

Thanksgiving, Praise and Worship

Iverna Tompkins

Transcribed by Jane Vaughn

There was a very *unlikely discourse* taking place, recorded in Chapter 4 of John's Gospel. It was *unlikely* in many ways. It was unlikely socially because we find a Jewish man speaking to a Samaritan woman.

It was unlikely spiritually because it was a totally unequal thing – it was not a fellowship of equals as when two ministers get together and speak heart-to-heart about the things of God. When two like-minded people get together and share spiritually it's one thing – but this was a very mis-matched conversation taking place.

It was unlikely physically because it was two people just sitting at a public well – out in the desert, unshielded from the heat of the day.

And it was unlikely in subject material because, instead of it being a casual conversation like: “Where are you from? What do you do?” or “What are you doing today?” the whole subject was – *worship*.

You know this story, don't you? The unlikely part of it ceases being *unlikely* and becomes *likely* when the woman begins to speak, because as Jesus, the man, the Jew (in representation here) begins to talk to her, **His very presence reveals her to herself.** Now, please pause long enough to get that.

My goal in this message is to take *from* you a mis-conception about “a worship service” – and to show *to* you “service” as worship.

You know the story related here in the Gospel: the disciples left Jesus to go on a little shopping trip, and He seemingly just happens to sit down at the well of Samaria. A nameless woman comes to draw water and the conversation begins. It was not just by happenstance – *it's a miracle*.

As the pastor said, just moments ago, “God is not a respecter of persons. He loves everyone the same.” We know that truth in our minds because the Scripture says so (2Chron.19:7; Rom.2:11; Eph.6:9), but we don't *really know* it. We think certain people, when they worship – or lead worship – or encourage worship – have a greater anointing and bring more stimulus from us than others. We think certain songs are more important than others.

We have such a mis-understanding of *worship as it really is* that I felt it would be good to take this time and remind you – or, if you don't know it already, to inform you – that *worship* – is the key to understanding the Bible. You see, **the main thought of the Word of God is *worship***.

God wanted *sons* – to worship Him (Ex.20:3; Dt.6:13; Mt.4:10). So – does that describe God as an ego-maniac? Sitting up there and with His great authority saying, “I created you – worship Me – or I'll throw you back out!” Or, does that mean that God sits on His throne and looks down at us and says: “I'll see whether they behave themselves and then maybe I'll take their worship.” Or, does it mean that God is somehow vacant inside without worship from those He created? You see, those are subtle thoughts that we don't usually articulate. We don't express them but they are there somewhere in our minds.

Sometimes, I've been in worship services where it's been suggested by a leader: “There's a part of God that *needs* our worship...” that “if we *don't* worship Him...” Here's the Truth to that idea: **God doesn't need anything!** It is just a huge privilege for us to be able to worship Him!

Then, why? What was going on in Him that He says, “I must create these that will worship”? Think about it before I give you the answer. Are you ready for it yet? **Because without worship, there cannot be blessings!**

Blessing is the promise: “If you be *willing* and *obedient*, ye shall have everything. You’ll have the good of the land – you’ll eat the fruit of the land – you will be fruitful – you can ask the Father anything in My Name...” Obedience cannot be separated from worship.

Now, all the way through this conversation, Jesus is just, it seems, haphazard. But He is bringing her into understanding. What He has done is – thrown out a hook, she took a bite, and now He’s reeling in this lady. What *she* wants, however, is to start the usual argument of people – as to *where* they should worship (Jn.4:19ff). “I grew up a Catholic – and I believe we should worship there.” “I grew up Pentecostal, and I believe we should worship there.” “I grew up a Baptist, and I believe we should worship there.”

“Our people say...” (vs.20) – she’s already in the argument. She says to Jesus, “You know, you Jews say that you’re going to worship only in Jerusalem, and we Samaritans say we’re going to worship on *this* mountain.... Now what I want to know is, You say You’re the expert on worship, where, precisely and exactly, is the accurate, the right place to worship?”

I listen to people saying the same thing today only in different words. Today it goes like this: “How long should we worship?” “How long should a worship service be?” The answer? A lifetime!

“Do you think we should use the hymnals?” Only if the leader says, “Open your hymnal to page 22.” “Do you think it’s right to use overheads (or Power Point) for the words?” Only if you want me to sing them! ☺

We get caught up in the most ridiculous things and then we’re incapable of responding to the Father as we were created to do – because we have mindsets.

