

Hey everybody. Welcome to Christ Fellowship. I'm real excited today because we are starting a brand new series in our journey through the gospel of John. This series is going to be a two-part series called proskuneo, and we will come back and talk about that as we move into the service. If you have your Bibles with you, I want to encourage you to go ahead and open them to John, chapter four. If you are a guest with us for the first time, I want to welcome you. My name is Rick and I serve as the Lead Pastor here. We believe that you are not here by accident. We believe that God brought you here by a providential act of God, because He wants to speak into your life. God always does that through His Word. What I have to say to you today is insignificant, but what God has to say to you through His Word is eternally faithful and eternally binding. So, John, chapter four: If you don't have a Bible, don't worry. It will all come up on the screen and you can sort of follow along with us that way.

I want to set this series up by asking you this: How many of you have ever eaten out of a plate like that (with divided sections in it)? Maybe as a child? My daughter, Rebecca, serves her children food on a plate like that. So does my daughter Natalie. The goal of a plate like this, obviously, is to compartmentalize the food; to keep the food from getting mixed together; to keep the food that is runny from running all over the other foods. In fact, when I was a little boy my mom served my brother and I for a time out of plates like that. She would put the potatoes in one compartment, the meat in another compartment, and the veggies in another compartment. When she served breakfast she put the grits in one compartment, the eggs in one compartment, and the toast in one compartment. Again, the idea is to keep the food compartmentalized. To keep the food separated from each other.

Check this out: My brother had this one food that it was like he worshiped it. That was ketchup. Mike Blackwood loved ketchup to the degree that he refused to compartmentalize it. Mike Blackwood loved ketchup so much that he made ketchup a part of everything on the plate. I'm not kidding you! Mike Blackwood would put ketchup on his grits. His grits would be red. He put ketchup on his potatoes. He put ketchup on his eggs. I called him this week and said, "Did you put ketchup on green beans?" Oh yeah! His green beans would be red. You see, for Mike it was okay to compartmentalize everything else, but not ketchup. For Mike Blackwood there was no such thing as a place where ketchup went. There was no such thing as a ketchup day. No, for Mike every day was ketchup day. For Mike, ketchup was a part of everything on his plate.

Now, let me turn a corner and sort of draw an analogy to that, because we are in a study of the gospel of John, and in John, chapter four, the woman at the well raises the issue of worship, and Jesus responds to her by saying this. He says, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem." You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning this, and this is my proposition. It is so important. When it comes to worship, God wants us to love worship so much that we would refuse to compartmentalize it to a place, like a mountain, or Jerusalem, or in a building. Kind of like my brother loves ketchup so much that he refused to compartmentalize it; that he put it on everything on his plate. Kind of like that, God wants you to love worship so much that it becomes a part of everything on your plate in your life; so much that it becomes a part of your morning and a part of your evening. He wants you to love worship so much that it is a part of your job; that it is a part of your family; that it is a part of your finances; that it is a part of everything in your life from sun up to sun down. It gets mixed into everything.

You might be saying, “Rick, what exactly is worship? We hear that word thrown around a lot. But what exactly is worship, and how in the world can I make worship a part of everything in my life? “Well, we are going to find out the answer to that as we go back to John, chapter four today. I want to give you two thoughts about worship today. Here they are. Number one: Here is what you need to know, and this is so important. Worship is a term of intimacy. Let me say that again. Worship is a term of intimacy. With that in mind, let’s pick up the narrative beginning with John 4,19. “Sir, the woman said.” Stop right there and let me reset the narrative before we press on. You remember, to begin with, Jesus is talking to this woman who shows up at this well; who shows up at Jacob’s well where Jesus is. As Jesus talks to her and as she talks to Him, they talk first of all about race. Then He talks about gender; and then Jesus starts talking about her broken world. Then as we saw last week, Jesus brings up the issue of her soul. When Jesus brings up the issue of her soul, the woman then raises the issue of worshipping God. Watch what she says: John 4:20: “Our ancestors worship on this mountain.”

Stop right there just for a second, because often when we hear the word “worship” it conjures up in our mind religious images. For a lot of people, as soon as they hear the word “worship”, it conjures up images of a religious place, a religious day, a religious hour where you do this, and when you do this religious routine, and when you get through with that religious routine you can sort of check off God for the week. That is what a lot of people think of when they think of worship. But folks, nothing could be further from true worship. So I want you to put your thinking caps on just for a moment. To begin with, every time you see the word “worship” in your Bible, in your New Testament, it is a translation of the Greek word *proskuneo*. I always tell you that your New Testament Bible was originally written in what is called *koina* Greek and then translated to English, Spanish, French, or whatever. But that word “worship”, that English word, is always a translation of the original Greek word *proskuneo*. It’s sort of an easy word to say. Now let me break it down and tell you what it means because it will help you understand worship. The prefix *pros* in the Greek always means towards. The word *kuneo* means to kiss, so *proskuneo* literally means to kiss towards God. Folks, I love that, because worship is not a term of religion. Worship is a term of intimacy with God. Worship is loving God so much that we long to kiss Him. Again, that word *proskuneo* means to kiss towards God.

