

Individual and Family Worship Helps for March 22, 2020
Redeemer Presbyterian Church PCA • Dickson, Tennessee

Gather on the Lord's Day

Prayer for the Lord's Blessing and Assistance

Old Testament Lesson Exodus 17:1-7

Psalter Psalm 95:1-8 (Tune: [LANDAS](#) or *My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

O come and to Jehovah sing;
Let us our voices raise;
In joyful songs let us the Rock
Of our salvation praise.
Before His presence let us come
With praise and thankful voice;
Let us sing psalms to Him with grace;
With shouts let us rejoice.

The LORD's a mighty God and King;
Above all gods He is.
The depths of earth are in His hand;
The mountain peaks are His.
To Him the spacious sea belongs;
'Twas made by His command;
And by the working of His hands
He formed the rising land.

O come and let us worship Him;
Let us with one accord
In presence of our Maker kneel,
And bow before the LORD.
Because He only is our God,
And we His chosen sheep,
The people of His pasturage,
Whom His own hand will keep.

Today if you will hear His voice,
Then harden not your heart;
Strive not as those at Meribah,
Nor Massah's testing start.
*Before His presence let us come
With praise and thankful voice;
Let us sing psalms to Him with grace;
With shouts let us rejoice.*

A Season of Prayer

Confession

Adoration

Praise and Thanksgiving

Supplications for Ourselves and Others – Even from our homes we may touch the world through prayer.

If you wish, include the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven; Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

New Testament (Epistle) Lesson 1Corinthians 10:1-4

The Offering and Prayer of Consecration

Here is an example prayer of consecration:

We bring you these gifts, O God, from what we have first received from you. Use them, we pray, to enable the ministries of our church to flourish as we together serve our neighbors, both near and far away, by showing love and doing mercy. Amen.

New Testament (Gospel) Lesson John 4:5-15; 19-26

Meditation on the Word – The Blessing of New Covenant Worship

The location at which our Lord talked with a Samaritan woman is rich in history and full of significance. It had been visited by **Abraham** in his day.¹ **Jacob** had come there after facing his brother Esau in an uncomfortable encounter. Jacob came to this location in Samaria, bought a parcel of land, built an altar, and called it *El-Elohe-Israel* or "God, the God of Israel."² There at Jacob's well, our Lord could not have been far from the spot where Jacob's altar had been built so long ago.

This was also the location for the great ceremony of covenant renewal commanded in the time of Moses and led by Joshua (see **Joshua 8:30-35**).³ The ceremony involved two mountains—Gerizim and Ebal. The altar built on Mount Ebal represented the curses that would befall the Israelites if they violated the covenant. The uncut stones of the altar were covered with white plaster and the law of God was written on them in the presence of the people of Israel with tribal leaders positioned on the mountain.⁴ On nearby Mount Gerizim (the mountain mentioned by the woman as the place where the Samaritans worshiped) leaders of the tribes were positioned to express the blessings of covenantal obedience. Half the people stood in front of Mount Ebal and half in front of Mount Gerizim. The ark of the covenant stood

¹Genesis 12:6

²Genesis 33:18-20

³Deuteronomy 11:29; 27:12-13

⁴Deuteronomy 27:4, 8

between them while the law was read to them. They were the *descendants* of the Israelites who came out of Egypt and entered the covenant at Sinai in the time of Moses. By this worship, the covenant was renewed to the new generation. This is an important idea in Scripture.

But this is not the end of the story for this location. In the time of Nehemiah, there was an enemy of Israel named **Sanballat** who was a continual nuisance to godly Nehemiah and the Israelites who were seeking to rebuild Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile.⁵ Tradition has it that Sanballat is the culprit who built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim to annoy the Jews. That temple stood for close to three-hundred years. This Samaritan temple was destroyed by the Jews in 128 B.C. (about 150 years before our Lord's conversation with this woman), but the Samaritans continued to revere Mount Gerizim—a fact that was a continual source of tension between Jews and Samaritans. It is reported that there is a Samaritan religious community that worships there to this day.

Now all this is to say that while the Samaritan woman probably raised the issue of worship in an attempt to divert a conversation that was hitting too close to home, worship was a live issue and an important one. The Lord willingly followed her into this conversation and I'm glad He did. What He says on the subject of true worship holds as much blessing for us as it did her. We will be better equipped to worship the true and living God if we learn and take to heart the truth our Lord taught beside the well.

Old Covenant worship was true worship (John 4:22b).

