

Vanity, or Spirit and Truth?

by Chip Brogden

The sermon emphasizes the importance of worshiping God in spirit and truth, and invites the audience to submit to Christ and live a lifestyle of devotion to God.

Duration: 27:47

Scripture: Isaiah 29:13, Matthew 15:7-8, Mark 7:6-7, Acts 9:1-6, Galatians 1:11-12, Philippians 3:10

Topics: "Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his frustration with the traditional practices of the church and emphasizes the need for a genuine relationship with Jesus. He references the story of Saul on the way to Damascus, highlighting how Saul's encounter with Jesus transformed him from a religious teacher to a follower of Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of worshiping God in spirit and truth, rather than going through empty motions. He shares his personal experience of seeking the Lord for truth and how God revealed His Son in him.

Transcript

I tell you, this morning I am very burdened in my heart and very hungry for spirit and truth. I don't know about you. I don't know you personally and you don't know me personally.

But I am so tired of business as usual. I am so tired of dead religion. I want spirit and truth and I want the real Jesus.

In Matthew chapter 15, I am going to read a couple of passages of Scripture. This is the first one, Matthew 15 verse 7. Jesus says, ye hypocrites, and I would like for all of us just to take those two words, ye hypocrites, and just sound it out loud. Just as Jesus would have done.

You know, there is a thing going around, what would Jesus do? Well, there is one thing Jesus did. He pointed his finger and he said, you hypocrites. And so right now as we read this passage, I would just like to read that.

And I would like for all of us to say that in unison. You hypocrites. Ready? You hypocrites.

Say it real loud. You hypocrites. I like that.

I mean, I don't like it, but it's the truth. Sometimes. Jesus used the word hypocrite in Matthew 15 different times.

He is the only person in the Bible to use the word hypocrite. So I didn't invent this phrase, or this saying, but this is from the mouth of Jesus. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, these people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

When was the last time you heard a message on that? You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, these people draw near to me with their mouth, and they honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain they do worship me. Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

The next passage of scripture I'd like to read is found in the Gospel of John, chapter 4. John chapter 4, begin reading in verse 23. Again, Jesus is speaking here. He says, the hour comes, and now is.

Everyone say, now is. When the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father seeks such to worship him.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. I don't really have a three-point sermon this morning, or four-point. I'm good for giving four-point messages.

But I just want to share my heart with you, because I believe my heart this morning is the heart of Jesus. I had a book one time, and the book was called, Does God Speak Today? Does God Speak Today? And the book did not try to tell us, yes or no, does God speak today? But it was a very unique book. In the first half of the book, it had all the instances where people spoke or acted in the belief that God was telling them to do something.

And the catastrophe that resulted, because they thought that God was speaking to them, and God was not. The second half of the book, however, talked about instances in which people did hear from God. And they did speak.

And they did act in belief that they were hearing from God speaking to them. And the last half of that book gives accounts of all of the miracles and all of the things that happened when people genuinely heard from God. And were obedient to it.

So quite an interesting book. But in the last half of that book, the half that told us the instances when people did hear from God, and it was genuine. There's a story there of a pastor's wife.

And I'm not sure of the denomination of the church. I don't think it really matters what denomination it is. It could be any denomination.

But like most pastors' wives, she would kind of sit there on the front row while her husband did what he did on Sunday morning. And in the middle of their worship service, she believed that she heard God speak to her. But what she heard God speaking to her, she could not believe.

She doubted that it was the Lord actually saying this to her. Because what she heard was so offensive that she thought, perhaps this is not God. Maybe this is just the devil.

Or maybe it's my own thinking. So she asked God for a sign to confirm that this was indeed what he was speaking to her. Have you ever done that before? Lord, I need some assurance.

I need some confirmation before I step out. I need to make sure that this is you and not me. So she said, Lord, I believe I hear what you're saying.

But if it's really you, if you are really telling me this, then you'll speak to my husband, who is the pastor, and you'll have him to ask me is there anything I would like to share before he preaches. Well, she figured she was pretty safe because he had never done that in all the years of their ministry. She figured that will never happen in a million years.

