

John 4:23-27

by St. John Chrysostom

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, true worship, and humility in our relationship with God, highlighting the need for a spiritual and incorporeal approach to worship.

Scripture: Matthew 18:1, John 4:23-25, John 4:27, John 21:15

Topics: "Worship In Spirit", "Faith And Salvation"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of faith as the foundation of blessings and salvation, emphasizing the necessity of believing in Christ's teachings. He explains how true worship transcends physical locations and rituals, focusing on worshipping God in spirit and truth. Chrysostom delves into the significance of God being a Spirit, highlighting the need for incorporeal worship through purity of mind and soul. He also explores the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, showcasing Jesus' humility and the importance of meekness and gentleness in displaying true love for Christ.

Transcript

Jesus says unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes, when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

1. Everywhere, beloved, we have need of faith, faith the mother of blessings, the medicine of salvation; and without this it is impossible to possess any one of the great doctrines. Without this, men are like to those who attempt to cross the open sea without a ship, who for a little way hold out by swimming, using both hands and feet, but when they have advanced farther, are quickly swamped by the waves: in like manner they who use their own reasonings, before they have learned anything, suffer shipwreck; as also Paul says, Who concerning faith have made shipwreck. 1 Timothy 1:19 That this be not our case, let us hold fast the sacred anchor by which Christ brings over the Samaritan woman now. For when she had said, How say ye that Jerusalem is the place in which men ought to worship? Christ replied, Believe Me, woman, that the hour comes, when you shall neither in Jerusalem, nor yet in this mountain, worship the Father. An exceedingly great doctrine He revealed to her, and one which He did not mention either to Nicodemus or Nathanael. She was eager to prove her own privileges more honorable than those of the Jews; and this she subtly argued from the Fathers, but Christ met not this question. For it was for the time distracting to speak on the matter, and to show why the Fathers worshipped in the mountain, and why the Jews at Jerusalem. Wherefore on this point He was silent, and having taken away from both places

priority in dignity, rouses her soul by showing that neither Jews nor Samaritans possessed anything great in comparison with that which was to be given; and then He introduces the difference. Yet even thus He declared that the Jews were more honorable, not preferring place to place, but giving them the precedence because of their intention. As though He had said, About the 'place' of worship you have no need henceforth to dispute, but in the 'manner' the Jews have an advantage over you Samaritans, for 'ye,' He says, 'worship ye know not what; we know what we worship.'

How then did the Samaritans know not what they worshipped? Because they thought that God was local and partial; so at least they served Him, and so they sent to the Persians, and reported that the God of this place is angry with us 2 Kings 26, in this respect forming no higher opinion of Him than of their idols. Wherefore they continued to serve both Him and devils, joining things which ought not to be joined. The Jews, on the contrary, were free from this supposition, at least the greater part of them, and knew that He was God of the world. Therefore He says, You worship ye know not what; we know what we worship. Do not wonder that He numbers Himself among Jews, for He speaks to the woman's opinion of Him as though He were a Jewish Prophet, and therefore He puts, we worship. For that He is of the objects of worship is clear to every one, because to worship belongs to the creature, but to be worshipped to the Lord of the creature. But for a time He speaks as a Jew; and the expression we in this place means we Jews. Having then exalted what was Jewish, He next makes Himself credible, and persuades the woman to give the greater heed to His words, by rendering His discourse above suspicion, and showing that He does not exalt what belongs to them by reason of relationship to those of His own tribe. For it is clear, that one who had made these declarations concerning the place on which the Jews most prided themselves, and thought that they were superior to all, and who had taken away their high claims, would not after this speak to get favor of any, but with truth and prophetic power. When therefore He had for a while removed her from such reasonings, say ing, Woman, believe Me, and what follows, then He adds, for salvation is of the Jews. What He says is of this kind: neither, that blessings to the world came from them, (for to know God and condemn idols had its beginning from them, and with you the very act of worship, although ye do it not rightly, yet received its origin from them,) or else, He speaks of His own Coming. Or rather, one would not be wrong in calling both these things salvation which He said was of the Jews; which Paul implied when he said, Of whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all. Romans 9:5 Do you see how He commends the old Covenant, and shows that it is the root of blessings, and that He is throughout not opposed to the Law, since He makes the groundwork of all good things to come from the Jews?

