

John 4 1-42

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- [0 : 00] It would be useful to have that passage in front of you that Caleb read to us earlier. We'll be referring to that as we go through this evening.
- At 8.15am on the 6th of August 1945, the United States sent a plane, a Nola Gay, which dropped a hydrogen bomb called Little Boy on Hiroshima.
- It was a horrific event in which 140,000 Japanese people died, but as a result of that and subsequent bombings of Nagasaki, it culminated in the end of the Second World War.
- And then a time of peace, relatively as far as the world is concerned, has taken place until this time. And it was declared, when that bomb went off, that the world would never be the same again.
- Well, when Jesus went to the cross, it was also a horrific event, as we've been thinking about over this weekend. But this time, only one man died, Jesus.
- [1 : 23] And with his resurrection, peace then became possible for all who believed in him. But this peace wasn't the end of a war, but peace with God himself.
- And this event guaranteed that the world would never be the same again. So the question that I want to ask us tonight is, so what changed when Jesus rose from the dead?
- What changed? What makes it never the same as it was before? Well, just to think of some of the questions I'm going to be asking as we go through tonight, I want you to imagine for a moment a scene whereby you're travelling in a car with some young family members.
- Okay, we've got eight grandchildren, so you understand what I'm talking about. And you're in a car and you're travelling on a journey. And after a few, what seems like seconds, you get the first question.
- What's that over there in that field? A couple of seconds later, you get the next question. Why are the sheep lying down in that field over there? And then you get the next question.
- [2 : 48] Where are we going? And then again, what time is it? And then finally, when will we get there?
- And the next one follows. When are we going to stop for something to eat? Well, you can imagine on a long journey, you get an awful lot of questions.
- And what I want to do tonight is to pose some questions for us to answer from this passage that we looked at earlier. And it's to do with what, who, why and when and how.
- Those sorts of questions. And the first one I've mentioned, what did the Lord's resurrection change? Well, I read up what a few people have said about this.
- And I'm going to quote you just two from what could have been many. C.S. Lewis said this, Jesus has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man.
- [3 : 54] He's met, fought and beaten the king of death. Everything is different because of what he has done. And the second quote is from John Murray, who said this, Everything before this in the incarnate life of our Lord moves towards the resurrection, and everything after rests upon it and is conditioned by it.

And both men, in different ways, said the same thing, didn't he? Everything has changed. Everything. There is nothing that is the same, apart, of course, from God's promises.

And at the centre of this story, we have this Samaritan woman. And one of the most important things that needs to be cleared out of the way before we start is, you'll notice in several stories in the Bible, it's always a Samaritan.

The Good Samaritan. It's one of the most famous stories. And then later on, when we think about people like Philip, Philip went to preach to the Samaritans.

And there are various other stories in the Bible. There was this hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. But I'm not sure, certainly wasn't when I was thinking about this, why that was.

[5 : 20] Obviously, it's a very deep-seated thing. So I decided to find out. This apparently all started when the tribes were carried off into captivity.

The Jews had made a pact with Egypt. And when they were ultimately defeated by the Babylonians, they were taken off to Babylon. But the Samaritans, they didn't have that treaty with the Egyptians.

And they were a bit separate to them. And they eventually were taken off by a man called Shalmanezar in 722 BC. And he took them off to Assyria.

At least he took most of them off. He left behind the very poorest people, the ones who had basically nothing, who it wasn't worth taking along. And then the Babylonians came across into the area and began to integrate with the people there.

And what happened was, they basically set up a religion of their own. It was broadly based on the worship of God, but it was corrupted because of the things that the Assyrians brought with them.

[6 : 33] And so theirs was a completely different religion in the end, so that when the Jews came back to the area, they, of course, came back to build the temple.

And the Samaritans wanted to be a part of that. But this is what the response was when they asked if they could help with this particular project.

This is in Ezra 4, verse 3. Zerubbabel said this to them, You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the Lord.

And the Samaritans took offense at that, and so they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. And that fueled the contempt that the Jews had for them.

And ever since that time, there'd been this enmity between them. And that's at the core of what I want to think about. This is a wonderful story about this woman who was, we understand, converted.

[7 : 37] It never actually says that, but we assume from what's said that she became a Christian. And many people have preached on it. I don't intend to do that.

I want to focus on verses 21 to 24, where Jesus is speaking to this woman and says, Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you'll worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know. For salvation is from the Jews. You can imagine this coming to the woman with the background I've just given.

For salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For they're the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.

God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. So the first question that we need to consider in looking at what has changed since the resurrection is where do we worship God?