He's never asked me to share anything. So she thought she was safe. And the pastor got up behind the pulpit.

He opened up the Bible. He was about to open his mouth. And he looked up, looked over at his wife and said, Honey, is there anything you would like to share? And she says her heart was beating a thousand beats a minute because God had confirmed this is what I want you to say.

And so she got up. She walked to the front of the congregation, just like I'm doing. And she spat on the floor.

And she said that is what God thinks of your worship. Now, I'm not going to spit on the floor today because God has not told me to do that. But when we read these passages of Scripture here, I am struck by the fact that there are only two kinds of worshipers in this world.

Now, we read about the first kind in Matthew 15, 7 and 8. These are hypocrites who draw near to God with their mouth. Who honor God with their lips. But their hearts are a million miles away.

Their hearts are not close to him. Then there is a kind of worshiper that Jesus says will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. First kind of worshiper is a hypocrite.

Hypocrite is an interesting word in the Greek language. I'm not a Greek scholar, but I know how to look up words in a dictionary. And hypocrite, in the time of Jesus, is a term from the Greek world.

And it meant an actor. Someone who put on a mask and got up on stage to perform. Back then, Burt Reynolds would be considered a hypocrite.

Sally Field would be considered a hypocrite. Julia Roberts would be considered a hypocrite. It did not have a negative connotation.

It just means they were actors. Actors in a play. And they would wear these masks that would hide who they really were.

Because they were playing a role. They were playing the part of someone else. Now, I've already alluded to the fact that Jesus used the word hypocrite to describe the religious intelligentsia of that day.

Fifteen times in Matthew alone. You hypocrites. You play actors.

You draw nigh to me with your mouth. You honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me. In vain you worship me.

Vanity. If it's vanity, it means it counts for nothing. It means nothing.

In vain they do worship me. You know, some worship is acceptable to the Lord, and some worship is unacceptable to Him. Have you ever considered that? And it all depends on the heart of the person who is worshipping.

Because there is another kind of worship, Jesus says, that the Father Himself is seeking, looking for those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Everything that is done in the name of Jesus is not necessarily spirit and truth. Because Jesus says in that day, many will come to me and say, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name.

In your name we cast out devils. We raised the dead. We healed the sick.

But Jesus will look at them and say, depart from me. I never knew you. You hypocrites.

Play actors. Instead, the Father is looking not for someone who can put on a good show. Not for someone who can get up on Sunday morning and preach a good message.

Not for someone who can get dressed up and attend service. You know, one rule of preaching that I've learned, I may sound like I just started in this and that I'm full of fire. But I've been ministering behind the pulpit since I was 12 years old.

So I'm not a new convert. I'm not someone that just got saved last week and I'm full of zeal. I am someone who has preached and preached and preached.

And I've heard more sermons and I've delivered more sermons than I care to remember. But for all of that, we can go through the motions of church. Go through the motions of religion and still worship God in vain.

Because we're just being hypocrites. Where is spirit and truth? Where is reality? It is in the hearts of those whom the Father seeks to worship Him in spirit and truth. What am I talking about this morning? Well, first of all, I'm not talking about you've got to be charismatic, or you've got to be Pentecostal, or you've got to be Methodist or anything else.

I'm not talking about a style of worship. I'm talking about a heart of worship. I'm not talking about you have to swing from the chandeliers.

But I am talking about, are you worshipping God in spirit and truth this morning? Or is it just an act? Just a part in a play that we perform for 60 minutes on Sunday morning? Because there is no life in that. That, my friends, is counterfeit. That will not get anybody saved.

That will not get anybody delivered. For 16 years, I spent my life in a denomination. And my idea of the world was only as large as that denomination.

I won't tell you what denomination it was. It doesn't make any difference. I grew up in the Methodist church, but that's not where I spent 16 years.

I began to minister and to preach and to do what I believed God had called me to do when I was 12 years old. So I've been around the block a few times. And I have seen them come and I have seen them go.