I want to give you an image of what pure worship, authentic, genuine worship looks like. To do that, I want to read a narrative to you from Luke 7:36. If you want to know what worship looks like, here it is. “Now, one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.” Now, back in those days they didn’t sit like we do at a table. They would actually recline. They would lay down around a table that would be about a foot off the ground. They would prop their head with their left hand and leave their right hand free to deal with the articles of food and the utensils. So their feet would be stretched out behind them. With that in mind, listen to Luke 7:37. “A woman in that town, who had lived a sinful life, learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house. She came in with an alabaster jar of perfume.” Now watch what she does. Luke 7:37 “As she stood behind him – so she is behind Him, at His feet – weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.” In other words, she loved Jesus so much in her heart, and her heart was so overwhelmed with love for Him that she was moved to tears.

Then she notices something. She notices that our Lord's feet were dirty. This would have been common in those days. The streets of ancient Palestine were either an inch deep in dust or an inch deep in mud. People wore sandals, which was basically soles with straps on them, so your feet were always dirty. So she sees that Jesus' feet are dirty, and so she begins to let her tears drop on his feet. Then she does something revolutionary. She lets her hair down. Girls didn't do that in those days. They didn't let their hair down in public. She let her hair down and began to wash her feet with her hair. Then watch this. "Then she wiped them with her hair and then kissed them." This girl loved Christ so much that she let her tears become the water and her hair was the wash rag she washed His feet with; and then she started kissing the feet of God. You asked me, "What is worship?" I give you Luke chapter seven, the woman in that chapter. You ask me "What is worship?" That is worship in its most raw form: no religious buildings, no religious day, no religious articles, no people dressed up in religious garbs, just raw love for God. That is what worship looks like.

Folks, here is what worship is. It is where we love God so much that there is something in us that longs to kiss God. You might be saying, "Rick, I would love to kiss God. I would love to kiss the face of God. That's never going to happen." Well, don't be so quick to say that. We kiss toward God, we worship, we proskuneo toward God when we express love to Him. What God loves to have with us is a relationship, not religion. God wants to have a relationship with us where God expresses love toward us in His Word. For God so loves you. Where we express love back, we kiss toward God by saying, "God, we love you too." In other words, worship is like breathing. It is sort of like you inhale the love of God, and then you exhale love back to God. Let me say that again: You inhale the love that God has for you, and then you exhale love back to God. That is true worship. That is what true worship looks like: God loving you and you loving God.

God is seeking true worshipers. Look at what Jesus says. John 4:22: He says, "A time is coming and now has come, when the true worshipers will worship the Father." That word "true" is a translation of the Greek word "ahlayfas". Using the Greek does help understand the meaning. The word there is "ahlayfas", true worshipping. Ahlayfas means true as opposed to fake. Ahlayfas means true; it means genuine as opposed to phony. So watch what Jesus is saying. "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true (genuine, not fake, not phony), the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers that the Father seeks. Folks, God is seeking, God is longing for, God is searching for authentic worshipers, genuine worshipers, and true worshipers. Folks, where does true worship come from? Where does true worship emerge from? True worship comes from within. That is where it originates.

Listen to what He says. Jesus says "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the spirit." You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning true worship flows out of your spirit, it flows out of your heart; it flows out of your soul, which is why Jesus says this: He said, "Love the Lord your God – worship the Lord your God; that is what worship is – love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all of your mind." Get it: True worship flows out of a soul that has been filled with God's love. In other words, as you just fill your soul more and more with the truth that God loves me, God loves me. You need to do this, that God loves you, that God loves you. There comes a point when your heart gets so full, if you will do that, with God loves you, that your heart then just

begins to get so full that it overflows with love back to God. Just like, “My cup runeth over.” Again folks, it is not about religion. Worship is not about religion. Worship is about God loving you and you loving God.

Here is what you need to know. Listen: You can compartmentalize religion. You can compartmentalize religion to a place and to a time, but you don’t compartmentalize love. Worship is love. In my relationship with Rhonda, I don’t say, “Honey, I can only express love to you at 12:30 on Sunday. 12:30 to about 1:30, and then honey, I sort of check you off. I’m done with you and I’ll come back and have my relationship with you, whatever that looks like, again at 12:30 next Sunday at this place. We will have a place where we do this.” I would never do that to Rhonda, and yet religious people do exactly that to God. They compartmentalize God to a time and to a place and they sort of check God off. That is what religion does. Religion is not about love. Religion is always about the religion.

