

SERIES: Gospel of John: Seeing is Believing?
 SERMON: *Living Water*
 SCRIPTURE: John 4:1-42
 SPEAKER: Pastor Josh Black
 DATE: October 16, 2011

Missions exists because worship doesn't.

Over the last two weeks we have been blessed to have two missionaries preach, Don Davis and Curt R. I hope you were challenged and edified by both of them as much as I was. We're going to continue our focus on missions this morning as we look at John 4. But before we look at John 4, I want you to consider a statement about missions from John Piper's book *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*.

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.”

The Great Commission is the mission of the church, to preach the gospel and make disciples of all peoples. But worship of God is the result we hope will come from executing our mission. Missions exists because worship doesn't...right?

Well, not exactly. If you look around, you'll notice that worship is everywhere. We were created to worship and so all human beings will worship...something. The problem is not a lack of worship. The problem is, in our sin, we don't worship the right thing. In our sin, we don't worship God. The Bible calls this idolatry; anything we worship other than God. Consider this quote from Tim Keller in his book *Counterfeit Gods*.

“Each culture is dominated by its own set of idols. Each has its ‘priesthoods,’ its totems and rituals. Each one has its shrines – whether office towers, spas and gyms, studios, or stadiums – where sacrifices must be made in order to procure the blessings of the good life and ward off disaster. What are the gods of beauty, power, money, and achievement but these same things that have assumed mythic proportions in our individual lives and in our society? We may not physically kneel before the statue of Aphrodite, but many young women today are driven into depression and eating disorders by an obsessive concern over their body image. We may not actually burn incense to Artemis, but when money and career are raised to cosmic proportions, we perform a kind of child sacrifice, neglecting family and community to achieve a higher place in business and gain more wealth and prestige.”

I could go on, but I think Keller illustrates the problem. We are made to worship, but in our sin we worship the wrong things, we are idolaters. In the Old Testament idolatry is called spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 3). Instead of worshiping the one true God we have gone after other lovers; we have whored after idols. Or as Dick prayed earlier, we have “...forsaken [God] the fountain

of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for [ourselves], broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13).

If you are worshipping the wrong things, I suspect you are worn out this morning. Idols are nasty taskmasters; they require a lot, but don't give much in return. If you are worshipping the wrong things, I suspect you are thirsty this morning. Jesus' offers a solution to our problem. Jesus offers living water that will quench our thirst forever – Jesus offers eternal life for whoever believes that he is the Christ, the Savior of the world.

In order to fulfill the soul-satisfying purpose for our lives we need a whole new life; we need eternal life; a life that can only be given to us by Christ. As long as we remain in our sin we will chase after idols. But if we receive the new life that Jesus offers it is possible for us to live the soul-satisfying lives we were created to live in worship of the one true God. Verse 23 says, *“...the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”* Jesus makes true worship possible.

Sermon in a sentence: To worship God we must receive eternal life, which is available to whoever believes Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world.

“Whoever”

Notice a very important word in this sentence, “whoever.” This word may be the most important word in understanding our text this morning. Look back to chapter 3 beginning in verse 15, *“...**whoever** believes in him [the Son of Man] may have eternal life.”* Verse 16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever** believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Verse 18, *“**Whoever** believes in him is not condemned, but **whoever** does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”* And verse 36, *“**Whoever** believes in the Son has eternal life; **whoever** does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”*

Eternal life is an entirely new kind of life that only God gives. And it is available to whoever believes. It is available to Jews and Gentiles, to men and women, to adults and children, to the religious and the irreligious, to the moral and the immoral, to the educated and the ignorant. And as we see in chapter 4, it is even available to a Samaritan woman.

Two weeks ago Don Davis talked about frog kissing. According to Dr. Davis a frog is someone who is not desirable and from the world's perspective is not even worth our time. Frogs are untouchables. But our mission in the church, Davis argued, is to kiss frogs because we never know what frog might become a prince. We are called to share the gospel with all peoples because eternal life is available to whoever believes, even frogs. Because Dr. Davis' illustration was so good and because it has so much relevance to our text this morning I'm going to continue to use it.