True worship is worship that is based upon God's self-revelation—not human invention. The true knowledge of God and worship according to His commands go hand-in-hand. We see this principle at the very dawn of human history when God had respect to Abel's obedient worship and rejected Cain's self-chosen worship.⁶ The Biblical rule is not “whatever is not forbidden is permitted in the worship of God.” Rather, the principle that governs Biblical worship is “only what is commanded in or properly derived from Scripture is true worship.” We have many examples in Scripture of God's zeal for His worship according to this principle. The instructions given in the time of Moses to guide their worship were precise, exact, and to be followed as given.

Old Covenant worship pointed believers to Christ as the object of faith and renewed to them the promises God had made concerning the Redeemer to come. The types and shadows of the law were made effective by the Holy Spirit to direct their faith to Christ and to keep them in the true faith until Christ appeared.⁷ That is the gist of our Lord's words in **John 4:22**.

Old Covenant worship had to come to an end (John 4:21; 23).

The idea of two covenants—one temporary and one eternal—runs throughout the Scriptures. What our Lord said to this woman was nothing new. It was the plain statement of what God had revealed throughout the Scriptures. The Old Covenant was in service to the covenant of grace. It administered the covenant of grace to believers as they looked forward to the coming of the Redeemer in the fulness of time.

⁵ Nehemiah 2, 4, 6 13

⁶ Genesis 4:3-7

⁷ Galatians 3:24-25

The New Covenant is only “new” to those who have lived under the Covenant revealed at Sinai and renewed at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. New Covenant *worship* is an administration of the covenant of grace revealed to Abraham—as was Old Covenant worship—but without the Old Covenant rituals and ceremonies. The promise made to Abraham’s “Seed” (Christ) was that through Him “*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*”⁸ The Old Covenant was temporary from the beginning—“*till the Seed should come to whom the promise had been made.*”⁹ When the Seed of Abraham fulfilled the types and shadows of Old Covenant worship, they would have no more purpose and come to an end. Our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman about this most blessed truth. When He said these words to her, the hour had almost arrived when the temple veil would be torn in two by the hand of God.

New Covenant worship differs from the Old Covenant worship in *form*, but not in *substance* (John 4:22-24).

The object of worship does not change from the Old Covenant to the New. True worship is still directed to the true and living God.

The principle of worship does not change from the Old Covenant to the New. God still looks at the heart of the worshiper and regulates the outward form of His worship.

The meaning of worship as a celebration and ceremony of covenant renewal does not change from the Old Covenant to the New. The outward forms of New Covenant worship accomplish the same thing as Old Covenant worship. This is why the apostles describe the assembly of believers as a temple and priesthood, as

*“living stones, [who] are being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*¹⁰

This is true every time the church gathers. The parts of New Covenant worship—prayer, praise, Scripture reading, preaching, the sacraments, giving of tithes and offerings, and the singing of psalms—direct our faith to Christ, glorify God for His saving acts, confirm and renew to us the covenant promises of God, and bring the covenant of grace to bear upon our lives. I remind you it was not long after this conversation, joy filled the Samaritan woman’s heart when the gospel of Christ’s resurrection went out into the world and she was swept into the visible body of His church. They met on the Lord’s day and worshiped in spirit and in truth. She met each Lord’s Day the One who had met her beside the well—and worshiped Him. Their worship was outwardly unimpressive when compared with the prestige, outward beauty and the throngs who pretended to worship at the temple. But it was real because Christ was in their midst.

Some closing thoughts

- How happy we will be to gather again on the Lord’s Day for worship when this season of separation is over! How I long for us to be gathered and to behold your joyful faces as you give praise to God!
- How privileged we are to worship God acceptably alone or in our families during this

⁸Genesis 22:16-18

⁹Galatians 3:17-18

¹⁰1Peter 2:5

season of separation. There is nothing to prevent us from giving pleasing worship to the Lord during this time. Our families are holy. Our homes are holy. Our bodies are living sacrifices.

- The duty and privilege of worship demands our very best—all our strength and our very hearts. Sometimes this is a challenge for us. Sometimes we enter the sanctuary with many burdens and worries. I'm thankful our God and Father is *seeking* true worshipers, that He equips and empowers us for this awesome task. When we do purpose to give our very best to God in grateful worship, the fountain of living waters (that well up into everlasting life) well up in healing and blessing for us and for the body of Christ as a whole.

Hymn 32 [Great Is Thy Faithfulness](#)

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

*Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Closing Prayer