You can tell that this girl has been exposed to a lot of religion, to a lot of compartmentalizing God because watch what she says to Jesus. She says, “Our ancestors worship on this mountain.” That is our place. but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” Get it: The Samaritans believed that the place you worship God was on this mountain. The Jews believe that the place you worship God was in Jerusalem, specifically at the temple, and mainly in the Holy of Holies. Either way, that is religion, because it compartmentalizes God. You see, here is what you need to understand. Religion sees worship as something you complete. In other words, you go to the religious place, on the religious day, at the religious hour, and you go through these religious motions, and once you complete those religious motions, you can sort of check God off. I’m done with God. I’m done with God because you compartmentalize God to a day, to an hour, and to a place.

Let me tell you something. God hates that. God hates that, because that is not loving God. That is an assignment. That is treating God as an assignment that you do and you check God off. True love – this is what true love looks like – true love is when you receive love from God and then you give love back to God, and you dare not compartmentalize that to a place and to a specific time. Here is why: Worship is like breathing. In other words, worship is breathing God’s love into the lungs of your soul, and you don’t just breathe in God’s love. You need to breathe in all of God’s attributes. You need to breathe in God’s mercy for you, God’s compassion that He shows on you; God’s care that He has for you; God’s wisdom that He has for you; God’s gentleness that He shows you; God’s kindness that He shows to you; God’s presence in your life. You need to breathe that in, and folks, let me tell you something: you need to do that all through the day. It is like you need to rise up out of the world and breathe in the love and mercy and compassion of God. You need to do that all day long.

Here is why: Your soul needs worship like your body needs air. Your soul needs worship, requires worship, like your body requires air. Let me give you the image of this to help you understand it. Most of you, all of us know this: You know that a whale is a mammal. A whale is not a fish, even though it looks like a fish, it is not a fish, it is a mammal. The key difference between a whale and a fish is this: a fish has gills so it can stay under the water all the time. A whale, on the other hand, has lungs. So a whale has to surface out of the depths of the water, and rise up and breathe in God’s air or it will suffocate. In fact, let me give you an image of that.

A few years ago there was a new story that broke about these two whales that they named Pitcoo and Sitcoo. They were trapped in a section of the sea, right off the coast of Alaska, where the water above them was frozen solid eight inches thick. When they spotted these whales, they were reeling into this ice trying to get to air. They were bruised. They were bloody. They were battered and they were suffocating to death. So here is what the rescue workers did. They began to cut a series of what they called breathing holes into the ice. These whales would come up and they would rise up out of that breathing hole and breathe in the air. Then they would go back down. They would continue to cut more breathing holes to move them forward, and the whales would come up from the depths and breathe in air. They cut more breathing holes, and more breathing holes for them to breathe air until eventually they kept coming up and coming up until they moved them all the way out to the open seas and they swam away to freedom.

Folks, what an image of worship! Worship is like breathing holes in your life. Your soul is like the lungs of a whale, and this life can leave you bruised, and battered, and bloody, can't it? But you have these breathing holes all day long where you can rise up out of this stressful world and breathe in, "God loves me." When you are fearful and you are going through the day and things are happening to you that make you fearful, you can rise up out of this world and breathe in "My God is sovereign"; my God is in control. You can breathe that into your soul, and continue throughout your day. When you are depressed, you can rise up out of the depths of this world and breathe into your soul: "God loves me"; "God cares for me"; God is going to get me through whatever I am going through. Worship is like breathing holes that God cuts into your life and God cuts them out of this world when you can rise up and breathe until God gets you out into the open sea of eternity.

You see, this is why Jesus de-compartmentalized worship. It is because you don't need worship just once a week, once an hour. You need to be able to rise up every day, every moment, and rise up and breathe in God's love for you. As you breathe in God's love for you, you naturally breathe "Thank you Lord." Worship. "Thank you that you love me. God, I was afraid. I was fearful, but God, I know that you are in charge. Nothing is going to happen to me, God, that you are not in complete control of. I love you so much." Do you see how personal worship is? Do you see how relational it is? It is not religious. It is between you and God. It is personal and intimate.

I want you to stay with me, because one of the reasons why religion compartmentalizes God to a place is because religion thinks God, Himself, is compartmentalized to a place. Do you want to know why the Samaritans thought worship had to happen on a mountain? It was because they thought in their minds that God lived on the mountain. That is where He was compartmentalized to. Do you want to know why the Pharisees thought worship was compartmentalized to Jerusalem, mainly to the temple, specifically to the Holy of Holies in the temple? It was because they thought that God was restricted to that; that that was kind of where God lived. But either way, both are religion. They both compartmentalized God. They compartmentalize God to a place.