[8 : 46] It was quite clear in those days what the woman said. She said, You're a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is Jerusalem, and in particular, in the temple in Jerusalem.

But Jesus says that this time is coming, and he says there now is, when there won't be people worshipping the Father on this mountain, or in Jerusalem.

This mountain had certain connections with the Jewish religion, because as they mentioned, Jacob's well was there. So it could well have been that the people in the past would have thought that this ground was special to them, but Jesus is destroying that in saying that these things aren't actually important anymore.

This is one of the things which has happened since the resurrection. And Jesus, if you like, in speaking to this woman, he's preempting what was going to come when he rose from the dead and went to be with his Father in heaven, because he's basically saying to this woman, but everything about what you believe, in fact he was saying to all the Jewish nation, everything that you've ever believed, forget it, because everything has now changed.

The time is coming, and now is. In other words, Jesus was aware of what was going to happen. He knew about the cross.

[10 : 22] He knew that he would have to die. He knew that he would be risen from the dead. And he knew that this would change everything. So, he gives them some warning of this.

Previously, in John chapter 2, in verse 19, you remember these words. When he was asked Jesus a question, he said, destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.

Why did he say the temple? Why didn't he say the town hall? Why didn't he say that inn over there? Why didn't he say the building that, you know, will be in tomorrow?

He specifically mentions the temple, because in the eyes of the people in those days, this was the place where they met with God. From the early days of the tabernacle, going across the desert, where the Lord literally was present in the place, people believed that the temple was where you were to worship God.

And in one sense, we still believe that, don't we? That's why we come to church. But the whole point that Jesus is making is, if this church was reduced to rubble tomorrow, it wouldn't make any difference to our worship of God, would it?

[11 : 40] It would make absolutely no difference. And this is the point that he's making. It's irrelevant where you worship God. Where is the wrong question?

This was made clear when the resurrection actually happened, because in Matthew 27, verse 51, you remember, it says this, that when Jesus died, he said the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

From top to bottom. In other words, not from the bottom where any human would do it, but from the top down to the ground. This was something that God did.

It was symbolic of the fact that this curtain, which was cutting off the holiest of holies from the rest of the church, the rest of the temple, was now ripped into shreds.

Everyone, in other words, would have access to the Father. And, as if we needed to be reminded a bit further, when we get into Acts, I've picked one reference from Acts, but there are many others, not only in Acts, but in the letters of Paul.

[12 : 52] Acts chapter 17, verse 24, says, God does not live in temples built by hands. God does not live in temples built by hands.

And this was from the passage, remember, where the Athenians were worshipping an unknown God. And what does Jesus say to this woman? You Samaritans worship what you do not know.

The world is full of people today who are worshipping something. They have faith in something, as Peter mentioned this morning. But what isn't quite clear.

But Jesus says here, and in other places, that this worship of God takes place in one place, and one place only.

And that place is mentioned, again, in many scripture references. I'm just going to read from 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16.

[13 : 57] Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.

For God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. We have been set aside by the Lord for his worship.

We are literally the temple of God. That's why, whether Christians are in war-torn regions, where they can't actually get to a place of worship, or whether, for some reason, they don't have their finances to have a church, or whatever, that is totally irrelevant.

Because, one of the effects of the resurrection was that the site, as it were, in which worship takes place, moved from the focus of the temple in a specific place to inside the heart of the individual.

In other words, we take the Lord with us wherever we go. Isn't that why, in one of those hymns that we sang at the start, it talked about Christ going with us day by day, with us?

[15 : 17] And it obviously raises another question, not one of the ones that I'm following through here, but raises an obvious question. Would it be possible for a man or a woman to be going through life and not realizing that Christ was in them?

Is it possible? I don't believe it is. I think people know exactly whether they have Christ at the center of their lives, whether Christ is in their hearts.

And this is the first point that he's trying to teach this woman who eventually, after this teaching, would turn to the Lord and find for herself the truth of what Jesus is saying.

So where do we worship God, Jesus, and the whole of the Bible tells us that we worship him in our hearts. In our hearts.

The second question that arises is who do we worship? It seems an obvious answer, but Jesus is saying to this woman that she was worshipping an unknown God.

[16 : 36] And then he says that this is what I'm going to talk to you about. In Acts 17 again, when he's in Athens, he says this, this God that you don't know, I'm now going to proclaim to you.

He's going to tell this woman who she should be worshipping. And that comes a little bit after the passage we're looking at. Verse 25, the woman said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming.

When he comes he will explain everything to us. Then Jesus declared, I who speak to you am he. People will say in the world, well, I don't believe in God, I don't believe in Christ and I don't want to be a Christian.

