

(The Chief End of Man - Part 7): The Internality of True Worship

by A.W. Tozer

True worship is not about externals, but about the heart and spirit, and is a natural part of human existence.

Duration: 37:01

Scripture: John 4:19

Topics: "Chief End of Man"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the vastness and wonder of the universe, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and worshiping God in light of this mystery. He highlights the significance of having the Holy Spirit dwelling within a person, rather than relying on external factors such as nationality or religious affiliation. The preacher also emphasizes the liberating power of Jesus' words, which bring light and elevate believers above the worldly and traditional influences. He concludes by mentioning his intention to continue discussing the internal aspects of worship and spirituality in future sermons.

Transcript

In the fourth chapter of the book of John, John 4, the gospel of John, that is, fourth chapter, we break into the narrative at the nineteenth verse. The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our Father is worshipped in this mountain, and we say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and we shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeketh such to worship him. Then the text will be, verse 24, God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

My message tonight will of necessity be shorter than the others, I think, as I plan it to be. But I want to talk about the internality of true worship. And of course, I have here for my text, God is spirit, not a spirit, but spirit.

That is, the substance of God is spirit. Therefore, they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Now, in that text there is found a sample of the revolutionary quality of Christ's teaching.

Just 16 words are here, 17 if you put the A in, which doesn't belong in. Just 16 words are here, and yet into these 16 English words are compressed truth. The most liberating, the most illuminating, and the most elevating.

Religious people have always been a bound people. Religious people all over the world are bound. It is a very significant fact that the word religion means to bind back.

And religious people have laid off one set of chains and taken another as a rope. Except where there is true worship, and that's what we're getting at tonight. But I'm talking about religious people generally, people who are worshipers, supposedly, all over the world of every religion.

And along comes our Lord and puts into 16 words an emancipation proclamation and signs it in blood, so that the people of the world, bearing the heavy yoke of religion, might know that instead of religion being a yoke upon our neck, religion is weighing on our souls, if we only knew it. Then our Lord Jesus put in words that were illuminating. By that I mean that the light shines upon us so that there is light in our spirits, and this elevates and gets us up out of the mud.

The people of God are never called to walk knee-deep in the mire of the world, nor are they called to walk knee-deep in the traditions of man. So our Lord sets us free here, and to change the figure, opens a fountain of healing water for the healing of the wounds of the world. They tell us in India, that this is only one sample, but in India they believe that the Mother Ganga, that is, the Ganges River, has power to cleanse people.

So there are certain ones, certain saints, they call them, holy men, who make pilgrimages to bathe in Mother Ganga, one of the dirtiest rivers in the world, incidentally, they say, again. And they will fall down fully, and then mark with their finger where their forehead was, and then step forward and put their foot where the mark is, and then fall full length again, and thus literally fall across scores of miles to Mother Ganga, the river Ganges, and bathe themselves there, and go away and be no cleaner than they were before. In fact, not as clean as they were before, maybe, but certainly wounded and bruised, bitterly in their souls.

And our Lord puts into one sentence the words of worship, and says, you don't please God by abusing your body, nor by bathing in this or that river, but those that worship the Father worship him in spirit and in truth, so that this is healing water for the sores of religious men. And our Lord tells us here that worship is natural to man. I mentioned that before, and I explained that I have been taken to task for saying that, but I don't mind it, because it's true.

That worship is natural to men, and natural to man. It was perfectly natural for Adam to walk with God in the garden in the cool of the day, and the ears of Adam were blessed by the velvet, soft, healing voice of God. Then when Adam sinned, he hid from the presence of God among the trees of the garden.

He was hiding, he was conscious of God, but he was not free to worship God now, because sin had come in between and torn the strings off of the harp. Nothing was left but the outline. The music of his soul was muted now, and there was cacophony and discord where there had been harmony before.

So he lost the proper object of his worship, and he was looking about for people or something to worship. But man worships nevertheless, and he worships by the necessity of his being. He worships by the necessity of his being.