Listen to what she says: "Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews think the place you must worship in Jerusalem." Both of them thought that God was compartmentalized to a mountain, or to a city, and to a temple. Let me tell you something. Religious people can still kind of think that way

today. In fact, if we are not careful, we can start to think that way, that God compartmentalized us. Sometimes I'll hear people walk in to this building, to this room, and they will say, "This is the house of God." They mean well, but they are thinking that God lives in here; that when we all leave in a few moments, God will be here. This is where He lives and He will be sitting here until you get back. He will be waiting next week when you come back, because this is where God lives. Or people will walk in here and they will say, "This is the sanctuary of God." Can I tell you something? This is not the house of God. This is not the temple of God. This is not the sanctuary of God, and let me tell you why. You are the sanctuary of God now. Everything is changed.

Listen to what Jesus said to her. Jesus said to her: "Woman, believe me. The hour is coming where neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." That is all changing. The time is coming and is now come when the true (ahlahas) worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth.." You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning true worship does not have to happen in this building. Now, corporate worship does. We are going to talk about that next week. God loves it when we all come together and voice our voices together in unison, and stick together. We are going to talk about that next week. But you don't have to come into this building. Why? Because worship happens everywhere because worship comes from your spirit, and here is why. Listen to Acts 2:4: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit." Ephesians 5:8 says: "Be filled with God's Spirit."

Now, when you see the term "Holy Spirit", simply put, the Holy Spirit is simply the presence of God. That is simply put. When you see the term "Holy Spirit", that refers to the presence of God. This verse says that God's people are filled with the Holy Spirit; that means filled with the presence of God. The word "filled" is a translation of the Greek word *plalaho*, which means like filling up a glass with water. That is exactly what happens. The moment you trust Christ as Savior, the moment you say: "God, I open up my heart and my soul. Come into my life." The moment you do that, He comes in, and He fills you with His presence. God's presence then fills you from the inside. Folks, this was revolutionary, because up to that point it was like the presence of God resided inside the temple in what was called the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was a fifteen foot cubed building, and that is where, at least symbolically, the shekinah glory of God dwelled. It was in the Holy of Holies in the temple.

Listen to how that has changed. Listen to 1st Corinthians 6:19. "What, do you not know, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which the presence of God is in you, which you have been given by God." Folks, listen to me. Do you want me to tell you why there is no longer a temple in Jerusalem? Do you want me to tell you why when Jesus died the veil of the temple was split in two? Do you want me to tell you why not long after Jesus died, the temple was destroyed. It was leveled to the ground; not one stone was left upon another? Do you want me to tell you why God has never allowed that temple to be rebuilt since then? It is because since the death of Christ, you are the temple of God now. Do you want me to tell you why there is no longer a Holy of Holies? It is because the Holy of Holies is in you now. You are where the presence of God resides. You don't have to come to a building. You don't have to wait to an hour, or a day. You are constantly with the presence of God.

God loves you so much that God wanted His very presence to be with you always; to be with you every hour of every day, every second. Why? So that no matter what is happening in your life, you can at any moment rise up and say, "He loves me." "He cares for me." This situation doesn't look good, but God is sovereign and God is in control of everything. You can breathe that into your lungs throughout your life until God just walks you all the way out into eternity. You are the Holy of Holies.

Let me say this and then I will close. There is something in every one of us that longs to experience that. There is something in you and there is something in me that longs to experience the presence of God in our life. Let me tell you why: It is because we have a place inside of us, you have it and I have it, and it is called your soul. Your soul is the equivalent of the Holy of Holies. God designed that place inside of you to be His habitation, to be the place where His presence would reside. You were built for that. You were designed for that. But my friend, until you open the door of your life and your soul and invite God into your soul, into your heart, that place within you will be empty. It will be void. And as long as that place within you is empty of God, I'm telling you, you will never be really happy. You will never be truly satisfied. There will always be something in your life that leaves you unsatisfied. Because your soul within will always be telling you, "I need God. I want God. I have to have God. I'm desperate for God." It will tell you that most of the time. It will talk to you the loudest when you are alone. By that I mean when the party is over, when the music is gone, and the lights are down, and it is just you laying there with you, that is when your soul will cry out to you, "I'm desperate for God. I wasn't meant to go through life without God. Please give me God. So often this is what we do to our soul. Shhh. Like a mother with her finger over pursed lips to a child. Shhh. I don't have time for this. Shhh!" I don't have time. Stop bothering me."

The truth is, your soul will never stop crying out to you until you give it what it was made to have. That is your Creator. You were made for the presence of God to dwell inside of you. You were not designed to do life without God. You were designed to do life with God. I'm telling you, there are some of you right now: you are sitting in this room and your soul is calling out to you, and begging you to open up and let God in, so you can love Him and He can love you.

Let's bow our heads for prayer.