To a 1st Century Jew, a Samaritan woman would have been the wartiest frog of all frogs. But Jesus offers eternal life to her – he kisses a frog in verses 7-26. Then he makes it plain that he wants his disciples to kiss all of the Samaritan frogs from the village in verses 27-42. But there is a contrast between the way Jesus sees things and the way his disciples see things.

We'll spend most of our time in verses 7-26 considering what Jesus sees, and then we'll spend a little time in verses 27-42 considering what we're called to see.

WHAT JESUS SEES. (7-26)

Verses 3-7 establish the setting in this story. Jesus travels with his disciples from Judea to Galilee. This was about a three-day journey.¹ Samaria was half way between Judea and Galilee. So, Jesus has been travelling for at least a full day and he's tired and apparently thirsty. He sits down at Jacob's well around noon and when a woman from Samaria shows up to draw water, he asks her for a drink. The woman's response to Jesus' request begins a very interesting dialogue, which reveals that it is in fact the woman who is truly thirsty.

We are all thirsty

The woman is confused by Jesus' request for a drink. Look at verse 9. "*How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?*" (*For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*)" The woman's confusion makes perfect sense, if you understand the background. Samaritans were warty frogs to Jews. The reason Jews had no dealings with Samaritans was that Jews considered Samaritans unclean, or impure.

The first wart on Samaritan frogs was their **race**. According to the Jews, Samaritans were an impure race. In 722 B.C. the Assyrians captured Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians deported the best of the Israelites and re-populated the land with foreigners. The Israelites who were left in Israel intermarried with these foreigners.² Samaritans are the race of people that came from this intermarriage. Intermarriage was a big no-no for the people of Israel and so Jews considered Samaritans half-breeds.

The second wart on the Samaritan frog was their **religion**; the Jews considered their religion impure. Samaritans only held to the first five books of the Old Testament. Jews considered all of the Old Testament Scripture. Samaritans worshipped on Mt. Gerizim. Jews worshipped on Mt. Zion, in Jerusalem (cf. v. 20).

In addition to race and religion, Jews also considered Samaritan women to be an **impure gender**. Although *all* Samaritans were impure in the eyes of Jews, women were especially impure; women were the wartiest of all the Samaritans.³

Jews considered Samaritans untouchables, literally. If a Jew had dealings with a Samaritan they thought they may become impure themselves – they may get a wart. So, when Jesus asks this Samaritan woman for a drink, it is no surprise that she is floored; after all she was an untouchable.

I tried to think of parallels we may have with this Jewish sentiment toward Samaritans in American Christianity. Are there any people we treat as untouchables? I don't know that there is a perfect parallel, but I wondered what you would think if you saw me at Starbucks with an

¹ Mike Bullmore. "The Worship That Flows From The Life Jesus Gives."

² Don Carson. *The Gospel According to John*.

³ Ibid. Jews thought all women were unclean when they were menstruating. The Jewish leaders had a saying regarding Samaritan women: "all 'the daughters of Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle' and therefore perpetually in a state of ceremonial uncleanness."

overtly homosexual man who had tattoos all up and down his arms. Do we treat homosexuals as untouchable? Can you think of another group that may be considered untouchable? Can you think of somebody whom you are treating as an untouchable?

This Samaritan woman was an untouchable, or so she thought. But she didn't know whom she was talking to. Don Carson says, *"far from being defiled by what is unclean, Jesus sanctifies what he touches. Others who touch lepers become unclean; Jesus touches a leper and brings healing."* Or to use Don Davis' analogy again, some touch frogs and get warts, Jesus kisses frogs and they become princes. Jesus will not be defiled by this woman; he is able to purify her.