He looks around for something to worship, and he recognizes mystery and wonder. Every time you wonder about something, every time you wonder. The other day I was down on my knees praying in my study, and I got to thinking about the speed of light.

I reached up and got a pencil and a pen, and I began to figure out how fast light travels in the course of a day and a year and so on. I know that it travels 186,000 miles a second. Then I know that if you multiply that by 60, you get how fast it travels in a minute, and if you multiply that by 60, you find out how far it travels in an hour.

If you multiply that by 24, you know how fast it travels in a day. If you multiply that by 365, you will find out how far it travels in a year. By that time I had reached the edge of my card on both sides, just multiplying.

There is something wonderful about that. They count the galaxies out there in billions. Now, not thousands or millions, but billions, that is thousands of millions of millions, thousands of millions.

They count them in billions, and the galaxy, they say, is a central sun with satellites revolving around it, such as our sun around which the nine planets revolve. Well, your mind is enlarged and lifted, and you are filled with wonder. This very wonder leads you to worship.

It beats you down and opens mystery to you. We must recognize mystery, and we do recognize mystery. Men used to stand on the seashore and hear the moanings of the sea and watch the gulls turn and see the white clouds float, and they would cry, Oh, what is all this? What is all this? And they called that something out there Neptune, and they said, This is our God.

And they got on their knees and made sacrifices to Neptune, for they saw the sun rising in the morning and making its journey across the sky and setting in a sea of blood and oil rose at night. And they said, What is this shining thing that rises always in the same place and goes down and never fails? And they called it Phoebus Apollo. You named Phoebe, you got close to this.

And there we have Apollo, a great, beautiful God. They made him to be a God with silver wings on his feet that went so fast across the sky. And they worshiped because they said, This is wonderful.

They didn't know what it was, but it was wonderful. And the Parsis got on their knees before the sun, and they called it Mazda. And the light that shines down here tonight is Mazda light, named after the God of the Zoroastrians, the Parsi fire worshipers.

Well, now why am I telling you this? To show you that if we don't know how to worship through Jesus Christ our Lord, the human heart will break out somehow like a flood that goes over its banks, and it will worship. And if it doesn't get going the right direction, it will go the wrong direction, but it will worship. The human soul will worship.

Then they also said, Well, look at love. Look at this powerful, tremendous thing for which men and women die and think nothing of it. Look at this which binds a man and woman together, which binds family together, which binds men to the love of their country until they will give themselves freely.

What is this? And they called it Venus. We've named one of the planets after that goddess, incidentally. Well, you can go on.

There's Ceres, the goddess of life, and there are many others. But beauty and art, I wonder what it is that makes a man want to do something beautiful. Why does he want to write a poem? Why does he want to paint a picture? Why does he want to compose a piece of music? Why does he want to do this? I believe that fallen man has got in him somewhere in the deep of his soul.

He has in him that cry after mystery, that longing after wonder, that uplifting something. Deep calls unto deep, but the noise of God waterspouts, and the deep voice of God calls, and the little deep of man answers back. And so deep is answering deep, and every time a Greek got on his knees at the seashore and offered his sacrifice to Neptune, it was the little blind deep within him answering back to the deep of God.

And every time an American Indian stood on the shore of the river and put reverently the bones of the fish back into the sea and apologized to God for killing it and eating it, every time he looked up and said, Gitche Manitou, praises be, he was giving up to mystery within him. And every time that great death genius, Beethoven, turned out a page of immortal music, he was feeling something within him, even that man who wasn't, I think, a Christian. At least he never said he was, and you don't want to make Christians out of people who never bothered to say they are.

But he said, I know God who is nearer to me than he is to other artists. I know this God, and then he wrote his imperishable music. What was he doing? He was clinging out wildly, wanting to worship something.

He said, wonder, mystery, wonder! He said, ask Gitche, he understands it. This great man who hovered back and forth between suicide and life until you gave up and went the way of all flesh. He was only a sample.

