Legitimate Worship

Objective: Urge people to verify that their worship is legitimate worship.


Memory: John 4:24, “G_i_s_, a_h_w_m_w_i_s_a_i_t_.

Introduction:
1. Worship is intended to be praise and honor directed to the Creator!
2. If we are “worshipping” out of fear, or obligation, or a sense of duty to family or community, or maybe even out of a sense of tradition, our worship will fall far short of what it is intended to be.
3. We are intended to render genuine devotion to God out of love and thanks and desire to please Him.

We want our worship to please God.  (HOW?)
In the passage that was just read, Jesus asserts that true worshippers will worship God in spirit and in truth.  God is seeking that kind of worshipper!  This morning, let’s explore what that means.  Let’s talk about how to please God with our worship.

I. It must be “in spirit”.
A. From the heart.
   1. John 4:24, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”
   2. Notice this is not optional.  For worship to please God it MUST be of a spiritual nature.
   3. It is NOT rote and ritual.  It is NOT just simply compliance with a set of rules!  It is not just “lip service” or “going through the motions”.  To be real, it must be from the heart!
   4. Are you sincere in what you are doing?  Are you feeling what you are doing?  Are you paying attention to what you are doing?  Are your actions and thoughts “living” or are they dead procedures?  Make sure they are they intentional, emotional, sincere and with purpose!
   5. Make sure you worship stems from heartfelt devotion and desire to bring Him praise and honor!
   6. Do we sing praises by rote and ritual, or do we really mean the words with all our heart?!
   7. Pay attention to the words of songs and of prayers and really mean what we are saying.
   8. Jesus (who knows what God is looking for because His the very word of God become flesh, because He is sent to make God known), is disgusted with what He sees being presented as worship by the Jews.  He calls them hypocrites.  
      a. Mark 7:6, “He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."
      b. Isaiah 29:13, “The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."
      c. If we are like them then our worship is not worship at all.  It does not please or honor God.
   9. Worship to is supposed to (MUST) engage the life focus from your inner being.  Your very spirit!
B. Living attuned to God.
   1. God is seeking those to worship Him whose very spirits are attuned to God’s Spirit by virtue of the Holy Spirit!  For your very life essence to be in accord with His and honoring Him in every way!
   2. Worship God with a “spirit” that embodies and reveals Christ in your heart and in all your actions.
   3. If this is true, then “worship” includes not only getting together with other Christians for formal worship efforts and times of assembly, but “worship” includes your whole life.  A life that actually “worships” God in spirit and in truth.
   4. Romans 12:1-2, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.  Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
   5. So “worship” includes Sunday morning, but in a very real sense you are “worshipping” while you are at work.  While you are watching TV?!  While you are chatting with friends and neighbors!
C. “Where” to worship is not the question.
1. The place doesn’t matter. The heart, the spirit does! John 4:21, “…Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”

2. Which city or which building is not the question! Can it be a home? Sure. Any place works IF the spirit is right.

3. “When” is not the question here either. In fact, true worship is our very lives “all the time”!

4. Is it possible to be genuinely and fully belong to God with all your heart for one hour out of the week and NOT be fully devoted to Him the rest of the week?
   a. Where do you draw the line between “your time” and “His time”?
   b. When do you NOT belong to Him?
   c. When do you NOT owe Him honor and devotion and your very life?
   d. When do you NOT owe Him glory and honor and praise?

5. True worshippers MUST worship in spirit. That is an all-the-time concept.

Sometimes folks are genuinely, wholeheartedly devoted, but have wrong, erroneous concepts of what is involved and how to go about it. For worship to be pleasing to God…

II. It must be “in truth”.

A. “Truth” involves sincerity and legitimacy of devotion to God.
   1. Truth is being not hypocritical. It is not saying one thing and doing another. It is not calling Him “Lord” and then living as if you are “lord” yourself.
   2. Truth is not pretending, but being real.
   3. Truth is being a Christian all the time.
   4. Truth is not submitting to Him and praying to Him only when we are in trouble.