We walk into the church – some of you were angry for twenty minutes today because it was cold in here. “Seems like they could warm it up if they want us to come here. Where’s all the money go, anyway?” ☺ If we have a broken furnace or something – you need to pray for someone to come in and fix it. I mean, it’s *our* responsibility – it’s *our* church. This building does not belong to the Board alone.

Others of you were angry because you looked around and saw Pastor Mary sitting here but Pastor Mike is missing. “Oh, fine! If they’d only have told us he was going to be gone!” Or, someone sits where we normally do and we’re troubled over that: “Well, that’s it!” ☺ “I hate sitting in the back!” We get so upset over these little things.

Pick a reason, but all of a sudden worship is eliminated from our minds – “We WILL NOT worship!” But will you be surprised when I tell you that you are worshipping right then? **All you’ve done is switch the object of worship – from *Him* – to *you*!** An uncomfortable thought, isn’t it?

The woman in John 4 says, “Exactly where should we worship? I want to do it the right way, and I don’t know whether I dare do this or this or this – and if I could find a church that I knew was right on!”

Jesus says this: “The time is coming – in fact, it has already come – when what you’re called will not matter.” You might as well quit singing, “I’m a Methodist till I die” because it doesn’t matter anymore. There’s coming a time when what you’re called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter either. Jesus said, “It’s *who* you are and *the way you live* that counts before God. **Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth.**” “*They that worship Him...*” finish it for me: “... *must worship Him in spirit and in truth*” (cf. Jn.4:21-24).

Now, what we like to think of that as meaning – *and it doesn’t* – is that the Spirit will do the worshipping for us or in us. And if He doesn’t worship. . . “Hey! It’s not my fault. I was here, freezing!” ☺

Jesus said, “Let Me tell you, it doesn’t matter who you are, what your nationality is. It doesn’t matter if you’re female and I’m male and I’m talking to you. It doesn’t matter. If you really knew Who you were talking to, you could enter into worship right here! But you’ve got such a mindset – that certain *things* are going to happen...”

Now, I’m going to say a few things that may offend you – otherwise, it wouldn’t be me now would it? ☺

I’ve heard so many of the recent prophetic utterances and I just say, “Amen!” to all of them. On the email, I get them sent to me; my inbox is just stuffed! And we have to rhyme them now, you know – “No more leaven – 2-0-0-7.” And “Let’s get ready for heaven in 2-0-0-7.” And ☺ I’m saying “9-10-11, I missed 7.” ☺

Do you know that if we do not keep our focus – on Him – the enemy will not shut down the prophetic words – he simply will make them our worship image. Are you okay? And what is important to us becomes: “So-and-so said such-and-such.” I think it’s time for us to come back and worship the Lord! “*And Him only shalt thou serve*” (Mt.4:10; Dt.10:20).

“*I am the Lord thy God and thou shalt have – NO OTHER GODS!*” (Ex.20:2,3, emphasis added). Oh, that’s so easy for us here in this country. We don’t carve little images and look at them while meditating or praying. But you see, we still have many gods! Our minds are filled with many gods! Only many of *our* “gods” are God’s called ones. Selah.

By worshipping them, we pull them down – because God cannot allow them to be the focal point of the worship of His people. He cannot – and He will not. I don’t have to enlarge on that if you know anything that’s going on in the Body of Christ, even today. You’re smart enough to figure it out. And it is an old problem – it has happened in the past – when we’ve elevated the vessel God used.

Worship isn’t something we come to church and “do” for 20-30-40-50 minutes. (Oh, the miracle of that.) The reason it goes on so long sometimes is because it takes four songs for *us* to say, “Oh, yep. Yes. You’re worthy – worrrr-thee.” What would happen if we would walk into this place – as worshippers!? Having been worshippers all week long! In our homes, on our jobs, every place we’ve been – and then come together. I mean, it would be *DY – NO – MITE!* ☺

They wouldn’t have to strike the first musical cord because we would be worshipping as we came into the building together. It wouldn’t be the usual commands from the platform: “Alright, everyone find someone near you and shake hands with them.” I hardly leave the pew I’m on, so I shake hands with the same people about four times. ☺ “Just find someone you don’t know... find three or four.” “Do I know you? God *bleess* you – God *bleess* you – and God *bleess* you, too. Is that three? Four?” And I like that guy back there because his hands are always warm – so I always *bleess* him! ☺ But we wouldn’t have to be told to do that. Just to look at another worshipper’s face would be a blessing – if we were so full of God!

If we were worshippers! Just coming into this building and looking at another person who is full of God – it’s just *::whhoow::* What a blessing! “God, You’re so good!” Or, hearing of someone’s healing: “God, You’re so good!”

