomes more real. You cannot worship in **truth and control**. The truth comes in the surrendering.

That’s why we sing:

All to Jesus I surrender

All to Him I freely give

I will ever love and trust Him

In His presence daily live

I surrender all

I surrender all. All to thee; my blessed Savior; I surrender all.

True worship is about a relationship with our Lord and Savior.

Your relationship with the Master is more important than any relationship on earth that you will have. The question that you must ask yourself “... **who is Jesus Christ to me?** Our members are desperately hungry for a worship experience. The problem in some of our churches; our worship is shallow. Because we have NO knowledge of God; NO relationship and as a result NO power from God.

True worship is a lifestyle.

I firmly believe you **cannot** worship; who you **do not** know. I do not have to wait for Sunday morning to be “pumped up” by the praise band or the Adult choir. We are **created** to worship the **Creator**; instead we worship the “**created.**”

Finally, I believe that **true worship happens in the most powerful and experiential way is when we as believers worship together.**

Worshipping together teaches us to submit and surrender **all** of our cares/concerns to God.

Do you remember what happened in the Upper Room? They tell me that worship broke out because of their **unity** and being on **one accord.**

VA Conference what would happen if just for one moment; we would put away our individual agendas (I'm not labeled as a traditionalist/progressive or centrist) and we really **stood together and worship God.**

What would happen if just for one moment we **“interceded”** on behalf of families who have lost loved ones to gun violence; or woman/men who have been sexually mistreated or people of color who have been considered 2nd class citizens, marginalized and scrutinized because of the color of their skin.

What would happen if just for one moment we “**cried** out and **repented**” to God on behalf of this denomination? I believe that God would bless our **unity**.

I believe if we worship together:

That deliverance would take place.

I believe if we worship together:

That races could be reconciled.

I believe if we worship together:

That we would heal the broken hearted and set the captives free.

But the time is coming – and is here! – when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship Him this way. God is spirit and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

