**The Sacramental Worship of God**

Based on [John 4:5-30, 39-42](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn4.5-30) and [Exodus 17:1-7](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ex17.1-7)

Preached on March 19, 2017

Third Sunday of Lent

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In today’s gospel lesson, Jesus teaches about the place of true worship of God. The Jews believed that the true worship of God took place in Jerusalem because God was in his temple there. The Samaritans, like the woman at the well, believed the true worship of God took place on Mount Gerazim, because God was in his temple there. But now that Jesus has come, his human flesh and blood body is the new temple of God.

Today, and until the end of the age, the true place of worship is the church. The church is not necessarily a building with a cross on the top, or a building dedicated to Jesus. The church is many places scattered throughout the world. The church is anywhere and everywhere people gather to hear Jesus’ Words rightly taught and to receive his sacraments administered according to his institution. Where word and sacrament are, there Jesus is; where Jesus is, there the Holy Spirit is given; and where Jesus is present and the Holy Spirit is given, there is where the Father is worshiped in Spirit and truth.

And so in our Gospel, Jesus was in Samaria, and he meets a woman from there sitting beside a well, a well that once belonged to their common ancestor, Jacob. **Jesus asks the woman for a drink, which begins a very interesting conversation.** He finds out she's had five husbands before and is now living in sin with a man who is not her lawful husband. She's a sinner, in need of God’s forgiveness and in need of the Holy Spirit. She knows Jesus is a prophet, because a prophets job is to condemn a persons sin and call them to repent and worship God. So she asks Jesus, “where do I go to worship God.”

Someone might say this woman’s question about where to worship God is irrelevant. “God is everywhere.” And that is true. God is everywhere according to his power and might. **This is his creation, and the sun rises and rain falls and the stars align all because he tells it all to, every moment of every day.** If he didn’t, there would be chaos and destruction, worlds would fall apart and the fabric of the universe would unravel. God is everywhere according to his almighty power, even among evil people. But according to his saving grace he is only where he has promised to be.

Wherever Jesus promises to be, there God is rightly worshiped. Before Jesus came, the true worship of God was done with offerings and ceremonies that could only rightly be done by priests working at the Jerusalem temple. These sacrifices and ceremonies were good and true, God instituted them. God was there, in that temple for his people, because that’s where he promised to be. But now the temple of God is not a building made by men. The temple of God is a man, Jesus Christ, who said of his body, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it.” He was speaking of the temple of his body, which was destroyed and on the third day risen again.

Even though Jesus is now ascended into heaven; he is still with his church. And his church is to be found wherever three things are present. First, people gathered; Jesus promises, “**Where two or three gather in my Name, there I am among them**.” To worship at the true temple of Jesus, is to gather with others in his name. And to gather in his Name is understood in the other two things. To hear Jesus Word rightly taught; and to receive his sacraments the way he instituted them. Where these three things are, there God is worshipped in spirit and truth.

This gospel lesson teaches us the sacramental presence of Jesus in his church. God no longer attaches himself to a place like a temple in Jerusalem, but he does attach himself to certain things. He gives his own temple, his body and blood under bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper. And he gives his Holy Spirit through the waters of Holy Baptism.

The conversation about true worship that Jesus has with the woman, segued into from a conversation about, of all things, water. Water is a big deal in the Scriptures, because Water is always associated with the work of the Holy Spirit. **He, the Holy Spirit, is the one who makes people Holy; consecrates us, gives us faith, moves us to lead Godly lives by His power, not ours, by his will, not ours.** And ever since the beginning, the Holy Spirit is linked to water.

Before God created Adam from the dust of the ground, Genesis says this, **"A mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground--then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature"** (2:6-7). The word "breath" is the same as the word for "Spirit". The scriptures record that the ground was watered immediately before his breath, his Spirit, could give man life. Water and Spirit together.

This pairing of the Water and the Spirit, which happens throughout scripture, points to the sacrament of Holy Baptism which Jesus gave to his church. We heard last week that Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Unless a man is born of Water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "Water and Spirit."