Jesus offers living water

Look at verse 10. Jesus says to her, *"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."*

The woman is even more floored by this response. She essentially says to him, "Who do you think you are?" Look at verse 12. *"Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."* There is much irony in this statement. She means this as an insult. But in reality Jesus is greater than Jacob.

Jesus' response to her in verses 13-14 finally gets the woman's attention. *"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again [forever]. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

What is it exactly that Jesus is offering her? Mike Bullmore offers a number of suggestions.⁴ Jesus knows the longing of the human heart. The longing of our hearts is to find satisfaction in something outside of ourselves. Our longing is to worship. But Jesus also knows the temptation of the human heart. We are tempted to look for satisfaction in everything except for God.

The real issue with the woman is not her race and it is not her gender. The real problem here is much deeper. And so Jesus, who sees into the hearts of all people (John 2:25), goes right to the heart of the issue. He goes to the place where she has been looking for satisfaction for years.

Look at verses 16-18. *"Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.'"*

Jesus painfully, yet lovingly reveals the real problem. The real problem is this woman is thirsty. She's been looking to men for satisfaction and they have left her dry and unsatisfied. She is living in a relational desert. She has hewed out cisterns for herself, but there is no water there; there is no satisfaction there. Jesus shows the woman there is no water in her broken cisterns so she can see her need for the living water.

⁴ Mike Bullmore. "The Worship That Flows From The Life Jesus Gives."

And friends, there is no lasting, living water for us apart from God. There is nothing but death and despair, a desert. But Jesus offers us living water. The water he offers is eternal life.

You see the problem is not just that we worship the wrong things. The problem is that we are dead in our sin and we are unable to worship the living God. In order to worship the eternal, living God, we have to be given eternal life. The woman was dead in her sin. But Jesus is able to make alive whoever believes. The problem wasn't her warts. The problem was she was a frog and frogs can't worship the King! But Jesus is able to turn frogs who believe into princes who worship.

Look again at verse 21. *"The hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."* When Jesus says, the hour is now here, what he means is that when he comes on the scene everything changes. Jesus and the woman have a discussion about the proper place of worship, where one goes to meet with God.⁵ But Jesus is the Christ, the great meeting place between God and man. He gives eternal life through his death and resurrection that makes worship possible.

Eternal life is not just a get out of hell free card; it's not just fire insurance.⁶ Eternal life is an entirely new kind of life that only Jesus can give. It is the kind of life that leads us to live the soul-satisfying life we were made to live worshipping God now and into eternity.

And this life is available to whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. You can stop looking in the dry places for water. And idol is anything that we look to in order to answer the questions God has already answered. Am I loved? Am I desirable? Am I valuable? God has already answered all of these questions. God loved and desired us so much that he sent his only Son to redeem us. We are of infinite value because we are made in his image.⁷ We don't need to look anywhere else for the answers. These other sources will always come up dry in the end. *"All who are thirsty all who are weak come to the fountain, dip your heart in the streams of life. Let the sin and the sadness be washed away in the streams of his mercy..."*⁸ Eternal life is available to whoever believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for your sins!

As I have said, the word "whoever" is a very important word. It is found in chapter 3, but it informs our understanding of chapter 4. Another reason I know this is John makes a strong contrast between Nicodemus in chapter 3 and this Samaritan woman in chapter 4.

These two people couldn't be more different than they are. Nicodemus was a Jewish man. He was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. He was a powerful man. He was at the top of the religious food chain. He was a highly educated man. He was from all appearances a moral man. He would have been honored in his community. I said three weeks ago, if anyone would have been granted access to God on his own merits, he would have.

⁵ David Helm. "John 4:1-26."

⁶ Mike Bullmore. "The Worship That Flows From The Life Jesus Gives."

⁷ Judy Dabler. Class Notes. CM 6572 Pastoral Counseling for Marriage and Family

⁸ Lyrics from the Vineyard song "All Who are Thirsty."