B. Worshipping in “truth” involves the spirit.
   1. Truth cannot live and act and “worship” contrary to the Spirit of God.
   2. True worship seeks and submits to and complies with the very Spirit of God.
   3. You cannot worship in truth if you have hidden or unattended sins you are hanging on to.
   4. You cannot call Him “lord” one minute and cuss or gossip or view pornography the next.
   5. True worship must involve the very spirit with which Christ reached out to the Samaritans in this passage.
   6. So true worship cannot involve the constant demeaning or putting down of others even when they are wrong or misunderstanding. It cannot involve despising or neglecting of other Christians. You cannot worship in truth if you have anger in your heart toward a brother or sister in Christ.
   7. True worship cannot involve “pride” or spiritual arrogance. It understands “grace” and “forgiveness” and has no room for malice or prejudice.
   8. 1 John 4:20, “If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.”
   9. True worship is being real in devotion to following God and His teachings.

C. In truth, man-made doctrines can not replace teachings of God.
   1. Matthew 15:9, “They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.” Everybody’s way is not okay, not acceptable, not pleasing to God!
   2. “We all worship the same God don’t we?”, is not really approved by God. (Otherwise Jesus would have approved of the Samaritan’s worship. He didn’t)
   3. “As long as we worship, it doesn’t matter how” is a common doctrine / teaching in our time, but is not approved by God. “Any old way” is not okay in truth.
      a. This is adamantly illustrated throughout Old Testament. Leviticus 10:1-2, “Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.”
      b. We do need to ask, Is this practice “authorized” by God? Does it stem simply from man’s desire or convenience, or am I earnestly trying to do God’s things God’s way to please Him?
   4. Isaiah 29:13, “The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”
5. I’m not going to list a long list of what I understand to be man-made doctrines at this time, but would be glad to discuss it with anyone. My point here is to urge each with a serious heart to worship God to take a careful inspection and determine, is this practice ordained and appointed by God or is it a “tradition” that derives from men and their desires?

D. “Truth” does not involve false doctrines either.
1. The Samaritans were not doing what God was really looking for because they did not KNOW what to worship; John 4:22. “You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”
   a. How were they wrong in their understanding of God and what God expects and wants?
   b. How were they wrong in their understanding of the means of salvation?
2. The Apostle warns Timothy to not allow false doctrines. 1 Timothy 1:3. “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer “
   a. What were those “Christian” men in Ephesus teaching? How was it in error? How did such doctrines reflect in their corporate worship or their life worship?
   b. By verse 4 we know they were teaching “myths”. What kind of “myths” were they promoting? Do we promote and “myths”?
   c. By verse 10, we know they were teaching something that was “contrary to the sound doctrine” and did not “conform to the glorious gospel.” (1 Timothy 1:10)
   d. Did they have wrong ideas of the nature of God? The nature of Christ? The nature of the HS?
   e. Were they accepting sin?
   f. Wrong ideas on what is acceptable in living as a Christian?
3. Praising a valid concept of God MUST be important. Knowing the very nature of God MUST be important. Seeking God with all one’s heart MUST be important. Knowing God in a personal relationship through Christ and the Holy Spirit MUST be important.
4. God is Truth. Jesus defines Himself as Truth. Truth must be very important.

E. “Truth” involves sincere behavior.
1. It involves actually doing things. It involves actual compliance with God’s will.
2. Matthew 7:21-23. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’
3. To be acceptable to God we must actually DO the will of the Father, not just the parts we like.

So What?
Jesus asserts very clearly in, John 4:23. “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” That time is here. True worshippers MUST worship in spirit and in truth. Worship MUST involve complete sincerity and complete reality. The plea from Scripture this morning is to examine your life and practices to ensure that you are a true worshipper such as God is seeking.

Closing Prayer:
Legitimate Worship

To provide:  John 4:21-24

"G_i_s_, a_h_w_i_s_a_i_t_.",

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How to please God with our worship.

I. It must be “in spirit”.
   A. From the heart.
      John 4:24   Mark 7:6   Isaiah 29:13

   B. Living attuned to God.
      Romans 12:1-2

   C. “Where” to worship is not the question.
      John 4:21

II. It must be “in truth”.
   A. “Truth” involves sincerity and legitimacy of devotion to God.

   B. Worshipping in “truth” involves the spirit.
      1 John 4:20

   C. In truth, man-made doctrines can not replace teachings of God.

   D. “Truth” does not involve false doctrines either.
      John 4:22   1 Timothy 1:3

   E. “Truth” involves sincere behavior.
      Matthew 7:21-23

So What?  
   John 4:23
   Examine your life and practices to ensure that you are a true worshipper such as God is seeking.