

## **Till The Heart Be Touched**

This morning we are going to continue talking about the subject that I began several weeks ago and that is the subject of worship. To do so, we are going to be looking at John 4. But before I begin let me give you a little bit of preface to John 4.

It is a chapter about worship. You could even call the whole chapter, “God’s Creation of a Worshipper.” I know that is not the way the chapter is often taught, but that is what is going on in John 4. God is creating a worshipper.

Now, let me again remind you of why we are talking about this whole subject. I have a couple of practical reasons to discuss worship with you. As I have mentioned over the last several weeks, we have had many new people coming to the Vineyard. One of the first things they notice about our Sunday morning is that we spend a lot of time singing. People ask “why?” particularly when that is an unfamiliar thing in their background; something that just wasn’t done in their church tradition. They ask, “Why do you guys sing so much?” As I mentioned last week, it is not because we can’t think of anything else to do. We can always find something to fill the time with.

But you need to understand something about what God is after when he pursues a man or woman to the point of establishing a relationship with himself. What is God attempting to do in your life? What is the end? What is the goal? Why does he come after you? Why does he run you down? Why does he stay with you? Why is he so patient? What is God attempting to do in your life? Do you think in those terms?

I hope you do from time to time think about the end or purpose of God's dealing with you. God is trying to make you and me into worshippers. And I know that this is a new thought for many, many people here. You see, so much of Christianity today is focused on people making a decision for Jesus. And if we can just get somebody to make a decision for Jesus, we say, "Ahhhh, that's the deal. That is where its at."

But I want to tell you that as I read the Bible, making a decision for Jesus is not the last stop on God's train. The last stop on God's train is to take somebody who has made a decision for Jesus and turn that person into a worshipper of Jesus. See, God has always been on the hunt for people who will be converted into worshippers. And that is evident in both the Old and New Testaments.

Think about that with me. Those of you who are familiar with the Bible, you know in the Old Testament, God saved the children of Israel out from Egypt and brought them through the Red Sea. To what end were the children of Israel saved? They were saved for the purpose of worshipping God.

You say, "Well, where do you get that from?"

Well, think about the way that the life of the nation of Israel was arranged. As the people of Israel were crossing the desert, God told them that they were to set up the camp in the desert in the following way:

He said, "I want you to take your 12 tribes and set three tribes on the north and three tribes on the south and three tribes on the east and three tribes on the west. But in the very center of the camp, I want you to put the Tabernacle that contains the Ark of the Covenant."

You say, "Well, why does it matter what was at the center of the camp?"

Well, God was communicating a spiritual principle via this physical lesson. And what the spiritual principle was was that no matter what the Israelite community was doing—you know, playing some ancient form of baseball, spending time inventing fire, finding new ways to cook manna; no matter what else they were doing—business, sports, marriage, sex; God wanted them to know that the very center of their lives was to be worship. The whole camp was revolving around the worship of God.

See, people are saved to become worshippers. That is what it says in 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

You have been made a church so that you could, then, praise God. Worship is the last stop on the train of salvation. If you ride the train long enough, eventually you will get to God’s end that you learn to worship him.

Think about it. Where is history going? I know where history has been in the Old Testament. Where is history going? Well, we are racing along on a bullet train toward the end of history. And what is going to happen at the end of history, there is going to be a judgment, the dead will be raised, people will be judged. What happens after that? What is the ultimate end?

Well, Revelation 5:11 tells us this is what is going to happen ultimately. The Apostle John says “He looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands, ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne, the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they say, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.” Now, here is the end of history. This is where it is all going. This is the goal: “Then I

heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them singing to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, ‘Be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.’ The four living creatures said, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshipped.”

It is racing toward worship. Let me pause and perhaps reflect back to you a question that you might have. Is it fair to say that worship really is our highest priority and the goal of all we do? That nothing else—teaching, bible reading, evangelism, ministry to the poor; nothing else supplants worship as the ultimate goal of the Christian life. I think it is fair and it is a fair reading of the bible. You see, nothing other than the worship of God is an end in and of itself. Let me say that again. Nothing other than the worship of God is an end in and of itself. Every other Christian activity points beyond itself toward another goal except worship.

For example: You might read the Bible. You might come from a background where Bible reading was really stressed and emphasized. Everyone was to read the Bible and so you got into the habit of reading the Bible. Or you just discovered it on your own and found it to be very enjoyable and a book that you really profited from.