Why? Because I've never seen God. and yet people who say that they don't know God, we do know Christ because not only is he described and is this whole book about him and his life and his death and his resurrection and his activity amongst men but also as we just said when someone comes to be a Christian they know it because it's in their heart.

They know it. they don't think they know it. They don't believe that on a good day they know it. They know it. So that he can answer anybody without any emphasis of doubt or any semblance of I'm not sure about this.

[18 : 16] We know Christ because we know him in our hearts and that is the only place where we can know him. so before the cross it was conceivable before the resurrection that people would not know God would not understand would misinterpret but after the resurrection there's absolutely no doubt and as Jesus said in this passage not only is this what's going to happen but it's already come.

The process was already started when Christ came to this earth as a baby that it was known that it would culminate in his resurrection culminate in realizing that the world would turn to Christ as the only saviour.

Notice what he says to this woman. He says you Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know for salvation is from the Jews.

and of course the irony is that was true in that the person would be the saviour came from the Jewish line but the Jews of course rejected him and reject him to this day.

They're still bound up in that temple in Jerusalem. They're still bound up in all of the Old Testament things that went before where it was all about legalism all about satisfying the law all about bringing tithes all about making sacrifices and Jesus here is saying that all of that is gone.

[20 : 04] It's a new covenant. It's not the old covenant which bound us to the law and confirmed our sin. This is the new covenant that he makes with his people.

So where do we worship God in our hearts? Who do we worship the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord through him? And the next question is how do we worship?

Well we've touched on it there and this woman was doing the same thing because before the resurrection people were going through the rules and the laws and doing what they thought would please God.

But after the resurrection we're told here in this passage what we must do in terms of worship. God is spirit and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit. And what is the truth? It's the truth that's in this word. It's the truth about Jesus Christ.

[21 : 16] It's the truth about his willingness to die this horrific death that the world might be set free from the penalty of death if people turn to him.

So how do we worship? We must worship him in spirit and in truth. It's a simple message that he's given to this woman.

And as soon as he reveals that he's the one, as soon as he says I who speak to you, he noticed the disciples came and this woman left.

And I know that another preacher on one occasion mentioned this, so I'll mention it now since I'm pinching his idea. What was the most important thing to that woman prior to meeting Jesus?

It was getting water from the well. This was the end of the day. All the commentators say it could have been at various times but this was the end of the day. All the evidence points to this would be the last opportunity that this woman had to get water from the well before it was dark and she wouldn't have come.

[22 : 26] So the most important thing to her was that jar of water that she'd just drawn from the well. And notice when she leaves she left the water jar behind.

because she'd found something far more important. As the Bible says in another parable she'd found the pearl of greatest price and she wasn't ever going to lose it.

She'd found this man who she in her own words says come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ? Could this be the Christ?

This is why there's some doubt. doubt if she had become a Christian she would know it was the Christ. Could this be the Christ?

We trust that later on she came to that same conclusion but she certainly went back and talked to all the people in the town to tell them about this man that she'd met.

[23 : 33] so what about these things? What about these questions that need answering? I think it's clear from this passage that this was preempting what would happen at the resurrection.

Jesus was pointing to the fact and we knew it all the way through his life didn't we that when he spoke to people how many people were converted in a temple?

How many people were converted in Jerusalem? How many people came to know the Lord Jesus in a place of worship? Weren't most of them beggars?

Weren't most of them we know the man who was dropped in through the roof of a house? We know that Jesus met many other people in his time who heard him and believed in him and they didn't have a church to go to.

They didn't have a temple to worship in but that man you remember was unable to walk he said he left singing and praising God for all that he'd done.

[24 : 39] He worshipped God because he'd seen the Lord at work. And there's one other thing about what happened when the Lord was raised from the dead.

Because he's alive he's able to do exactly what he did with this woman. Because the Lord when he comes to a man or a woman he doesn't come as a name he doesn't come with an army of angels he doesn't come in any other way but one to one.

when you meet Jesus you meet him one to one. If there's anybody here who thinks that they can be a Christian because their mum or dad is a Christian or their brother or sister is a Christian or that they know somebody who is a Christian this immediately wipes that out.

The resurrection wiped it out because now the Lord comes to those that he's come to save. He leaves them in no doubt when they have been saved because he gives them the Holy Spirit.

That temple of our hearts becomes a temple in which God is worshipped. it may be a hard lesson to learn.