I mention him only because I happen to admire him and his music very much. But this is it. Man has got it in him to do this.

He's got to admire, he's got to fear. So there are many religions. Again, going to India, they tell us that there is a God for everybody in India.

And didn't our sister Muriel Clemenger say this morning there are 450 million in India? Maybe I'm mistaken there, but I think that's it. Well, then you've got that many gods. You've got a God for everybody.

They've got to worship. Man's got to admire, he's got to fear, he's got to adore. And if he's lost his ability to adore in his spirit and soar in his heart, he will soar in a rocket.

He'll get out there somehow. And I believe that the impulse back of the longing to explore other worlds and ride out into the vast spaces is an evidence of something within us. No other creature does it, and no other creature wants to do it, and no other creature thinks of doing it.

Only man, said the poet Ovid, only man looks up, all the other beasts look down, and man alone wants to worship. Now, you will notice what this woman in the text said. And you will notice how she revealed what is wrong with the whole religious world.

She said, sir, and that was incidentally, I won't press that because I haven't time tonight, but that was to get herself off the hook, you know. He told her, he said, go call your husband, and she fell into the trap and said, I don't have any. He said, you can say that again.

You've had five, and the one you have is not your husband. Well, that was getting embarrassing, so she turned the subject. She said, sir, I understand from what you say that you're a prophet.

She said, you know more than the average man would know, you must be a prophet. So she said, I've got a question for you, and this question was not simply a frivolous one. It was one that separated Jew from Samaritan, even though they were related by blood.

The question was, here in Samaria, in our holy mountain, we worship. Across there a little way in Jerusalem, the holy mountain of the Jew, they worship. And we say this is the place to worship, and you say Jerusalem is the place to worship.

Now, you're a prophet, tell me. I might have an answer. The people can't agree, and there's always argument between Jew and Samaritan, where is the right place to worship? So this woman fell into her own little trap, and she revealed the chief role of the religious world.

Do I worship here, or do I worship there? Do I worship in this church, or do I worship in this church? Do I go here, or do I go there? That's the difficulty and the problem. And the whole problem then was externality of worship. That's the whole problem, externalism.

And that's our problem now. That's the biggest problem that church faces now, is the problem of externalism. We ran an article in a little magazine that I edit, *Are We Building Too Much?* Somebody got tired seeing these fabulously luxurious religious country clubs we call churches going up out all over the suburbs, and they wrote about it.

She said, I'd like to vote against it and think we ought to give more admissions. Well, you know, my ears are still burning, and my whispers are still singed from that thing. They're writing from everywhere, committees and groups writing, and people from everywhere.

What's the matter? What happened to you that I dare say a thing like that? Shall we worship here, or shall we worship there? I didn't write the article, but of course I'm responsible for it because it went in the magazine, and I take full responsibility for everything but typographical errors, and we can't explain them. Well, this is it. Shall we worship here, or shall we worship there? Now, Jesus, our Lord, said this beautiful thing.

He said, Sister, the time is fast approaching, in fact it's already here, when worship won't be tied down to any location. For the Father touched to worship him in spirit. For God is spirit, and therefore you've got to be spiritual worshipers.

If God were a local deity confined to a hill, you'd have to go to that hill to worship him. If God were a river deity confined to the river, you'd go down to the bank of the river and worship him. If God were a mountain deity or if God were a plains deity, you'd have to go where he was.

But Jesus gave us the marvelous lesson that God is spirit and therefore God's everywhere, and we don't worship in places anymore, that is, not necessarily in places. You can worship, I'm worshipping God here, have worshiped, I think in some measure, God here today in this church in Toronto, Canada. Tomorrow

night at this time, at about this same hour, everything goes well, I'll be preaching in Greensboro, North Carolina, down among the hills.

And I will be worshipping God. Now, if I believed that God was confined to this so-called sanctuary, I'd be in a fix. I'd have to stand outside and apologize to God for leaving the sanctuary.

