

# WORSHIPING IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

Excerpts from a sermon by Rev. Frederick M. Chapin

*“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*  
(John 4:24)

When the Lord came to earth, a significant change took place in the way people could worship the Lord. Worship was no longer focused upon external rituals, but on a person’s inner thoughts and feelings.

For the most part, people did not fully understand this change. When a Samaritan woman asked the Lord where the proper place to worship was, He did not answer her question directly. Instead, He spoke these words: “The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). The woman did not understand these words, but the Lord was revealing that the quality of worship is in a person’s loves, not in the place or in how it is being performed.

External acts of worship are still important. External worship can be an expression of the appreciation and the love we feel toward the Lord and can be a reminder of the kind of life we are to trying to lead. The instruction we receive through sermons and classes can give us greater ability to live the life of heaven in this world. Taking part in church activities can encourage and support a stronger life of charity within ourselves.

But being a true worshiper of the Lord goes far beyond the formalities of ritual. The essential of worship is what is in our hearts. It exists in a life of service for other people. So external worship is only effective if at the same time we have a genuine desire to perform useful tasks for others.

We worship the Lord in *spirit* when we desire the Lord’s presence and leadership in our lives. We long to have decent and pure loves, and our highest aspiration is to become an image of God. In order for this to happen, a conscience from the Lord must develop in us. If we truly value the life of charity that we can live for others, that desire will protect us from thinking of worship as only about what we know, rather than about how we can apply the teachings of the Word to life.

We worship the Lord in *truth* when we desire knowledge from the Word to give us light and direction. Only the Lord can give us the ability to know and understand what truth is, truth that can help us distinguish good from evil, bring order to our lives, and give us the capacity for sound judgments. We worship the Lord when we seek Him in His Word, and when we love what is true simply because it is true, that is because the Lord has said it.

True worship of the Lord exists within our feelings and thoughts *and* in our external activities. When the Lord leads both our minds and our actions in a life of love to Him and to the neighbor, we are allowing Him to fully direct our lives. We can become more and more united with the Lord in a process that will continue throughout eternity. As true worship is established in our hearts and minds, we will increasingly appreciate these words of the Lord: “The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23).