And so the OT lesson today gives the account of God's people in the wilderness, who thirst for water. And rather than pray, they complain to Moses. "Oh we had it so much better back in Egypt. **Sure, we were slaves, and our children were being murdered for population control, but hey...*At least we had wa*ter**." And so Moses, speaks to God about it, and God gives instruction to Moses.

God tells Moses to strike a rock and water will come out of it. Now, here's a little test..."Christianity 101"...if you go home and strike a rock with a stick, can you expect water to come out of it? No! ***Why not?*** Because God never promised that it would for you. **But he promised that it would for Moses, and so what matters is not the method, but the Word.** It's the same with the miracles of Baptism and Communion today. **Can water and bread and wine miraculously give forgiveness, life and salvation?** No they cannot...alone, but they can with God's word and command. Had Moses struck a rock without God's command or promise, no water would have come forth, but with God's word and command it did.

The rock in the OT is a sacrament, gods promise working through a thing, giving water for the salvation of God's people. And if it isn't obvious enough, then listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "**All [the Israelites] ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. for they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ"** (10:4)

If a rock, way back in the OT times before Jesus was born--**if such a rock could be Christ for the people, so today can bread and wine be Christ for you*, so long as God's Word and Command say so.***

Jesus continues talking to the Samaritan woman, from whom he asks a drink of water. She says, "Why would you ask me, I'm not a Jew", and Jesus says, "**I'm being ironical, because I am the source of living water, and if you knew that, you would say, *'My Lord, I need water from you, and yet do you come to me for Water***?'" Jesus is making the point that He is the source of living Water, which means that **He alone is the source of the Holy Spirit** for God's people.

A few chapters later in John, Jesus is at the Jewish feast of Booths in Jerusalem. And on the last day he stands up and cries out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "**Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water**." It says that he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Sprit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:38-39). This was fulfilled when Jesus hung dead on the cross. If you remember, when Lord of glory is dead on the cross, a soldier with a spear comes by and pierces his belly, and out of his side flows blood and water. When Jesus died he said, "It is Finished", and John puts it this way: "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that he bowed his head ***and gave up his*** Spirit" (19:30)

When Jesus died he gave up His spirit...to the church. There's a painting that shows water and blood coming from his side and angels positioned below his corpse, one holding a chalice for communion, the other holding a font for baptism, **catching the water and the blood, the spirit of Jesus proceeding forth into the life of the church, so that, in baptism and the lord's supper Christ himself is available to us,** like a rock in the wilderness from which living water pours forth, Water that is His Holy Spirit.

And so the conversation between Jewish Jesus and this Samaritan woman proceeds to true worship. **It's a conversation between a Jew and Samaritan that moves from water to worship.** And the woman says, "You Jews say worship happens in Jerusalem, we Samaritans say it's on this Mountain...Mount Gerazim. Where is it that we are to go and worship for this living water then?" And Jesus says, "**salvation is from the Jews, but the hour is coming, and is now here, where the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.**"

Ladies and gentlemen, here's the point. Worship is not limited to a geographical location. Worship is to happen wherever Jesus is, because wherever Jesus is, the Spirit gushes forth, making people holy. **And Jesus makes himself available, not at the end destination of any great pilgrimage, but he is for his people everywhere that the Word is rightly preached, and the sacraments rightly given.** There is where Jesus is for his people, to be worshiped because he is worthy of all honour, glory and praise; for he is the sacramental rock for his people, who are quenched with forgiveness, life and salvation.

Do you desire this living water...this Spirit? Then go to where Christ is and receive Him. Where is the Spirit? He's wherever God is; **Where is God, wherever Jesus is. And where is Jesus?...well, everywhere in creation from the top of the tallest mountain to the bottom of your coffee cup; He is everywhere in his power, *but in his grace he is not everywhere****.* In his grace, he makes himself available through the means of grace...from out of which flows his Spirit...giving forgiveness life and salvation in Word and Sacrament...for you. For in these things he is our spiritual, that is ***Spirit-giving***, Rock, and in these things we are invited to worship Him in spirit and truth.