Now, unless you see that Bible reading is not an end in and of itself, you have missed the whole point. So often, people are in groups and situations where Bible reading and Bible study becomes an end in and of itself. Folks become adept at measuring the Bible and they can find verses on every doctrine right in the Bible. They can weigh the Bible and know how many words and what the middle verse is and what the shortest verse is in the Old Testament. And what the longest verse is in the Old Testament and how many words are in each book.

But if you think that the study of the Bible is an end in and of itself, then you are wrong. And Jesus rebukes the phariseal attitude in John 5 where he says, “You diligently search and study the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” In other words, the reason to study the Bible is so that you might find Jesus through the Bible. That you might come to him. And the reason why he wants you to come to him is that you might worship him.

Bible study is not an end in and of itself, even evangelism is not an end in and of itself. It is important that you let your light shine. I hope that many of you are regularly asking God for opportunities to share your faith with somebody who yet doesn’t know Jesus. I hope that many of you are specifically praying for other people’s salvation by name—family members and friends, co-workers, children; I hope that is a part of your life. It should be. If you have discovered Jesus, then you should have the attitude that you want other people to come to know him. And I hope you are praying both for opportunities to share and also your praying by name for people who don’t know Jesus.

But however important evangelism is [and it is right up there on my list, it is near the top] evangelism is not an end in and of itself. Evangelism is for the purpose of the worship of God.

“Where do you find that in the Bible, Rich?”

Well, Romans 15:16, Paul sums up his ministry and he says that he is a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Paul sees his evangelistic ministry, his missionary activity as being his way of

worshipping God. He pictures himself as a priest standing before God with empty hands. And he says to God, “God, I want to make you an offering. [Every priest stands before God making an offering to God] God, what can I give to you?” And then he says, “Ahhhhh, I know what you are calling me to give to you. You want an offering of people who are converted. I will make you a spiritual sacrifice, as my offering to you. This is what I want to give you back. An offering of the Gentiles.”

You see, everything to Paul was an offering—money; his life poured out ultimately in martyrdom. He said that was his offering, ultimately, back to God. It is my life poured out like a drink offering. When you give, when you decide to tithe and you put money in the offering plate, that is an act of worship. Everything in the New Testament is called a spiritual sacrifice or act of worship to God. Doing good, sharing with those in need at Christmas. You give some money to somebody else who needs it, it is an act of worship to God. Having a humble, broken heart can be an act of worship to God.

You see, God is ultimately creating worshippers. That is what he is doing in John 4. Why is he doing that? Why does God have that end in mind for you, for me? I have to continually remind myself and you in teaching that God knows that he is wonderful. When God decided to make anything, he did so because he knew that he was wonderful. He very much enjoyed his own person. And he decided to share the joy of who he was with creatures that could likewise enjoy someone as wonderful as God. God’s design is that you would value him and enjoy him. And say that this is the supreme highlight of my life, to know God. This is what my life is about. Oh, I am busy with this activity and I have these other things, but the joy of my life, the delight of my heart is this person,

God. That is where you are running toward. If you didn't know that as a Christian, I am letting you in on a little secret. God is making you into a worshipper.

Now, today I am going to describe the process that God is going to use to make you into a worshipper. And that process is the break down every barrier that keeps God at arm's length from your heart.

How is God going to turn you and I into worshippers? Well, we have to understand what is the core of the problem. Let me tell you a little story. Maybe come of you have seen the film *Mr. And Mrs. Bridge*? It is the story of a Kansas City lawyer and his family. It is a prosperous, upper middle class family, three children. The family looks very together. They have a beautiful home in the suburbs. They belong to a country club. They regularly go on vacations. Their lives are orderly and they attend church. Everything appears on the surface to be OK except what you quickly realize is that these people only engage in very superficial interaction with each other and with everyone around them. There is no connectedness. There is no intimacy. There is no real deep conversation at all in which people express their aspirations, their fears, their real deep anger about anything. If there was intimacy in the Bridges' marriage in the earliest days, it is now gone. The children grow up unable in this sort of disconnected to form nourishing, intimate relationships with anyone.

Now, let's be honest with each other. Have you ever been in a family situation where you realize that the only kind of conversation that you are going to have is a superficial conversation? I know that many of you understand what I am talking about when I talk about the home-life of the Bridges'. Because I have talked with some of you and you have said, "You know, the thing that bothers me most about my relationship with my

family is that I can't talk with them about what really matters to me. They wouldn't understand where I am at. I can't talk with my Dad or my Mother about what I really cherish, what I really value. They don't want to talk at that level." Intimate talk, deep talk is scary and so we end up talking about what we are wearing or what we are buying or outward trappings of success.