And I would have to say, Now, God, you know I've got business down in North Carolina, but if you'll excuse me, I'll be back late Friday and I'll be out to the sanctuary next Sunday and I'll worship you some more. But the beautiful thing that Jesus taught us is that we are portable sanctuaries, and if we are worshipping in spirit and in truth, we can take our sanctuary around with us. Some will say, Oh, the chandels are getting off the roof all right, and the nave, and forget all the parts of the sanctuary, I remember them all, but they all name them, and they've got to be there to worship.

Jesus said, Don't you see that if God is spiritual, worship is spiritual, and anything spiritual has no location in space, and it has no location in time. Therefore, you don't get up in the morning and look at your calendar and say, Is this the time to worship? And you don't go out and look around and say, Is this the place to worship? You worship God now, anywhere, any place, any time, because worship is spiritual. Now, people have made a comedy of religion, a comedy of errors, it has been true, because men have enslaved themselves to externals, they've enslaved themselves to objects.

I remember a dear fellow who had been on the board that had called me to Chicago 31, 2 or 3 years ago. He didn't have them now, but he got into the hospital down there some years ago in Chicago, and it used to be Old Auburn Park, but the Catholics bought it and called it St. George. They put a big stone statue outside the window, and I could see it from my friend Darry's bed, and I went to see Darry.

I went in, and I said, Good morning, Brother Darry, how are you feeling? Well, better, thanks. We had a little chat, and he smiled and said, Do you see Old George out there? I said, Yes, I see him. He said, You know, the nice little sister was in the scene, and I was suffering a little bit, grunting a little, groaning, and she said, When you're in pain, look out the window, you'll get comfort from George.

Ah, you'll get comfort from a piece of stone! Well, Jacob took a stone and put it for his pillows, and I've always wondered about why Jacob did that. If there's anything in the wide world I wouldn't want for a pillow, it would be a rock. But Jacob put it up for his pillows, and there was St. George made out of a rock outside that window.

They got George all around there. Now, that's worshipping, you see, and it's locating it in an object. On the wall, of course, there would be crucifixes.

So, objects are holy. These dear friends, and God bless them, if there's one of you who doesn't get mad at me, I don't mean to hurt anybody. It's not the individual.

I pity the individual, but it's a big mistake that is being made. You take a fellow whose hands have beer mugs and whisky glasses and cards and dice and written crooked letters and all the rest, all his lifetime, when he dies, to put a crucifix in his hand and fold it on his breast. And he's got to leave this object to have some kind of a vial of hope that it will be all right with him when the world should come.

I am perfectly happy by the grace of God to die without a crucifix in my hand, because I've got the cross in my heart, perfectly willing that I should die without seeing a statue of St. George or any other saint, because I have it inside. They that worship him, worship him in spirit and in truth. So, there are no religious

objects.

There may be objects that have certain tender memories for you. Somebody may have given you something. I have mentioned before that I have a whole manila envelope full of little things that our daughter, Becky, gave me over the years.

As I trace them down, they get worse and worse and worse and worse down until she's just able to write to me. Those are precious things and objects like that. But don't imagine they are religious, because they have no religious significance whatsoever.

In objects we have locations, as I mentioned before, and some make their religion to consist in foods. Some things they don't eat, and some things they do eat. The result is that if they do eat it, they are holy, and if they don't eat it, they are not holy, and vice versa.

But Paul said that what you ate didn't make you better, and it didn't make you any worse. It might make you sick, but it won't make you holy, and it won't hurt you nor help you. If it is decent and good, you can digest it and help yourself, because religion doesn't lie in your food.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And then there are times when worship is not in times. I respect our Brethren of the Church calendar year that begin with one thing and end with another, but I don't follow it at all.

Can you imagine that six weeks out of the year I repent, and then after that the lid is off? No, it couldn't be. I couldn't imagine myself tied down to times. Any time before now is the accepted time, this is the time.