The woman in chapter 4, however, was illiterate. She was without influence. She was a despised moral outcast. She was an impure Samaritan woman. If anyone would have been denied access to God from a human perspective, she would have.

But these two very different people have one very important thing in common. They both need Jesus desperately. Actually neither of them had access to God on their own, because the only way you can worship God is if you have been given eternal life by Jesus Christ through faith. Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again. In other words he needed eternal life. Jesus offered the woman living water. In other words she needed eternal life. The problem was the same for both of them. They were both sinners. The solution was the same for both of them. They both needed eternal life that is only available through Jesus Christ. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God will have eternal life. That is the only way.

If Nicodemus couldn't be born again through his legalism then none of us can. If the Samaritan woman wasn't kept from the living water by what she had done then none of us will be. Your good behavior won't earn you eternal life. But your bad behavior won't exclude you from eternal life.

Both the prodigal son and the older brother were lost and estranged from their father. The father wanted both of them to come home. The younger, wild brother came home. The older, legalist brother stayed outside (Luke 15:11-32). Whoever believes Jesus is the Christ who died for our sins will have eternal life.

Remember we said earlier that missions exist because worship doesn't. And we said that the mission involves kissing frogs. I want to draw your attention to a profound insight my administrative assistant, Julie Egy, had this week regarding Jesus' frog kissing mission. But first we need to look again at verses 1-4. *"Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria."*

Jesus leaves the Pharisees in Judea, the religious people in a religious place, to go to a woman in Samaria, an impure person in an impure place. And the text tells us he had to. And this is Julie's observation – Jesus is avoiding those who by all human accounts should be saved to save those who by all human accounts should be avoided.

Jesus was on a mission to kiss a frog. Jesus saw things very clearly. What about us? How do we see things and how *should* we see things?

WHAT WE'RE CALLED TO SEE. (27-42)

There is a contrast in this passage between the way Jesus sees things and the way his disciples see things. Jesus sees the prince in the frog; that is obvious. His disciples on the other hand marvel that he is talking to a woman (27).

Little do they know, the woman just had her life transformed. Look at verses 28-30. *"So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who*

told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?’ They went out of the town and were coming to him.”

The disciples didn't see what Jesus saw. But he knew they needed to because in a few moments a bunch of Samaritan frogs were going to be coming over the horizon . And so Jesus has a little sit-down with them. Look at verses 35-36. *“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”*

Jesus tells them to open their eyes – the fields are ready to harvest whoever believes, even Samaritans. He wants his disciples to see things the way he sees them. And he wants us to see things the way he sees them. He wants us to see people the way he sees people. He wants our hearts to break for the things that break his heart. He wants us to want what he wants. The Father is seeking worshippers and so he sent his Son on a mission. He wants us on that same mission. We can't die for the sins of people, but we can tell people that Jesus died for their sins.

He wants us to have a bigger view of our purpose. Missions exists because worship doesn't. There are people all over the world and all over this city who are dead in their sins, seeking satisfaction in all the wrong places. He wants us to go to them and share this good news.

To worship one must receive eternal life, which is available to whoever believes Jesus is the Savior of the world. If it is available to whoever believes then Jesus wants us to share this good news with whomever. He wants us to share with people like Nicodemus and people like the woman at the well. He wants us to kiss frogs.

If you are thirsty this morning, come drink from the streams of living water by placing your faith in Jesus Christ. If you have been filled already, do like the woman and call others to come and see Jesus for themselves so that they can be filled to the brim with eternal life and fulfill their soul-satisfying purpose in life to worship God in spirit and truth.

Prayer:

Heal my heart and make it clean
 Open up my eyes to the things unseen
 Show me how to love like you have loved me
 Break my heart for what breaks yours
 Everything I am for your kingdoms cause
 As I go from nothing to eternity⁹
 May I do so for your glory, Amen.

⁹ Lyrics from the Hillsong United song “Hosanna.”

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