Now, in the movie, *Mr. And Mrs. Bridge*, you see Mr. Bridge at the beginning of the movie composing a letter to his wife that he never gave her. It was too intimate. But it put down his thoughts of what he really wanted out of their relationship. And he said in this love letter to his wife [it is so sad because it is an undelivered letter],

"You have taught me that I have a heart. You have thrown a deep light downward and upward into my soul. You have revealed me to myself, for without your aid, my best knowledge of myself would have been merely to know my own shadow. To watch it flickering on the wall and mistake its fantasies for my own real actions. Indeed, we are but shadows. We are not endowed with real life and all that seems most real about us, is but the thinnest substance of a dream till the heart be touched."

All that seems most real about us is but the thinnest substance of a dream till the heart be touched.

You say, "Rich, what does all of this have to do with worship and creating a worshipper?"

I want to talk with you about the main problem of being made into a worshipper. It is connected with Mr. Bridge's story. Jesus tells us that the main problem, as he saw it, [and I think he would say the same thing today] is these people honor me with their lips,



but their hearts are far from me. In other words, at a heart level, not at a word level, not as an outward sign level, but at a heart level, we are disconnected from God. And all the activities that we do and all that goes on is but the thinnest thread till the heart be touched.

I have used that line as the title of today's sermon. Because in making a worshipper, God is relentlessly going after the touching of your heart. Let's pray.

John 4 is an example of God creating a worshipper. And we are going to see how he relentlessly pursues this woman until he touches her heart. Well, let's begin by reading in John 4. The Apostle writes,

“The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.”

I want to comment a little bit about what we are reading particularly in verses 4-6, and then turn to the subject of Jesus touching the heart. But there are a number of details that the Apostle John mentions: That Jesus was walking through Samaria. That he came to this town of Sychar there. That there was a well in the town as there is [in fact archeologists will tell us that one of the best attested, historical sites in that part of Israel is Jacob's well. It is near a town called Shechem today, or Nablus. It is in a Palestinian

area.] in most towns. He says that he sat down by this well. It was about the sixth hour. There are lots of little details. Geographically, topographically, historically.

Now, what is so significant about this? What is significant about this verse is that this is typical of the Apostle John to have lots of historical and geographical illusions as he proceeds in telling a story. And for those of you who have been exposed to modern New Testament scholarship, you have probably heard the view often expressed that John is the least historical gospel in the New Testament. If any gospel has been attacked for its historicity, it is the gospel of John. Since the 19th century, it has become the fashion of New Testament scholarship to say that gospel of John was probably written up to a hundred years after Jesus died and it was likely written by a Greek Jew who was living somewhere in Asia way-off in the dispersion somewhere. Somebody who was very unfamiliar with Judaism and wrote to deal with one of the heresies of the day which was gnosticism. But the historicity of the book of John is almost always called into question by much of New Testament scholarship.

What I would like to do is to stand up before you today and register an enormous protest and say to you that whoever tells you that the book of John is historically questionable, I believe is simply parroting some scholar's view and has not sat down and actually read the book. Because if you just sit down and read the book as many recent scholars are beginning to do in the last 15-20 years, the new emerging consensus is that this book is historically accurate. There are three things in the book of John that just jump out at the reader and tell us that this book must have been written by a Judean Jew [not a Jew of the dispersion, but somebody who lives in Judea] and must have been written by a Jew who lived in Judea before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

There are three things that scream to us about the historicity, that is the historical accuracy of the book of John. Number one: the person who wrote the book of John is deeply aware of Jewish custom practiced by Jews living only in Judea before the destruction of the temple. He tells us about little customs that went on at the temple and Jewish rituals that stopped being done after the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. He is very familiar with Jewish customs. His knowledge of Jewish custom is historically accurate for pre-70 A.D. Judaism in Judea.

Number two: This Jew who wrote the book of John is also profoundly and accurately informed about different cities in Judea that were destroyed by the Romans in the year 67-70 A.D. He is not just guessing what went on in Judea. He knows it. And he talks about the colonnades that were at the temple and destroyed in 70 A.D. He speaks of this well in Samaria. He talks about the pool of Syluon that was destroyed by the Romans and then was dug out later on.