John 4:23

But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father.

We, O woman, He says, excel you in the manner of our worship, but even this shall henceforth have an end. Not the places only, but even the manner of serving God shall be changed. And this change is at your very doors. 'For the hour comes, and now is.'

2. For since what the Prophets said they said long before the event, to show that here it is not so, He says, And now is. Think not, He says, that this is a prophecy of such a kind as shall be accomplished after a long time, the fulfillment is already at hand and at your very doors, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. In saying true, He excludes Jews as well as Samaritans; for although the Jews be better than the Samaritans, yet are they far inferior to those that shall come, as inferior as is the type to the reality. But He speaks of the Church, that she is the true worship, and such as is meet for God.

For the Father seeks such to worship Him.

If then He in times past sought such as these, He allowed to those others their way of worship, not willingly, but from condescension, and for this reason, that He might bring them in also. Who then are the true worshippers? Those who confine not their service by place, and who serve God in spirit; as Paul says, Whom I serve in my spirit in the Gospel of His Son: and again, I beseech you that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service. Romans 1:9 and 12:1

John 4:24

God is a Spirit

But when He says this, He declares nothing else than His incorporeal Nature. Now the service of that which is incorporeal must needs be of the same character, and must be offered by that in us which is incorporeal, to wit, the soul, and purity of mind. Wherefore He says, they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth. For because both Samaritans and Jews were careless about the soul, but took great pains about the body, cleansing it in various ways, it is not, He says, by purity of body, but by that which is incorporeal in us, namely the mind, that the incorporeal One is served. Sacrifice then not sheep and calves, but dedicate yourself to the Lord; make yourself a holocaust, this is to offer a living sacrifice. You must worship in truth ; as former things were types, such as circumcision, and whole burnt offerings, and victims, and incense, they now no longer exist, but all is truth. For a man must now circumcise not his flesh, but his evil thoughts, and crucify himself, and remove and slay his unreasonable desires. The woman was made dizzy by His discourse, and fainted in at the sublimity of what He said, and, in her trouble, hear what she says:

John 4:25-26

I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He has come, He will tell us all things. Jesus says unto her, I am that speak unto you.

And whence came the Samaritans to expect the coming of Christ, seeing that they received Moses only? From the writings of Moses themselves. For even in the beginning He revealed the Son. Let Us make man in Our Image, after Our Likeness Genesis 1:26, was said to the Son. It was He who talked with Abraham in the tent. Genesis 18 And Jacob prophesying concerning Him said, A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a leader from his thighs, until He come for whom it is reserved, and He is the expectation of nations. Genesis 18 And Moses himself says, The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet of your brethren like me, unto Him shall you hearken. Deuteronomy 18:15 And the circumstances attending the serpent, and the rod of Moses, and Isaac, and the sheep, and many other things they who chose might select as proclaiming His coming.

And why, pray, says one, did not Christ lead on the woman by these means? Why did He instance the serpent to Nicodemus, and mention prophecy to Nathanael, but to her say nothing of the kind? For what reason, and why? Because they were men, and were versed in these things, she a poor ignorant woman unpracticed in the Scriptures. Wherefore He does not speak to her from them, but draws her on by the water and by prophecy, and brings her to make mention of Christ and then reveals Himself; which had He at first told the woman when she had not questioned Him, He would have seemed to her to trifle and talk idly, while as it is by bringing her little by little to mention Him, at a fitting time He revealed Himself. To the Jews, who continually said, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? Tell us if You are the Christ John

10:24, to them He gave no clear answer, but to this woman He said plainly, that He is . For the woman was more fair-minded than the Jews; they did not enquire to learn, but always to mock at Him, for had they desired to learn, the teaching which was by His words, and by the Scriptures, and by His miracles would have been sufficient. The woman, on the contrary, said what she said from an impartial judgment and a simple mind, as is plain from what she did afterwards; for she both heard and believed, and netted others also, and in every circumstance we may observe the carefulness and faith of the woman.

John 4:27

And upon this came His disciples, (very seasonably did they come when the teaching was finished,) and marveled that He talked with the woman, yet no man said, What seekest Thou? Or, Why talkest Thou with her?