And I've still got a long ways to go, brother. I've got a lot more to see and a lot more to do. But I want you to know something this morning.

There came a day and a time in my life when I decided I wasn't going to play the religious game anymore. Because what I saw was false. What I saw was vanity.

Because I read that Scripture there in Matthew. And it says, In vain you worship me. He's all near to me with your mouth, with your lips.

Oh, praise the Lord. Oh, hallelujah. But you worship me in vain.

It's worthless. It's pointless. Going through the motions.

And I began to get so hungry for reality and for truth. I said, I don't care what it costs. Me personally, I don't care.

Someone asked Duke Ellington one time, can you give me a definition of rhythm? And Duke Ellington said this, If you have rhythm, you don't need any definition. And if you don't have rhythm, ain't no definition going to help. And when I say this morning that I was hungry for the Lord, You say, what do you mean you were hungry for the Lord? I said, listen, if you were hungry for the Lord this morning, you know what I'm talking about.

You don't need a definition. And if you're not hungry for the Lord this morning, ain't no definition going to help. I was hungry and thirsty for Jesus.

I tried religion. I tried denomination. I tried pastoring churches.

All of these things are about Jesus. All of these things are good things. But I learned that the things about Jesus are not the same as Jesus Himself.

They become distractions. They become clutter. From the pure vision, the pure revelation of who Jesus is.

It's following man's idea of ministry. Man's idea of what it meant to pastor a successful church. What is a successful church today? Well, people will tell you, if you've got 100 people or 200 people and you're growing numerically, then you've got a successful church.

We are so interested in quantity and not quality. We're interested in numbers of people filling the pews. Not whether or not they're growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Are they becoming mature spiritually? I'd rather have five people that are growing in the depths of Jesus Christ than 5,000 people that will worship God in vain. Because it says the Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit. The Father seeks.

We hear a lot about seeking God, seeking Jesus, seeking the Father, seeking the kingdom of God. I preach and I teach that and that's good. But did you know that there is also an element that is often overlooked? And that is that the Father God Himself is seeking something.

He is seeking. He is looking. He is searching.

What is He looking for? What is He seeking? It says He seeks those people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. What do we mean in spirit and in truth? Because God is spirit. God is not in our emotion.

God is not in our feeling. God is not in our church buildings. God is not in our religious programs.

He is not in our theology textbooks. He is spirit. He is life.

Jesus says the words that I speak to you are spirit and life. But the flesh profits nothing. Worshipping God in the flesh, making the outward look good while the inward is decaying.

It's all vanity, Jesus says. Jesus has such a knack for getting right to the heart of a matter. Here in the South, we like to kind of dance around the issue, beat around the bush.

We never really come out and say what we think. So when our friends from up north come down and they speak their mind and they say what they think, sometimes it offends us down here because we're not used to that. I kind of like that.

I think it's refreshing. But the thing about the Lord Jesus is He does not beat around the bush. He does not play games.

It says in the book of Revelation that He stands in the midst of the candlesticks. The candlesticks are the churches. He says, I know you.

Seven times in those churches, He says, I know you and I know your works. Good, bad, lukewarm, whatever the case may be, Jesus says, I know your works. And He went right down the line and said, these are the things that I am pleased with.

He always begins with positive reinforcement. If there's anything positive to be found, but in a couple of churches, there was nothing positive. He couldn't even start out with a compliment.

My point is this. The Lord is all about reality and truth and getting to the heart of the matter, not playing games. That's why He could look at the religious leaders of the day and say, you hypocrites, you play actors.

You teach for commandments of God, the traditions of men. But the Father this morning is seeking those of us who will say, I'm tired of that. I am tired.

I'm tired of churchianity. I want the reality of Christ. The reality of Jesus.

Jesus revealed Himself to me. Jesus revealed Himself to me. Do you hear what I'm telling you this morning? Jesus revealed Himself to me.

Just as Saul was on the way to Damascus. He was a religious man. He was an instructor, a teacher.