But, there was a third thing. And the third thing is that this writer throws in little bits of information in his telling of the story that speaks to us about him being an eye-witness to the events that took place. For example: You have heard of the story of the feeding of the five thousands by Jesus. Well, this writer doesn't only tell us that 5000 were fed, or that Jesus took break and broke it. This writer goes on to point out that the kind of bread that Jesus broke was a barley loaf.

And when this writer tells us the story of Mary of Bethany breaking a jar of perfume, he doesn't simply say that she took a jar and broke it. He tell us that the smell of perfume filled the house. Almost as if he was there and smelling it.

And then this writer is the only one to tell us the story of the woman caught in adultery and has Jesus kneeling in the dirt writing with his finger. Funny little detail, Jesus kneeling in the dirt writing with his finger. An odd thing to mention.

And finally, when this writer tells us a same story that is in all the other gospels of the night that Jesus was arrested, one of his disciples took out a sword and cut off a servant's ear. This writer tells us alone the name of the servant who's ear was cut off. He says, "And oh by the way, his name was Malchus."

You say, "Well, Rich, what do all of these little details mean in terms of the historical accuracy of this book? So what if he mentions that perfume filled the house? And that the loaf was a barley loaf? And that Jesus sat not by this well, but over by that well and that well was in Sychar and it was near this mountain and the mountain was the place where the Samaritans worshipped and on and on and on.... So what if he tells us all of these details?" Why does that point out the historical accuracy of the book?

For this very simple reason. Did you know that until the 19th century, there is not one example in all of history of a myth that contains little historical, unnecessary details? In other words, if you look back at ancient literature at myths, what you will find is that they will tell you a story about an event and how it happened. If there is any information, that information is designed to communicate some larger truths. Something that the writer intends you to read into the story. But we have no example of a myth where the writer just adds little details because that would make the story seem more real. That kind of literary device did not occur until the 19th century. There are literally dozens of these kinds of irrelevant kinds of details sprinkled through the book of John. Odd thing, isn't it? If it is mythological, it is the singular example of ancient myth with irrelevant details.

There is nothing like it, it burst on the world scene with out any precedent and continued to be an unprecedented form of writing until the 19th century. That is one option or, it was written by someone who saw that there was a barley loaf that Jesus broke and someone who smelled the perfume filling the air and someone who knew that the name of the servant was Malchus. And someone who watched Jesus sit by a well.

My own conviction after surveying the evidence in terms of the kind of literature that the book of John is, the archeology that has been done on the place is that of the four gospels John has the best claim, not the worst, the best claim for historicity.

OK, well, lets pick up the story then and watch how God relentlessly goes after the heart of a person, pursuing us until he touches the heart. Because again that is the issue in worship. It is the engagement and touching of the heart. And so, we find Jesus sitting by a well in verse 6. In verse 7 it says, “When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ His disciples had gone into town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.’”

Now, this is a fascinating story following on the heels of John 3, which is Jesus’ dealing with an intellectual Jewish Rabbi. And you must see that what John is doing is that he is juxtaposing two stories of Jesus’ contact with individuals who are at the opposite poles from each other. All that Nicodemus, that intellectual Jewish Rabbi, was the woman at the well is not. He is a Jew. She is a Samaritan. He is an intellectual; she is really probably an uneducated nobody. He is a man in a culture that was unbelievably chauvinistic; and she is a woman, a Samaritan woman. He is highly moral, and we are going to read in the story that she is entirely immoral. She is sleeping with men all over

the place. But the final contrast is the one I think is the most important. He was a God-seeker, a seeker after truth. He came to Jesus with questions, with issues. She was not a God-seeker. Jesus came to her. In fact, I love C.S. Lewis' line because it so perfectly describes her and actually describes my status 20 years ago. C.S. Lewis, an English author, said in one of his books, "To call me a God-seeker would be like calling the mouse a seeker after the cat."

What you see in the woman is someone who is not only not seeking God, but at every point attempting to keep God away. To fend him off, to raise another wall, another objection, another issue regarding why her heart must not be touched by God. Whether you read John 3 and apply that to yourself, the account of a religious intellectual learned person, or John 4, you must see that God's purpose for Nicodemus and the woman was the same. The purpose of God for every individual is the same even though the individuals are different. And the purpose of God was to make both of these people and to make you into worshippers.