We must no longer get stuck thinking our “worship time” is – whatever time we start the service Sunday morning or Wednesday evening until the first speaker comes to the platform.

As it is now, when the moderator comes to the microphone, there’s a *mind-shift* in the congregation that is pathetic! As soon as the worship team stops singing or leaves the platform or whatever – there’s a mind-shift – to near cynicism. “Oh, now they’re gonna stop the flow – and take an offering.” You don’t read the Book! They took offerings during worship!

I preach in churches where, during the worship, spontaneously, people come forward and lay money on the front of the platform. I love that! Because they are inspired in their worship to come and give something of themselves – just to come before His Presence and bring an offering!

But we don't do that. We want everything categorized: "Now, where exactly shall I worship?" the woman at the well asked. Now, it's time to sing (and we do, most of us). Now, it's time to bow (so we bow down). Now it's time to shake hands (and we oblige). Now it's time to give my offering. And now? the speaker comes...

No matter how we arrange the service, it cannot be a flow – *unless you let it flow*. No matter what we do. The leaders can come together and talk as a group and even prayerfully plan it all: "Well, we'll do this and then we'll just flow right into that and then we'll go into the other thing..." But you won't...

And we vote. We have people here who gladly proclaim: "I like the worship here. That's why I come to this church. I like that music. It has a beat! And it's... I just *like* it!" Then we have other people in the same services that say: "I tolerate the music but I can't wait for the ministry of the Word."

So those who like the worship come and they enter right into it all. And those who don't – wait – voting. Then, when those who like that part and it's finished *::pffwitt!::* so are they! Then after the whole service you overhear the conversation between the differing parties: "Wasn't that a good word from Pastor?" "Uh, I don't remember. What'd he say?" "Weren't you the one doing the dance down here?" "Oh, yeah! I love the worship!" Honey – you don't have a clue what worship is!

So Jesus (Who is God) says the to this lady in John 4: "**God is sheer Being itself**." He's not a man – that He should lie (Num.23:19). Not a woman. He is – God. And Jesus' description of Him is: "He is sheer Being. He's Spirit." Then He says, "...those who worship Him must do it – out of their very being!"

Who are you? Whose are you? If people you work with came to this meeting and saw you in action – would it be a surprise to them? It shouldn't be. It shouldn't. It should be a natural thing all the time – the person you are here in church should be the person you are everywhere, all the time.

The words, our vocabulary, shouldn't change – nor our voice tone. We talk naturally out there but when we get in the church we adopt this quiet whispery, gentle little voice: "God bless you. It's so good to see you. How's the baby? Are things better?" Why don't you just be you?

Why don't you just be you? When we come to God, we don't have to use a King James language! ☺ He knows "you" from "thou!" ☺

We have picked up an idea, in our minds, of how we will worship Him so much so that we're at least two different people. One out there – in the home and with the kids and on the job – and then another in church. And I know we don't usually use words like "bless-ed." But do you know how many people out in the world these days are saying, "I'm blessed"? They're not Christians even – to my knowledge. Many of them used to say, "I'm lucky." Now they're saying, "I'm blessed."

Well, hey! Where did they get that word? From someone who knew what it meant! Learn to pick up on those things and say, "Oh! I am too! That's so great!" I actually did that once and the lady said back to me, "You are too – what?" I said, "I am too – blessed."

Let's not just have a language that is only understood among *us*. Am I making sense to you?

Now, when Jesus said this to the woman at the well – that God was Spirit – she was startled because it broke her *mindset*. Everything she thought . . . Everything they told you that your church background was – suddenly changes when you have a divine encounter with God! That was Jesus' entire goal when He came to this earth – to reveal God. If you don't believe me, you've never read John 17.

There we read Jesus cried out: “Oh, Father, I finished the work You gave Me to do and I told them all about You. I’ve given them Your Name...” (Jn.17:4,6,8,26, et.al.). We walk through the names of God: Jehovah Jireh – Nissi – Tsidkenu. All the names we have learned in the Old Testament, the Names of God, show us Who He is. They give the essence of Who and What that Spirit is. He isn’t Shammah sometimes and Tsidkenu another. He is ALL of that all the time! The Great I AM!

That’s the full revelation Jesus brought. It was the whole purpose of Jesus to reveal the Father and to reveal the access to the Father. You see, ***the way of the cross is the access to the Father.***

It wouldn’t do me any good for Him to come and spend three years telling me how wonderful the Father is and how He loves us and how He sent Himself, Jesus, to come and how He was going to pay the price to be the holy spotless lamb to satisfy the Father and the requirements of sin on our behalf – all of that wouldn’t do me one bit of good if He didn’t tell me how to get there!