[26 : 13] How often when we pray is our heart and our mind cold towards God and then we wonder why he doesn't answer our prayers. When we pray from the heart when we pray because the indwelling Lord Jesus Christ through his Holy Spirit is alive and in the temple of our bodies then we'll truly be able to pray in a way which God finds acceptable.

Well there's a conclusion to this in that when this woman had gone back to tell all the people in the village about this you remember Jesus said to her God is looking for worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

I think the interesting thing about the end of this story is what happens because when he comes to the people and they come to him then these Samaritans believed some it said because of the woman's testimony that he told me everything ever did but when they urged him to stay when he stayed within two more days others became believers and notice what they said they said to the woman we no longer believe just because of what you said now we've heard for ourselves and what did the woman say could this be the Christ what do these people say once they'd heard the Lord he says now we've heard for ourselves and we know this man really is the saviour of the world that's the difference often between someone who goes to church is religious who does the sort of things that by the law people used to do but the difference is for those who truly believe in

Christ since the resurrection that they know they know the Lord Jesus it was said this morning in the service wasn't it if you don't know him you don't belong to him so whatever else we might believe we need to know the Lord well I want to close by just coming on to one of the things that was said in Mark's Gospel chapter 12 we're told that when people asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment he actually spoke this to them and see how this fits in with what we've just been thinking about Mark chapter 12 verses 29 30 says this you're to love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength and we can do that wherever we are we can do that when we're on our own we can do that when we're in a crowded place we can do it anywhere because it's heart soul mind and strength and when that happens we can be sure that the promise that Jesus made to disciples when he left this world is true of us

Matthew 28 verse 20 surely I'm with you always to the very end of the age what about the application of this well just imagine going through life believing that you know Christ believing that you had that power that authority from heaven that you had that salvation that the Bible talks about and then you were put in a position suddenly where you had to make use of that particular knowledge or that belief suddenly to find that it wasn't true the Bible says that when people come to the last day of their life on this earth that ultimately is when they'll find out the truth but then it will be too late because all the way through their lives perhaps they believed that they were following God that they were worshipping him but in reality they were just worshipping all the things that surround the religious background of most other religions but imagine on the other hand that you follow what these people have followed that this

[31 : 19] Lord Jesus is dwelling in your heart that you know it you don't just partially believe it so that in any argument you're always on the retreat thinking that somebody's got a more powerful argument our most powerful argument is I know him I know him in here and that promise that he will be with us always to the very end of this age isn't that the only thing that will carry us through isn't it the only thing that does carry us through difficult times knowing that the Lord Jesus is with us is in our hearts he never leaves us he never forsakes us he's always there to the very end of the age so from the three four questions that I asked to summarize what we said

I think it's absolutely clear from this passage what we need to be thinking about the first is as with John Wesley when he was converted in that hall with the you know having met the Moravians and been affected by their religion which he said was a heart religion what did he say about his conversion he said he found his heart strangely warmed if we don't find our hearts strangely warmed towards God can we really believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is living within us that's his temple his temple is our hearts when people are asking us questions about the one that we worship are we often trying to give them a reply about something we don't know if we are then we don't know when we have

Christ in our hearts when we realise he's been raised from the dead we do know it's a certain hope it's a certain knowledge that the Lord Jesus is with us we must also remember to take this injunction that Christ gave to this woman and to every Christian who ever lived we must worship Christ in spirit and in truth when we worship God it should be based on the truth of his word the truth that he's revealed to us the mystery that revealed the mystery of Christ and his love for all the people and finally our worship isn't built on a building it's not built on a feeling it's not even built literally on the words in here it's built on a personal relationship with

Christ and we've got to ask ourselves the question how is that relationship going with us if you're in a relationship with anybody a wife a brother sister whoever it is and somebody says how are you getting on you know don't you you know how you're getting on it's either great or you're going through a difficult patch or whatever it is imagine somebody asking this question how is your walk tonight with Christ how is your walk with him because when we stand before the judge in that day that will be the only important question not how much have you given to charity or the church not how many people have you helped not what have you done the only thing that will be asked is what is your relationship with

Christ and as long as we can give the answer as the people who were baptized did the other day that I trusted and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as my saviour and gave my life to him that is the only thing that counts and we all need to learn those things don't we how to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth if we have not started that process let's begin it or restart it today when we think of all that God did for us on that day of resurrection when he rose from the dead the most glorious thing in the history of the world when he defeated death and gave hope to everyone in this world who would trust in him may the Lord enable us to know his presence with us day by day

[36 : 32] I am he that liveth that liveth and was dead behold I am alive forevermore oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor who has ever given to God that God should repay him for from him and through him and to him are all things to him be the glory forever Amen