God is not simply seeking a decision for Jesus. What he seeks are people who will worship him. What does he do with an intellectual? He starts plunging him into an area that they know nothing about. Do you know how to make an intellectual into a worshipper? Do what Jesus did. Start talking with them about the Holy Spirit and you will find that the intellectual, the learned, the scholar, the moral man, the religious man knows almost nothing about the move of the Holy Spirit. They will immediately say, "I am on ground that I am very insecure with. I would like to retreat back into my books, my scholarship, my learning, my words." And Jesus relentlessly pulls intellectuals into uncharted territory. "Let's talk about the Holy Spirit. What do you know about the Holy

Spirit? What do you know about hearing the Spirit's voice? What do you know about the gifts of the Holy Spirit? What do you know about healing? What do you know about deliverance?" These are threatening topics. But this is where God is taking you. If you have spent a lot of time in learning, in study, in intellectual discipline, God is going to push relentlessly into the uncharted territory of walking in the Holy Spirit. That is what he has done in my life. That is what I see him doing in Nicodemus' life. That is what he is going to do in your life. And it is going to be a major threat to your system and your security. It has been in mine.

The woman is very different. And Jesus' dealing with the woman is very different. But what he is doing is relentlessly tearing her defenses down, those walls that she has up to her heart.

How does he do it? I see him taking three major, almost battering-ram thrusts, to her fortress. In verses 7-13, very quickly, he takes the battering-ram of surprise or amazement. It says, "When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said, 'Will you give me a drink?' His disciples had gone into town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.' Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

'Sir,' the woman said, 'You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?'

Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water that I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’”

If you follow this dialogue, what you see Jesus doing is relentlessly notching up the level of amazement.

How do you deal with a preoccupied generation? A generation that is so overly stimulated and gets thousands of advertising messages a day, spends time watching MTV, has their hearts so satiated with stuff and things and there is so much busyness in the heart? You surprise them. You amaze them. You come around the corner on them and do something that is utterly unexpected.

In this story, Jesus is assaulting her heart by notching up the level of amazement. Look at it. He asked the woman for a drink. Her initial response was sort of low level amazement. “You are a Jew. I am a Samaritan. How can you ask me for a drink because Jews do not associate with Samaritans?” [I haven’t the time to go through the whole history of Jewish relations with Samaritans. Let’s just simply say they were abysmal. Jews thought that Samaritans were unclean. They were filthy people with a filthy religion. Sort of a mongrel race. And under no circumstance in that culture would a man engage talking with a woman in public in the same way that a man would not generally talk with a strange woman in public in an Arab setting today. That would have been inappropriate. But beyond that, in that setting a Jewish man would never take a cup from a non-Jewish woman because the cup and everything associated with the cup would be considered unclean.] And so this conversation and his request surprises the woman.



And then Jesus says, “You are surprised by my dealing with you, this little exchange with you? If you knew the gift of God who was asking you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

In other words, he is saying, “The surprising thing is not that I, as a Jewish man, would talk to you, a Samaritan woman. The surprising thing is that you didn’t come to me and initiate a conversation with me. Because if you only knew the reality of who you are talking to and what is going on here, you would have fallen on your face and begged me and I would have given you living water.”

In other words, oh brothers and sisters, if you could only see what really is going on in this world, if you could only see, if you had the least perception, you would be running to God.

The woman is now surprised by his statement about living water. She says, “You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. How can you get this living water? And by the way, Jesus, this claim that I would come to you is really stunning. But are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself as did his sons and flocks and herds?”

See, again, her amazement is misplaced. She is surprised that he thinks he could get her water from a deep well with nothing to draw from. “Well, that is pretty spectacular, Jesus!” He says, “You need to be more astounded than this. Because the water that you are thinking of, woman, only satisfies you temporarily. But I can put something in your life that will continually satisfy you. And as you go back to that source, what I put in your life, you will never thirst.”

You say, “What is Jesus referring to when he speaks of living water?” I think of two things. I think he is talking about his Word and I think he is talking about his Spirit. You say, “Rich, where do you get the idea that Jesus is referring to his Words?” The book of Proverbs 23:14 says, “The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life.” Proverbs 23:14, “The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life.” And Jesus in John 6:63 says, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

When you start drinking in the words of Jesus and pondering them and taking them in, they become for you life. A fountain of life bubbling up in your soul. Ah, this gives me confidence. I have been so anxious, but now this promise of God gives me confidence. Ah, this promise of God leads me to Jesus. Now I have wisdom. I didn’t know what to think or what to believe, but now I have wisdom, I know the mind of God. Living water is the words of Jesus.

