

Sunday, February 29, 2004 – First Sunday of Lent  
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene – AM Service

## **A Heart Of Worship**

### **John 4:19-24**

This is the first Sunday of Lent. Lent is a tradition of the church and encompasses the 40 days, not counting Sundays, before Easter or Resurrection Sunday. This is a time of reflection and meditation; a time to look at our lives and where we are in our relationship with God. It is a time to consider the love of God for us in sending His Son, Jesus, to die in our place, paying for our sins, and reconciling us to God. Traditionally, it is a time of fasting – giving up something we would normally enjoy – so we can pray and consider our dependence upon God.

Sundays are not included in this solemn time of reflection. Sunday is a day to celebrate corporately – to come together and worship the risen Savior in the fellowship of believers. The reflective time is for us individually and personally. It is during this time that we can assess the reality of our spiritual lives and measure it against God's purposes for our lives.

This year we have asked you to pick up a copy of *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren and being reading from this past Wednesday. There are 40 short chapters that we will read together but separately during the 40 days of Lent. Sundays will be left out of the schedule for you to use to catch up, although it has more impact if you only read the one chapter each day. If you have to catch up, try to separate the reading during the day so you have time to reflect on each chapter individually. We will be preaching on each of the five purposes on Sundays – except next week when we will be having Teen Challenge come to minister. Come prepared next week to give to that work.

The first purpose comes under the heading, "You Were Planned For God's Pleasure" in the book. Each week you will be reading one of the five purposes. The first week deals with the preliminary section called, "What On Earth Am I Hear For," so you will not read about Purpose #1 until next week. After Teen Challenge, the Sunday message will be more in sync with the weekly readings. So consider this a preview ☺

I would like to use John 4:19-24 for our text today in this message I called "A Heart Of Worship." **Worship** is define by Webster as, *"respect or reverence paid to a divine being or supernatural power – an act of expressing such reverence – to regard with great, even extravagant respect, honor, or devotion."*

What is worship to you? What do you consider worshiping God? How and where should we worship God? Historically, there have been feuds, wars, bitterness, and disagreement of this issue and our text today mildly touches on this very issue. Let's look at a small portion of the story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the well.

**Please turn to John 4:19-24.**

## John 4:19-24

*19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."*

*21 Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." NIV*

The Jews and the Samaritans had a long-standing hatred with one another. It primarily revolved around the subject of worship. The Samaritans were originally Jews who intermarried with pagans of the area. They wound up staying in their own area, which was part of the original Promised Land. In fact, the well they are standing at is Jacob's well and was in the Samaritan possession since the days of the Patriarchs. The Samaritans worshiped God on the mountain in their land while the Jews pursued the promise and established Jerusalem as the place of worship by God's instruction. But what was the focus of their worship? Why did the Jews worship in Jerusalem? Why did the Samaritans worship on their mountain? What difference did it make anyway? What does any of this have to do with Purpose # 1 in the book we're reading?

## Planned For God's Pleasure

*"You were planned for God's pleasure." (p. 63)*

God chose to create you – and He did that for *His* enjoyment. You are living for God's pleasure – you are living to bring pleasure to God. This is your number one purpose in life. He created each of us with five senses so that we could experience enjoyment just like He does. Our senses are given to bring us joy, and God wants us to enjoy the life He has given us. **Bringing pleasure to God is called "Worship."** *"Anything you do that brings pleasure to God is an act of worship." (p.64).*

Worship is an inbuilt need to connect with God – and is expressed in Love.

Love toward us: Rom 5:8 – *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* And – love for others – Phil. 2:1-11 – which speaks about being like Christ in our love for others so that we put others before ourselves. Receiving God's Love and loving others are acts of worship.