He knew all about the Bible, the Old Testament anyway. And he was on the way to Damascus to arrest and deliver over to death these people who were following a man named Jesus. And he thought he was doing the right thing.

He thought he knew God. But as he neared Damascus, it says that a bright light shone from heaven. And it knocked him to the ground.

And he heard a voice in Hebrew saying, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And Saul said, who are you, Lord? And the voice said, I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. And then in the book of Galatians, Paul says, I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel I preach, I did not learn from man. I did not receive it from man.

I didn't get it out of a book. I didn't go to school and learn it. He says, it is by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has to be our passion. Not our convenience, but our reason for being. Paul says, I count everything else that is done, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

The first church I pastored closed. And I thought it was because the devil was just after me. I thought it was because the people weren't faithful.

I had all these ideas and all these suggestions that people told me as to why the church failed. But it came a point in my life when I just had to lay all of that aside, lay aside all of my books, all of my notes, everything that I was doing, and just stop. And seek the Lord for truth.

And I can tell you this morning, when the Lord revealed himself to me, in my backyard at 113 John Street, Lewisburg, North Carolina. He said, what do you mean the Lord, did you see a vision? And I'm not saying I had a vision. Did you see Jesus? I'm not saying I saw Jesus.

But God the Father revealed his Son in me. Not out there, but in me. Opened the eyes of my understanding.

Opened the eyes of my heart. To know this Jesus that I had been preaching for all these years. And you know, when he opened my eyes to see all that was him, he also opened my eyes to see all that was not him.

And I discovered that a lot of what I was doing, in fact a majority of what I was doing in the name of Jesus, actually had nothing to do with Jesus. It had to do with my church, my ministry, my calling, my work. Where are you getting at, brother? What I'm saying is this.

Every one of us has to come to that point where we cast aside everything else and say, Father, reveal your Son to me. Because we get so distracted. We get so scattered.

We get so confused. Jesus looked on the multitudes and it says he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Confused, wondering.

The solution today is not another church service. It's not another building program. It's not another outreach.

It's not another ministry. And it's not another preacher. The Father is searching for those who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

Decide in your heart today, I want to be one who worships God in spirit and in truth. You might not even know what that means. I don't know that I can even explain to you this morning what it means to really worship the Lord in spirit and truth.

But I know this, it's a lifestyle. It's a way that I live. It's not something that I do on Sunday morning and do on Sunday night and do on Wednesday night and then I'm over and done with for the week.

But worship is a lifestyle of submitting to Christ, hungering for the truth no matter what. And the Father is looking for those types of people, for those kinds of people. It's a very simple message.

It's a very simple invitation. The Father looks. The question I leave with you this morning is this.

If the Father is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and truth, has he found what he's looking for in you personally? That's what God's looking for. He's not looking for a big preacher. He's not looking for a big revival.

He's not looking for a dynamic church, cutting edge ministry. He's looking for people who will humble themselves and seek his face and worship him in reality. Not in vanity, but in reality.

And the simple invitation to you this morning is, if that's what God's looking for, has he found it in you personally? Ask yourself that. You don't have to impress me. You don't have to impress those around you.

Is the Father pleased? Has the Father found satisfaction in you this morning? Not based on your works. Not based on whether you're good or bad or sinful or whatever the case may be. Worship God.

Worship him in spirit and truth. And the Father, it says, he will come and he will make his abode with us. He will have communion with you.

We have to give Jesus the preeminence. We have to give Jesus the first place in all things. That's what separates sheep from goats, Brother Ken.

Sheep give Jesus the preeminence in all things, and they live and they follow the lamb. Everyone else is playing games, playing the actor, playing the role. Has the Father in heaven found what he is looking for in this place this morning? I pray that he has.

Has the Father found what he's looking for in my heart this morning? I pray that he has, and I pray that he does. Has he found what he's looking for in your heart this morning? I pray that he has. And if he hasn't, I pray that you'll give that to him.

Not because I'm asking you to, but because he's inviting you to.

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