3. At what did they marvel? At His want of pride and exceeding humility, that looked upon as He was, He endured with such lowliness of heart to talk with a woman poor, and a Samaritan. Still in their amazement they did not ask Him the reason, so well were they taught to keep the station of disciples, so much did they fear and reverence Him. For although they did not as yet hold the right opinion concerning Him, still they gave heed unto Him as to some marvelous one, and paid Him much respect. Yet they frequently are seen to act confidently; as when John lay upon His bosom, when they came to Him and said, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? Matthew 18:1, when the sons of Zebedee entreated Him to set one of them on His right hand, and the other on His left. Why then did they not here question Him? Because since all those instances related to themselves, they had need to enquire into them, while what here took place was of no such great importance to them. And indeed John did that a long time after towards the very end, when He enjoyed greater confidence, and was bold in the love of Christ; for he it was, he says, whom Jesus loved. What could equal such blessedness?

But, beloved, let us not stop at this, the calling the Apostle blessed, but let us do all things that we also may be of the blessed, let us imitate the Evangelist, and see what it was that caused such great love. What then was it? He left his father, his ship, and his net, and followed Jesus. Yet this he did in common with his brother, and Peter, and Andrew, and the rest of the Apostles. What then was the special thing which caused this great love? Shall we discover it? He says nothing of this kind about himself, but only that he was beloved; as to the righteous acts for which he was beloved he has modestly been silent. That Jesus loved him with a special love was clear to every one; yet John does not appear conversing with or questioning Jesus privately, as Peter often did, and Philip, and Judas, and Thomas, except only when he desired to show kindness and compliance to his fellow Apostle; for when the chief of the Apostles by beckoning constrained him, then he asked. For these two had great love each for the other. Thus, for instance, they are seen going up together into the Temple and speaking in common to the people. Yet Peter in many places is moved, and speaks more warmly than John. And at the end he hears Christ say, Peter, do you love Me more than these? John 21:15 Now it is clear that he who loved more than these was also beloved. But this in his case was shown by loving Jesus, in the case of the other by being beloved by Jesus.

What then was it which caused this special love? To my thinking, it was that the man displayed great gentleness and meekness, for which reason he does not appear in many places speaking openly. And how great a thing this is, is plain also from the case of Moses. It was this which made him such and so great as he was. There is nothing equal to lowliness of mind. For which cause Jesus with this began the Beatitudes, and when about to lay as it were the foundation and base of a mighty building, He placed first

lowliness of mind.

Without this a man cannot possibly be saved; though he fast, though he pray, though he give alms, if it be with a proud spirit, these things are abominable, if humility be not there; while if it be, all these things are amiable and lovely, and are done with safety. Let us then be modest, beloved, let us be modest; success is easy, if we be sober-minded. For after all what is it, O man, that excites you to pride? Do you see not the poverty of your nature? The unsteadiness of your will?

Consider your end, consider the multitude of your sins. But perhaps because you do many righteous deeds you are proud. By that very pride you shall undo them all. Wherefore it behooves not so much him that has sinned as him that does righteousness to take pains to be humble. Why so? Because the sinner is constrained by conscience, while the other, except he be very sober, soon caught up as by a blast of wind is lifted on high, and made to vanish like the Pharisee. Do you give to the poor?

What you give is not yours, but your Master's, common to you and your fellow-servants. For which cause you ought especially to be humbled, in the calamities of those who are your kindred foreseeing your own, and taking knowledge of your own nature in their cases. We ourselves perhaps are sprung from such ancestors; and if wealth has shifted to you, it is probable that it will leave you again. And after all, what is wealth? A vain shadow, dissolving smoke, a flower of the grass, or rather something meaner than a flower.

Why then are you high-minded over grass? Does not wealth fall to thieves, and effeminate, and harlots, and tomb-breakers? Does this puff you up, that you have such as these to share in your possession? Or do you desire honor? Towards gaining honor nothing is more serviceable than almsgiving. For the honors arising from wealth and power are compulsory, and attended with hatred, but these others are from the free will and real feeling of the honorers; and therefore those who pay them can never give them.

Now if men show such reverence for the merciful, and invoke all blessings upon them, consider what return, what recompense they shall receive from the merciful God. Let us then seek this wealth which endures forever, and never deserts us, that, becoming great here and glorious there, we may obtain everlasting blessings, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-john-chrysostom/john-423-27/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net