**Holy habits - Worship: Week 13**

This is the final email about the Holy Habit of Worship. It is ironic that we have not been able to meet together physically for worship during the whole time we have been looking at this topic, but how appropriate it is that we have been able to remind ourselves week after week of just how important and precious worship is. Soon our doors will re-open and our worship will resume, and what a joyful day that will be.

This week we are looking at what Jesus specifically said about worship, which is surprisingly little. Apart from quoting the Old Testament, there is only one occasion in the Gospels when Jesus talks about worship, and that was not to His disciples, nor to the Pharisees and other religious leaders, nor to the people who flocked to hear Him. It was to a foreign woman notorious in her village for her behaviour, the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4.

It was the woman who brought up the subject of worship, as a diversion from talking about her behaviour. Jesus responds with some of the most important words found anywhere in the Bible, not just about worship, but about God. In verse 24 we read, *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (RSV and most traditional versions).*

How important it is to remember that God is Spirit. He is not and has never been a physical being, except in the person of Jesus. His Kingdom is not of this world, and His appearance and nature are beyond anything we can imagine. So often we make Him too small, as JB Phillips said. Worse, we often make Him in our own image, a complete reversal of the truth. The current debate about the white Jesus painted by artists from Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* to Holman Hunt’s *Light of the World* is an illustration of this error.

Since God is Spirit, we can only worship Him in spirit, says Jesus. How on earth can we do that? We can’t, fully. Not on earth, at least. It will only fully happen when the Holy Spirit of God brings us into the presence of Almighty God, where our response can only be a confession of our inadequacy and sinfulness, a complete acceptance of Christ’s forgiveness, and a spontaneous and unstoppable outpouring of praise and thanksgiving. All this will happen in an instant, as God is Spirit, so space and time are no longer relevant.

In the meantime, until we are in heaven with our Lord, we can only ask God the Holy Spirit to bring us as close as possible to the throne of God in our earthly worship, and there is only one quality we need for that. It is not goodness nor any actions we can do, it is not even holiness or faith. *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.* It is truth, says Jesus. There can be no deceit, no pretence, no dishonesty. We must be completely sincere and open. Jesus was always angry with hypocrisy, perhaps more than anything else. We must therefore come just as we are, confess our sinfulness, receive Christ’s forgiveness, and pour out our praise and thanksgiving in spirit and truth.

*Produced by Glenn Evans on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*