

John 4:16-26; Mt. 18:18-20; Where to Worship I. The Place for Worship II. The People of Worship  
Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, does it matter where you are right now? Does it make a  
difference- the place where we are located when we worship the LORD? Are some places holier than  
others? For example, some have said that praying to God from the top of mountain makes them feel  
closer to God. But does the location in which we pray matter? Well, today we are going to consider the  
significance of the place in which we worship. Although we miss being together as a congregation  
today- is the fact that we are unable to congregate as a church somehow make our worship less  
acceptable- less pleasing to God? This morning we are going to focus on the benefit- the blessing we  
have in knowing that God is with us- that our worship is acceptable to Him- no matter where we are! At  
issue is this- where is God located? So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ enables us to worship  
God wherever we might be.

### **I. The Place for Worship**

In our first point we consider the place in which we are able to worship. So where do God and man  
meet? When we read the OT, we find that there is a development that is found. In Genesis- in the  
Garden before the fall- God dwelled with man- they walked and talked together. But when mankind fell,  
the way into God's presence was blocked- man was removed from God's presence and the way was  
guarded by an angel who carried a flaming sword. However, that does not mean that God could not be  
approached- that worship of God was impossible. The OT patriarchs were known to erect pillars and  
build altars that testified to the presence of God- even then on earth. Jacob saw a ladder that stretched  
from heaven to earth. When God met with Moses on the top of Mt. Sinai- God's feet were said to be  
standing on the top of the mountain. Moses was given directions for the building of the tabernacle-  
which was the tent of meeting where God and man could come together. Throughout the wilderness  
wandering, that temple was erected at various places. When the Israelites finally possessed the  
promised land, God allowed his chosen servant to build a permanent house for His name. But does God

really live in these houses built by man? God asked David in II Sam. 7- would you build me a house to dwell in? Listen to the prayer of King Solomon in II Chron. 6:18- will God indeed dwell with man on earth? Behold, the heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain You, how much less this house that I have build! Even though Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem- he confessed- God does not need nor does He dwell in earthly homes. Yes, God was pleased to allow His name to dwell in a city- in an earthly temple for a time- but even that city and that earthly temple were destroyed as we saw last week. Even as Stephen confessed in Acts 7:48- the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands- for what kind of house will we build for the LORD? God's residence cannot be contained in a specific location- His presence cannot be limited to a specific residence. And that is what Jesus taught us in John 4.

As Jesus is speaking to this Samaritan woman, He makes it clear that there is a time coming when God will not make an earthly city or temple the place of His special presence. In John 4:21 He says, the hour is coming when you will not worship the Father at the temple in Jerusalem or a holy hill in Samaria. The earthly Mt. Zion and the earthly Mt. Gerazim would not be a special place- for no earthly, holy city would remain. As Jesus continues in v. 23- the hour now is- the time is at hand- when the place of worship will not matter! It will no longer be a question of where- but how- what kind of worship. The coming of Jesus alters- or rather develops the concept of worship. In the OT, with the shadows, we find places and location- in the NT we find not places but people as we will see in our next point. It is not where but in whom we approach God that matters! Let's think about this- Jesus is saying that we can worship God even if we were in prison- or in an open field! We have great freedom- liberty to worship God wherever we are right now- and every day! We can have fellowship with Him at all times and in every place! The church can gather in a marketplace or in a community center- or in an opening down by the waters edge. The place is not an issue! But how is that possible? The answer is found in v. 24- God is Spirit! Since our God is a Spiritual being- He is present everywhere. We call this the omnipresence of God. The very nature of God enables us to worship Him wherever we are! Let this truth sink in- we have a

wonderful privilege- and freedom to worship God- knowing that we need to travel to a holy place- our prayers are heard and answered wherever we might be! Our praises accepted because God is with us- near us at all times! We are always in His presence- always standing before Him! We cannot be hidden from His sight- and we cannot be removed from His hand! He is not the god of the tree or the god of the mountain and not the plains- He is everywhere- and yet we can know and fellowship with Him! It is Jesus who has brought this great blessing to us- making this blessed truth known to us. It is this very Jesus who has entered the heavenly temple- making peace by way of His blood Heb. 9 says. And one day, it is this Jesus who will bring the heaven temple down to earth as Rev. 21 promises- so that we might always know, see and live in His presence. So the time has come. Now in Jesus we are in God's presence and our praises are always pleasing to the Father because the precious blood has been shed! So true worship is not confined to a specific place- because God is always present with us!

## **II. The People of Worship**

Now that we understand the freedom we have to worship our God wherever we are in this world, in our next point we consider the people of worship- what are the character traits of those who worship the one, true God who is Spirit. This is where the concept of temple returns. In I Cor. 3:16 we find Paul telling the church- you are God's temple- because God's Spirit dwells in you. You are God's building- His structure- you are the place in which God dwells! Now this is a marvelous mystery! Instead of having to travel to a specific location- an earthly temple- to worship God- God actually turns us into a temple! This concept of being filled- or indwelt by the Spirit- is found in our text from John 4. After Jesus tells the woman that God is Spirit, He states that those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. As 4:23 puts it- true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth! These are the kinds of people the Father is seeking to worship Him! So it is not the place- but the people! Not the location- but the attitude! What then is this spirit and truth that God seeks? Being of the spirit means that the heart of a man is engaged- the soul is engaged- and the spirit of the worshipper is humble, heartfelt and

devoted. This kind of worship is only possible if the Holy Spirit is dwelling within- when we worship in spirit, our soul has been revived by the Holy Spirit- so that we have been born again- born of the Spirit, water and the blood. Added to this, true worship must be worship in truth! There is a content that is acceptable- being led by the Son in the way of truth. The Word of truth guides our thoughts and our actions. So then, there must be right doctrine and a right posture. Worship in humility and obedience. Worship that is mediated by the Son who is truth and the Spirit who gives life. Notice that Jesus is bringing worship from the realm of out there- to the realm of the heart- the inner being of a man. What you believe must be governed by God's special revelation- and it must be brought to bear upon your soul. In this way- being guided by the Spirit through the mediation of the Son- true worship takes place. It is not a formality- not a ritual connected to a physical structure- but a heartfelt devotion, love and submission that interests our God! True worship is not restricted to few, select locations. And true worshippers are not reserved to one tribe or nation. Anyone who has these traits- worshipping in spirit and truth- are ushered in the Father's presence and their praise is accepted. Both aspects are needed- a humble attitude and doctrinal soundness. And the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Son are what make this true worship possible. It is this that makes a person a true worshipper- and when we approach God in this way- we know that He is near to us. In fact, Mt. 18:20 says that when 2 or 3 of these worshippers are gathered in Jesus name, He will be among them. It is not even the size of the group that matters- but the heart attitude that proves God is with them.

To conclude, the point of this sermon is not to make light of the things that we miss! I, like you, long for the time when we will be able to fellowship and come together to participate in the corporate means of grace as a full congregation. But let us not forget the benefit that we have – that God is with us- He is present even now in our midst as we worship Him in spirit and in truth. So today we have seen that Jesus Christ enables us to worship God wherever we might be. What a comfort we have- in knowing that God is with us- wherever we are today- and that we are able to give him the worship He delights in!