

A part of this Autumn's teaching series, we are continuing to think of what values we believe God is directing us towards as a Church family. And today we are considering the important aspect of worship. We are to be a church community that worships.

And so here's a question for us all – What is the thing that satisfies you the most? What is it that gives you satisfaction? Do you receive the most satisfaction when a task gets done? Are you most satisfied when you can just sit in the house without having to get up for something? What is it that satisfies you?

I'd like to put to you all that actually nothing on earth will ever satisfy you enough. Today I want you to go away from here knowing one thing, and that is that God has designed every one of us to only be truly satisfied through our worship of him. Let me be even more explicit. Your soul and mine will never be truly satisfied apart from worshipping God. It doesn't matter how great your marriage is, it doesn't matter how much money you make or how secure your retirement is, it doesn't matter how healthy you are, it won't truly satisfy you.

Your soul, my soul is designed by God to only be satisfied in worshipping him. True Worship will bring about a satisfaction that is deeper, truer, fuller, and longer lasting than anything else.

In our reading from John 4 we see a woman who has sought satisfaction in relationships with man after man, none of whom could satisfy her ultimately. Here's a woman who has sought satisfaction in her reputation, only to now find herself alone, drawing water in isolation. And if you think about it, every one of us today has the same thirsts. We try to quench our thirst in all kinds of ways—through people, jobs, possessions, pursuits and other things. But we constantly find ourselves coming up empty.

One of the most famous songs written over the last century was actually created in ten minutes by Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. He said it summarised his view of the world and his frustration, even amidst all his success with everything around him in the world. It was entitled, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." And you will remember the lyrics, "And I try and I try and I try – I can't get no - satisfaction."

We are never satisfied, and yet in the midst of all of this Jesus comes alongside and says, "I offer you different water—the kind of water that will quench your thirst **forever**. You won't have to look elsewhere. The kind of water I give wells up to eternal life. It lasts forever."

"How do I get this water?" the woman asks. And Jesus engages her in a conversation about the very topic of this morning – worship. Jesus says that we will never require anything else when we realise what he offers. God has designed your soul to be satisfied in worshiping Him, seeking Him, knowing Him and loving Him. Remember how Jesus described how our souls are satisfied in John 6:35 when he says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Tue worship just doesn't happen; it comes when we recognise what Jesus has done for us individually. If you come not knowing that, then I don't believe you are worshipping God. How can you worship someone that you haven't surrendered to as Lord? When there is a personal encounter taking place in our lives, that understanding of salvation, then it totally transforms what happens when we gather together as the Church. Authentic Christians don't gather together for worship because they have to. Authentic Christians gather together for worship because we want to. This is not some religious obligation where we think we need to do this in order to appease our God, gaining some kind of credit from Him so that maybe He will bless us in return. Authentic Christians

gather together out of a sense of celebration, because they truly understand what Christ has done in them. So folks, if our values are about true authentic worship gathered as the people of God, then we come not because we think of it as something we have to do, but instead it's something that we long to do. And when we do this, others that join our church community will see it for what it truly is.

I have this real fear that many people within our main denominations have gone for years performing a dull, casual, monotonous religious motion, and have totally missed the depth of what God has designed for our souls. And so this greater understanding of our own salvation shapes our understanding of and our priorities in worship as a Church family. For too long the mainstream church congregations have been convinced that the priorities in worship are the quality of the music, the style of music or the liturgy, none of which we see the Bible prioritising in worship. So if God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshiping Him, then we want to worship Him the way He's designed us to worship Him, and not our own perceptions. So let's look at what our priorities in worship should truly be :

1. Our worship should have a biblical focus

We need to prioritise God's Word in our worship. Jesus says to this woman in verse 24, "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth." God's Word must be central, otherwise we veer off and interpret what **we** think is best. We need his Word and the inspiration of His Spirit to help us know more about him and who he is. Every week as we open this Word, we learn, we see, we discover more and more about Who God is. The more we see God, the more we will be satisfied in God. Psalm 16:11 states, "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence; with eternal pleasures."

Folks, in worship, let's ensure God's Word continues to be central. Let's stop allowing the pull of the world to influence our understanding of the path ahead of us. God and His Word are the only path to life. As Psalm 16 says, it's the way to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. This is why we want God's Word to be central in our worship.

2. Another priority in worship is the need to be together

Don't allow anyone to tell you that worshipping in their own home (unless they are house bound) is ok. It's not. Remember Hebrews 10:25 that we should not neglect meeting together, but instead we are to gather to encourage one another. We need to remember this is not about each of us individually and what we are comfortable with. We don't want our worship gatherings to be dominated by our own personal style or preference, because as soon as we do that we immediately exclude the other and shut any door of inclusivity. We want our worship to be a clear expression of our diversity in our community together. So can I encourage you that if you know people who are not regularly gathering with us any longer, to go and encourage them to come as we gather together in worship.