What is worship to you? Songs? Hymns? Up-beat songs? Slow meditative songs? What is worship to you? The message? The fellowship? Coming to church? Is it a combination of some or all of these? **What is worship to you?** Worship is NOT for your benefit but God's. *"Worship is not part of your life – it is your life." (p. 66)*

## What Makes God Smile?

*"The smile of God is the goal of your life!" (p. 69).* The author points out five things that make God smile:

**1 – God smiles when you love Him supremely** – Hosea 6:6 – *"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."*

**2 – God smiles when you trust Him completely** – even when it doesn't make sense. Noah trusted God and built the ark in spite of not understanding why he was doing it. Trust God even when it's illogical. Trusting is an act of worship. Trusting in God makes Him Smile – Psalm 147:11 – *"the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."*

**3 – God smiles when we obey Him wholeheartedly** – Noah obeyed exactly as commanded. Do whatever God asks without reservation or hesitation. What is He asking of you? “Obedience unlocks understanding.” (p. 72). Acts of obedience are acts of worship! James 2:24 – *“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.”*

**4 – God smiles when we praise and thank Him continually** – Psalm 69:30-31 – *“I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.”* It is no longer necessary to offer animal sacrifices in order to enter the presence of God. We enter with a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

**5 – God smiles when we use our abilities** – *“God said, ‘It’s time to get on with your life! Do the things I designed humans to do. Make love to your spouse. Have babies. Raise families. Plant crops and eat meals. Be humans! This is what I made you to be!’”* (p. 74).

God enjoys watching every detail of your life. Every activity – except sin. He created you to be you not someone else. Be yourself and do what you do best – do it for the glory of God and He will smile on you. “Every act of enjoyment becomes an act of worship when you thank God for it.” (p. 75).

Just as parents enjoy their children at every stage of development, so God enjoys you right now and does not require you to be perfect or even mature to bring Him pleasure. God looks at the attitude of the heart. How much pleasure is God getting out of your life?

*“Will you make pleasing God the goal of your life?”* (p. 76)

## **The Heart of Worship**

*“The heart of worship is surrender.”* (p. 77). What kind of person are you? “If winning is everything, then surrender is unthinkable.” Rom. 12:1 – *“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.”* “True worship – bringing God pleasure – happens when we give ourselves COMPLETELY to God.” (p. 78).

This is called many things, but in the Nazarene church, this is the doctrine of Entire Sanctification – coming to the end of self-desire and finally yielding completely to God. It doesn’t mean we will never sin. As long as we are in these fleshy bodies, sin will be right there with us. What it does mean is that our motivations and desires change to a true and honest desire to please God, trust God, and allow Him to run the show we call, “our life.” It is changing our independence to God-dependence. It is trusting in God’s love and promises no matter what, even with our very lives. It is the difference between “religion” and a thriving relationship with God. It is developing a true “heart of worship” – a desire to please God with who you are rather than what you do. It is total surrender – giving up your life in order to find true life, joy, peace, power, happiness, thanksgiving, and a transformation of mind and spirit. It is “true worship.” It is overcoming fear, pride, and confusion, which impair our worship. “The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because He made us.” (p. 80).

On the last Alpha course Mike Iarocci shared at the Celebration Dinner that in yielding to God, he was afraid of who he would become when he should have been more afraid of who he was and would NOT become. He was speaking from his heart and didn’t realize how profound a statement he was making for God. We should think, “Is what I’m facing fulfilling Your purpose for my life?” If so, grant me the grace You promise to take me through it. If not, remove it. Victory comes through surrender.

Will you choose to surrender to God?

**Surrender is an act of worship.**

## Becoming Best Friends With God

We have access to God because of Jesus. We were reconciled to God to become friends by the cross of Christ and our faith in that act. We are best friends with God:

**1 – Through constant conversation** – prayer – pray continuously – invite Him in. God is with us all the time. We have to learn to recognize His presence. Brother Lawrence – Practicing the Presence of God. Look it up on the Web – an amazing read from of old.

**2 – Through continual meditation** – Prayer lets you speak to God – Meditation lets God speak to you

**3 – Choose to be honest with God** – tell Him how you really feel. Read the Psalms with this in mind. You maybe harboring anger or bitterness toward God and not realize it.