Living water is also the spirit of Jesus. John 7:37 Jesus says, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me as the scripture has said out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the spirit which those who believed in him were to receive.”

Now why have I spent time talking about Jesus’ notching up her level of amazement? I want you to picture this. Let’s take a person who is far from God. Let’s assume the person is an atheist. And in C.S. Lewis’ words, again, he writes in one of his books,

“A young atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully.”

What God is continually doing with young atheists and old atheists; with young agnostics and old agnostics; with people who are far from him, is he is constantly coming

along assaulting our defenses to our hearts. He is doing so by way of amazing us. Creating in us this beautiful thing that I will call “wonder”, surprise.

This week, I decided to look up the word “amaze” in the New Testament. I found, to my amazement, that it is a very common word in the gospels. The word “amaze or astound” is used over 50 times in the gospels. And this is the way that Jesus sort of assaulted people’s defenses. You see it particularly in the birth narratives, the Christmas story. Everyone is continually amazed by all that is going on. Mary is amazed. John the Baptist’s father is amazed when he writes down the name, John, they are amazed. Jesus’ parents are amazed when they hear him teaching at the temple. Everytime Jesus is teaching the people are amazed. The disciples were amazed when he stilled the storm.

Why is this so important? Amazement is the state of the human heart when a person begins to get in touch with who God is and what God has done for them. Amazement, surprise, being astounded is the reaction of the heart when a person really gets in touch with the divine. To the extent that Christianity seems entirely reasonable to you, makes perfectly good sense, it is consistent with what you would expect that God would send his Son to die on a cross for you. To the extent that that makes sense to you, your heart is still guarded. When there are things about the character of God, his deeds in the past, his sending his Son, his incredible mercy, his extravagant grace, when you begin to lay hold that and it assaults you and comes over the top of your walls like repeated waves, then that contact with God begins to astound you, and only when it begins to astound you, then do you know that God is winning. That he is beginning to touch the heart.

I love the title of C.S. Lewis’ autobiography. Obviously, I have been reading it [I have quoted from it] this last week. It is called *Surprised by Joy*. That is so appropriately

named. The making of a worshipper is someone who gets surprised, caught off guard. A preoccupied, busy human being caught off guard, not intending to find God, gets blindsided by the Lord.

Well, after amazement, you see Jesus go through the second line of defensive walls in the woman's life. In verse 16 Jesus says, "He told her, 'Go call your husband and come back.' 'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is that you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'"

Now, we need to think about a few things that are going on here. Number one: This story may seem hard to understand at least from the perspective of the Jesus you know. Here Jesus is coming after the woman and his approach to her seems so mean. He points out an area of her life that she clearly feels shame in. And doesn't it seem mean that Jesus begins to speak about this very personal and private area of her life? I want you to know something. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men. When God, the surgeon, takes out his sharp knife and begins to cut into you, he is being kinder by a million fold than the friend or the individual who flatters you while you are being eaten away by some cancer, some self-deception, some lie that you have held onto for years that is really taking you down.

Oh, I don't see this at all as meanness. I see this as kindness. He is assaulting the heart because the goal is to touch the heart. How does he do it? He moves from amazement to revelation. He speaks about an area that is quite personal, the area of sex. I believe that sex for me, often, and for many of you is used as a false way to have our hearts' touched. Again, the goal is the touching of the heart and sex really is often false

intimacy. What drives so much of sex and for those of you who find yourself in some kind of bondage in the area of sex, what drives this enormous bondage that you can't get out of. It is that you desperately want your heart to be touched and you are going about it in all of the wrong ways. There is this need inside. And Everytime you feel that need, it hooks you into this sexual activity.

Jesus goes after a major issue in keeping us from having our hearts touched by God, false sexuality. And he does so by revelation. By saying something. Why was this so effective in her life?

Well, I picture this woman covering herself with a blanket of shame. She knows that she is in the eyes of the respectable, the off-scouring. Have you ever felt that? You have covered yourself with shame. Sexual sin in particular creates so much shame. And the woman can't possibly open her heart because there is so much shame and guilt.

And Jesus by this revelatory word pulls away the shame that says, "If this man knew me, if this guy who speaks about living water and real satisfaction, if he knew who he was talking to, he would walk away in revulsion." Jesus pulls away that blanket of shame and says, "Woman, [Rich, people sitting here in the Vineyard] I know what you are like. I know all that you are into. I know all of your secret faults. I know what you have done and I still want to touch your heart."