So any time is all right. You can say, Good morning, God. Any time you can say good night to God at night, you can wake in the night and think of God, and you can even dream of God ahead.

And you can have God any time, any place, so there are no seasons or days, or there are times of the year when I supposedly think a little more. I personally like Easter. Easter is my time.

If I were to go and have a time of year, it would be Easter, because that's when birds are returning from Florida, and the people of Garba are looking up and we're hearing, Christ the Lord is risen today, hallelujah, hallelujah. I like Easter, and I think it's a beautiful thing to have that, to celebrate that. But I have a tough time preaching Easter sermons, because all of my sermons are based upon his resurrection.

And if you take away the resurrection of Jesus Christ, my sermons collapse all about me, there is nothing that I can say to anybody, only be good and you will be happy. I wouldn't know what else to say, because it's all based upon his cross and his open grave and his session to the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Yet it's nice at Easter time, because women get nice colorful clothes and it isn't so cold.

But apart from that, I don't see that there is anything particularly holy about that time of year, because he came into the world and he made every place holy, if you are a holy man. You can sit in a restaurant where they are drinking around you, and if you don't, in the States you don't eat, brother, that's about it. So if you question some people, do you go in where they serve liquor? Well, I settled that with my heart long ago.

I don't drink it, and I don't choose to go into those places, but I'm not going to starve just because some fellow is guzzling booze in there. I don't have to guzzle it, and it isn't catching, you know. It isn't catching.

So I go in and order something good to eat, and eat it and go out. Even in drugstores in some other parts of the United States, they sell liquor in drugstores. Go in there and stalk up.

Take it home with you if you want it, out of a drugstore. There is no place to eat on trains, and I long ago gave that up. If you are going to eat on a train, you might just as well sit down and let them serve you what you want, and let the others drink.

So I don't think that there is anything holy about places. Every place is holy if a holy man is there. And no place is holy if there isn't a holy man there.

The Jews made the mistake of thinking the temple was holy, and because the temple was holy, nothing could happen to the temple. And Jesus said, Here I am. Do you see this temple? Do you see these stones? Oh, lay a bit of it away in the dust before very long.

And he did. Titus shook it down to the ground. In the year 70 A.D., he said, Israel is like a tree.

Your religion is like a tree. He said, See that axe? It will produce fruit or it will go down and be cast into the fire. So the Lord was perfectly free to turn from anything.

That's why I warned the Christian missionary alliance. I think I preached at every council but one for twenty-some years, and I have prayed to tell our brethren, Don't lean on A.D. Simpson. Don't give a pious look on your face and talk about our beloved Father.

He's dead, what have you got? That's all that matters. God took him home after he had done his work gloriously, fell asleep and was lying on the hillside above Nyack. And I can't wrap myself in his mantle.

He's gone, this sweet man of God, born out here in the Maritimes, but he was a holy man because a holy ghost lived in him, for no other reason. Not because he was Scots, not because he was Canadian, not because he went to the United States and established the alliance, but because God lived in him. He knew that.

If a young fellow wants to make an impression on the alliance, he talks solemnly about this great worldwide organization and our beloved founder. I never let any of that get into the alliance with us. We've got something bigger than that.

We've got God, we've got the Holy Ghost, we've got a living Lord Jesus, the right hand of the Father. We've got the world for our parish, and we've got every man for our brother who knows Jesus Christ the Lord. And while I've been, since I was 21 years old, a loyal member of this organization, and nobody has ever dared challenge that I am a loyal member of this organization, I know the difference between organization and free worship.

It takes in every man. We have some Anglicans come into the Church here and sit sometimes, shake my hand and tell me how they enjoy my messages. Thank God for my brethren of the Anglican Church.

I want to hear them. They call them Episcopalians down in the States, same people. I went to hear them in Indianapolis.

Rector Brown of Baltimore gave a series of talks on what is Christianity all about. I was a young fellow. I tell you, I got help from that man, such help as I hadn't found scarcely anywhere else at all.