3. Our priority is to worship in reverence

Let's for a moment just think about what we are gathered together right now for. We're here to worship God. He is the God Who rules over the whole world, the God Who spoke and a universe came into being, the God Who created you and me. Think about Psalm 139. He formed me. He is the God Who is sustaining you right now. This is the God who we meet today. Therefore we should not come casually to him. Now some people have mistaken this to mean that actually the Church needs

to be a quiet place, that it needs to have an element of order where children must be kept silent. That's not what reverential worship is. You see there's a danger that we can come today, find our seats, maybe start singing, participate in the responses, bow our heads in prayer, even open up our Bibles – and to the person in the pew next to you it ticks all the boxes, and yet our minds may never come face to face with the fact that we're gathered together before the Lord God. Our reverence in worship is about our focus being on God and him only. Let me be absolutely clear - we are not the audience here. God is the audience here. Let us never walk away from worship critically assessing, "Did worship today please me? Did anything offend me?" Let us always walk away from worship humbly asking, "Did my worship today please God?" That's what we mean by reverential worship.

4. Next our priority in worship should bring about an honest confession in us.

In this story in John 4, Jesus asks this woman, "Why don't you go call your husband?" She says, "I don't have one." He says, "You're right. You've had five husbands and now you're living with a man who's not your husband." Now I don't know about you, but doesn't that seem a bit bold, even insensitive, to just go right for her sin and her struggles like that?

There are at least two reasons why Jesus did this with her, and why he wants to do the same with us. Firstly, it's because in worship, Jesus desires to cleanse us from our sin. Jesus doesn't expose this woman's sin for her condemnation. No, he does it to bring her salvation. You see in worship, Jesus welcomes mess, our mess. I truly believe that He delights when we bring our mess into church, and not leave it at the door. We can't truly worship God with our lives if we're not honest with God about our lives. So if you have mess this morning, then you are very welcome.

It's actually very tempting to hold on to sin as we gather. You ask someone here this morning how they are, and the response is, yeah, great, when in fact that's not true. We're trying to pretend it's not there—going through the motions, singing those songs, listening to the sermons—then we move on with our lives. But in the middle of it all, Jesus is saying, "Stop! It's in this place as you worship my Father that you need to come open with your mess". Hear this this morning folks - stop trying to hide your sin from God. It's utter foolishness. You're not fooling God. He has made a way in Jesus for the mess to be got rid of.

Jesus also desires to comfort us in our sorrow. Jesus is addressing head on the pain that was in this woman's life, from man after man who had abandoned her, Jesus wants her to be honest with Him so that she can experience comfort that her soul needs amidst the hurt she has experienced. This is such good news today in a hurting world.

You see, worship is not us saying together, "All right, let's put aside all the tough things we're walking through in life, then come and worship." All those trials, all those challenges you're walking through right now, the pressures of work, the uncertainty of the future, whatever it is, that we put them aside so we can come and worship. No, no, no. You bring all those things and lay them before God, because He is big enough to handle all of them – you're not. If you go out of here today carrying the things you walked in with, then friend you've not allowed Christ in, and you've allowed the community of the church to sit uncertain about what it can do to help, because all I see week after week is someone broken and not willing to submit to the Lord the burden that drags around like a weight tied to your leg. Folks if that's you today, remember that worship is designed by God to meet you where you are, to bring you comfort. So come in honest confession.

5. Finally, Worship compels us to mission

If we read the remainder of the passage from John 4 we see that the woman leaves her water jar and goes back to the village to tell folks about Jesus. And she brings all kinds of Samaritans with her to meet Jesus. So the picture is clear; when we come in true worship, it always leads to mission, always. When our souls are satisfied in God, it starts flowing out from you. This is why we end our times of worship with the dismissal, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord". Folks, there are literally thousands of people in our community who do not know the satisfaction that's found in God alone – they're still searching for something else. But the incredible thing as we gather here, is that we live next to them. We work next to them. We go to school with them. We play and shop and eat and do all kinds of things alongside them. But the question is do we want **them** to be satisfied in God? Our worship is fuel for the goal of mission. If we grasp the significance of our corporate worship and the satisfaction that comes from worshipping God, then we will want others to experience the gladness in God.

So as we gather together each Sunday in both our churches, our worship must always have God's Word at the centre, we must never lose the momentum of gathering together, our worship must be in reverence to our Lord God and not the objects of worship, our worship should bring about in us an honest confession, and then finally it compels us to mission.

The reality is that when all around us is no more, when our life ends, all the things we have been striving for in life to satisfy us will be of complete insignificance. However there will be one thing that will remain. And that is that those who truly have surrendered to the Lord God as their own satisfaction and saviour will gather around the throne with every nation, tribe and tongue declaring his praises. And do you know what we're going to do? We're going to worship. We're going to worship forever, not just with our songs, but with life to the full. Our entire being will have a sole purpose of worship, because God has designed our souls to be satisfied in worshipping Him for all eternity. Let's live toward that end and let's celebrate as a church family every single week in a way that brings glory only to Him and satisfaction to our souls.