The revelatory word penetrates defenses, brothers and sisters. You say to yourself, "You know, I am not sure that God has touched my heart." You know what you can ask the Lord for? Ask the Lord to send a word your way. An empowered word from him. This kind of thing has happened in my life on several occasions. And in every occasion, its touched the heart and broken me.

I want to share with you one instance that I don't know if I have ever shared with anyone, really. It didn't occur to me until I was reading this story again this week. But the first time I was in Russia, I got together with a small group of pastors to pray. And we took some time to pray for each other and to pray over past issues. Well, I had an opportunity to talk about my own past and my own growing up and some of the bumps, bruises and hurts that I have felt. And one of the pastors wives looked me in the eye and she said, "I believe that God wants to say something to you." I said, "That's great." And she said, "No, I don't think it is going to come through us. I think what the Lord wants to do is something directly from his Spirit that just cuts you in the heart. That's what you need."

So, I said, "Good. I would really like that."

She said, "Well, we are going to pray for it right now."

And I approached this with very limited faith. I thought, "Well, God may speak something to me right now." But she was so convinced that the Lord had spoken to her that God is going to say something right now, not through us.

We began to pray. And immediately the Lord spoke a very, very personal and special word to me, right to my heart. We began praying and this thing just sort of exploded in my heart and I was pondering and meditating on it and she said, "Now, you tell us what God said to you."

I said, "Well, it is kind of personal."

And she said, "You need to share it."

I shared it. And I got about two words out. “The Lord said...” And as I began to share it, I just broke. I mean there were these deep, deep sobs. When the Lord in revelation speaks a living word to your heart, it will make you into a worshipper.

Amazement and surprise; revelation. But how adept we are at stealing away our hearts. The woman says, “Sir, I can see you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you, Jews, claim that the place that we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

You know, after we have abused our bodies for such a long time and we have been in many, many sexual relationships and we are covered with so much shame and we have been in many, many situations where we have asked for something and nothing has happened, this callous grows over our hearts. We are so afraid of the heart being touched. I think of the old Simon and Garfunkle song and apply it to this woman and I think it applies to so many people in the American church scene. “I am rock. Don’t talk of love. I have heard the word before. It is sleeping in my memory. I won’t disturb the slumber of feelings that have died. If I never loved, I never would have cried. I am a rock. I have built walls, a fortress deep and mighty, that none may penetrate. I have no need of friendship. Friendship causes pain. Its laughter and its loving I disdain. Here is this woman hiding in my room, safe within my womb. I touch no one and no one touches me. I am a rock. I am island. A rock feels no pain. And an island never cries.”

The cat is about to catch her. He catches her about talking a little more about worship. The defenses have fallen and Jesus says, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and how come when the true worshippers worship the Father

in spirit and truth. For they are the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship him in spirit and truth.”

God wants worshippers who worship him in spirit and in truth. I want to talk with you, woman, about the proper where of worship, that is not important. What is important is the how of worship. And the how of worship is what I have been going after in this whole conversation. That how of worship is worship in spirit and worship in truth. Worship in spirit—I believe he is talking both about the work of the Holy Spirit, but also about the human spirit. Which means worship from the very depth of your being, what God wants, is not just the worship of your lips. He wants to touch the heart. He wants worship from the inside. So much of what people understand of worship is not from the inside out. It is worship from the outside in. It is a matter of externals. People say, “I can only worship to this kind of music. I only can worship when the guitar plays like this; the drums are like this; when we sing these kinds of songs; I can’t worship this way. I can’t worship with hymns. I can’t worship without hymns. Ultimately, those kinds of things really don’t matter. That is worship concerned with externals. He wants worship from the heart.

And he wants worship in truth which is a discovery of the true God and his hard kindness to you. His relentless pursuit of you. His surprising mercy. His astounding patience. His amazing grace.

I think the reason I like this story so much and have preached on it on a number of occasions is that it is so personal. I appreciate the fact that God isn’t dealing with a crowd as he speaks to you today. He wants to break this crowd down into individuals and personally go after your heart. Reaching into you so that he can touch you. Will you



lower your defenses toward God in worship? Will you lower your walls and your barriers and your reserve and say, “Come, Lord Jesus. Come and touch me.”