I remember his great messages down to this hour. So with all of my Presbyterian and Baptist and associated gospel and all the rest, we are a fellowship of people in whom the Spirit dwells, and if the Spirit dwells in us, we break over all the bounds. Last Wednesday noon I spoke at Ryerson Institute of Technology.

I didn't want to go, and then after I got there I didn't want to leave, and I wanted to go back. We had a great time there. Then at night my wife and I went down to the Harbor Light, and I preached to a whole lot of alcoholics.

One M.B. sitting down in front of me, a medical doctor, who had drunk himself under the table and was down at the Salvation Army getting bailed out. Excuse the change of figure. But I like that sort of thing.

Pretty soon I'm going to speak at United Church in the City of Toronto, and they have asked me to speak on the cross of Jesus. And they said, Come and preach the cross. And I said, the only thing I know is the old-fashioned gospel.

And they said, Come and preach it. I said, I'm going to preach it. I got the text and I got the sermon.

The text is, God forbid that I should glory and save in the cross of Jesus Christ the Lord. And I'm going to preach on why I glory in the cross. They have asked for it and they are going to get it, and I think they will enjoy it.

Then very shortly I'm going to speak in a Baptist church up here in Willowdale. So I get around, and I don't know one from the other. Get a man on his knees and you have to listen awfully closely to know what school of religious thought he belongs to.

I'm talking about worship now, and saying that worship is a spiritual thing. It's internal and the external, while they are necessary. For instance, we couldn't sit here on the corner tonight and preach and sing and pray without walls to protect us from some heat.

You have to have buildings. So I'm for buildings. You have to have books, and I'm for books.

God has blessed external things, but the trouble is we make them our slaves instead of our servants. This building should be your servant, not your slave. That piano or that organ should be servants of the Most High God.

We should not be slaves to them. So with times and truths and everything else, they are our servants. I'm a prince of the house of God, brother to Jesus Christ the Lord, and so is every true Christian.

Therefore we rise above all the little things of religion and look down from our place, blessed all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. We look down and not up at things, but down on them. It's wonderful how little things look when you are up high enough.

You always know you are losing altitude when things begin to get big. When fields get the size of Canadian postage stamps, you are up there. When they begin to get a little bigger, you say to yourself, we are losing altitude.

You look at your watch and say, sure, we're going to land. And the further down you get into the world, bigger things look, and the higher up you get, the smaller. I recommend to you tonight, dear friends, that big problem that's facing you, rise above it.

Take off and get up there, and rise above it. Tomorrow I'm going to have another experience. I'm going to ride an eggbeater, one of these helicopters.

I've never been in one, and I'm not sure how I'll feel when they turn you over on your side or tip you up on the end and take you along. I hope they go high enough and come down when they should. But I like to fly now because I like to see things that get small.

I like to rise in God, where the little things of life aren't big after all, but as small as they are. God is spirit. I think I've got to close.

It's 829, and that's time to close. Now, do what they tell you in Bible school is never to do. Break off a sermon and finish it next week.

But I have much more to say about this. I want to talk further about the internality of worship and what spirituality means. I've told you tonight what it isn't.

Next Sunday night I want to tell you what it is. Do you know what I thought you would do tonight? We've had a baptism of service. Seven people have followed the Lord in baptism.

There's a parsonage, two studies here, offices. You can meet and talk with us, you can come to see us. Sometimes people do, and I have talked with them, and they have more than I do.

So I'll not press an invitation tonight, but I'll tell you what I want you to do. I want you to stand and sing, and sing well, lustily and in reverently in the chorus. Holy, holy, holy.

What's the number? 347. Day is dying in the west, heaven is touching earth with rest. Worship all the night, set your evening lamps alight through all the sky.

Let's worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. If your sins are gone, and Christ lives inside of you, you can sing that song with awful, wonderful meaning tonight. Let's stand and sing it.

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