**4 – Choose to obey God in faith** – (Jn. 15:9-11) – *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”* Obey because you love God. When we do the things God asks of us, they become acts of worship to Him.

**5 – Choose to value what God values** – What does God care about most? Think about that! What does God value or care about most? People's souls – salvation! Care about all the people around you and show them the love of God. This is an act of worship.

**6 – Desire friendship with God more than anything else** – You are as close to God as you choose to be. Is it worth the effort required to develop this intimate friendship for you? Pray throughout the day, “Lord Jesus, I want to get to know You intimately!”

There's nothing more important than developing a friendship with God. James 4:8a – *“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”*

**Friendship with God is an act of worship.**

## Worship That Pleases God

Why we worship is more important than where we worship. **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. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

Four characteristics of worship that pleases God:

**1 – God is pleased when our worship is accurate** – True worshipers will **worship in truth**. Worship God as He is truly revealed in the Bible (The Jews know this aspect). They understood the God of their tradition and written code. They were intellectual in their approach to the God they knew.

**2 – God is pleased when our worship is authentic** – “Worship in spirit” – your spirit. Worship is your spirit responding to God's Spirit. God gave us feelings so we could worship Him with genuine heart-felt feelings of honesty, love and sincerity. (The Samaritans knew this aspect). This was the difference between these two groups and their sensitivity. The Samaritans worshiped in total emotion while the Jews worshiped in total intellect. But what would God require? **John 4:19-20** - *“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”* – One in spirit and one in truth. Jesus gently corrects her and speaks a word of prophecy that has been fulfilled through Him...

**John 4:21-24** - *Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 **You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know**, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. 24 **God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in***

**truth."** Both are required! Authentic Worship. Knowing who God is and worshiping Him with all our heart.

**3 – God is pleased when our worship is thoughtful** – Broaden your understanding.

He commands us to praise His Name – God's names reveal His character – thoughtful worship gatherings – that are orderly, organized, mindful of visitors (1 Cor. 14:16-17).

*"If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified."*

**4 – God is pleased when our worship is practical** – taking care of our bodies is a command and an act of worship. God's Spirit in us can only go where our bodies can take Him. We need to take care of our bodies so God can use us for service to Him.

God is pleased with different kinds of worship: thanksgiving, praise, humility, repentance, offerings of money, prayer, serving others, sharing with those in need, etc. Worship costs something – it costs us our self-centeredness. We have to *deliberately* shift the focus off us and toward God. It takes *conscious effort* and energy – Sacrificial worship – worshipping God when we don't feel like it or when we're down - this pleases God.

Matt Redman wrote a song called, "The Heart Of Worship." It was born out of a time in his church when the pastor ordered – NO MUSIC! He wanted the people to find different ways to worship God – genuine worship – not hype or emotion or music induced. It was during this time that Matt caught a glimpse of true worship of our God.

"The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart." (p. 106).

So where are you really in your relationship with God Almighty? Are you a new Christian who still has that enthusiasm and love for the God of revelation? Good – keep the fervor – cultivate that relationship and yield your whole self to Him as He directs. Are you a forever member of the church? Do you still have that "first love" for God? Have you become somewhat complacent and resolved in your relationship with God? Are you someone who has drifted from the passion of God and His word to a place where you attend services merely by habit or family obligation, but you have become indifferent to things of God? Are you someone who has never really said to God – "I need You – please come to me and change my heart because I want to be with you forever and do what You desire me to do? Well there's a place at the altar for every one of us. Have you learned something about worshipping God today that you didn't realize before you came through these doors? There's a place at the altar of forgiveness – the altar of grace – the altar of the presence of God for every one here today. Won't you please take advantage of this time? God wants all of you – He'll take any part of you that you are willing to yield to Him. Are you a true worshiper of the God of Heaven? Do you want more? This is your time to come and meet with the One you worship in spirit and in truth. He is here and wants to meet with you. Will you come?

**Worship God with your life – your entire existence and being.**

**You were planned for God's pleasure.**

**Is He Pleased with your life? Do you make Him smile?**