How do you get to the Presence of the Father? It’s by the Blood that Jesus shed! By the way of the cross! But if we just have the cross. . . . There are some religions that are still (pardon me for saying it like this, but...) *stuck* at the cross.

I appreciate all He accomplished at the cross. I do! And I think daily: “Thank You, Lord, for my salvation. Thank You for the Blood of Jesus. Thank You I have boldness to come before the presence of the Father – because of the Blood. And because of the Blood cleansing me, You, Jesus, live in me and I, Jesus, live in You, and we come before the Father as one.”

That whole road of access was made known through the cross. But if it was just to make known the road, what good it is to the Father – to have a world full of children who know how to get to Him but don’t come very often – because they have issues. Issues with Him and issues with one another.

This little lady at the well was a hearer – she *heard* what He said. She found salvation in Him, and as a result of that encounter, the entire town was saved – because after her encounter with Jesus, she was different from what she had been before.

You see, her relationship with the town was with the men. So when she went back into the city *changed*, it was quite evident and they all said, “We want to see this Jesus.” She testified: “He told me everything – all I ever knew – all I ever did. He told me everything” (Jn.4:28,29).

There’s another occasion in the Bible where it tells us: here were Peter and John and they were just expounding the Word of God, and “*they took note of them*” (Ac.4:13). In other words, the people who heard them were startled. “I didn’t know they could do that! These are not college people; they’re non-degreed. These are unlearned men but listen to them. WOW!” The world would say, “WOW! Listen to what they’re saying.” The Bible says, “*They took note of them that they had been with Jesus.*”

People will take note of *you* – if you’ve been with Jesus. They will. There is something – different. You can’t *really* touch Him without it showing.

The amazing thing to me about salvation is the simplicity of it. What I mean is, all the complexity of salvation was paid by Jesus. It’s all that: He had to be born and live and preach and be beaten and die and be buried and resurrected by the Father. That’s the *complexity* of salvation. Awww, Church, that *is* something else! But it’s done! The simplicity of it is: “I am a sinner – and I recognize He’s the Savior; He paid that price *for* me.” (cf. Rom.3:9; 6:23; 2Cor.5:21; Gal.3:29,22; 1Pet.2:24).

I watch people come down this aisle and pray a simple prayer, such as: “I’m the sinner – You’re the Savior – I ask You to forgive and cleanse me of my sins and come into my life.” Now the miracle that instantly takes place in them – I never get used to! (cf.Jn.1:12).

Here's a person answering the altar call that comes down to the front looking like this: sad, dejected, depressed, lifeless, just expressionless. Then the saving encounter with God through prayer and suddenly – CHANGE! It's actually visible on his countenance as: life and light, a fresh smile and eyes brightened.

If you had spoken to that same person at the beginning of the service – you know: “God bless you. Good to see you” – you would have encountered them all downcast. But at the end of the service after they have accepted the Lord as Savior *::clap!::* What a change! HUGS! for all!

That's a miracle!! We should never get used to that! We ought to be *thrilled* every time we watch God perform such miracles!

But just as equally is the thrill of the knowledge that at *all* times, whether I have trouble or I do not have trouble – whether I'm in pain or I'm feeling great – whether it's morning, noon, or night – whether I'm at work or in my home or in a church service – I can always touch His Throne! I can come before the Father at all times – any time I want! Any time I want! (cf. Heb. 4:16; 10:19,22).

That's what Jesus was trying to get through to her. You don't have to have a *certain* place and have someone authoritatively announce: “The Lord is in this place!” My answer to that (I think it; I don't dare say it) – but my answer is: “DUH!” ☺

Think about it. Here are His people gathered together – in His Name – and I need a leader to resonate: “*The Lord is in this place!*”? I know He's in this place! I brought Him! I expect you to see Him! I expect you to bring Him! And when we all get together, the Lord is really in this place! (cf. Mt. 18:20). That's what we have to see – about *worship*.

What, then, could you say constitutes worship? Is it – lower the lights? Soften the music? Slow it down? Singing gently and reverently: “I love You, Lord...” It can be!

Or is it when we sing lively and enthusiastically with lots of body movement – hands raised and waving, dancing as David did: “Everybody sing and everybody shout!” Some would indignantly say: “That's not worship!” Really?

Why is it not worship? Because *you* don't – worship? “Well, I can't imagine coming before the throne – of God – with that kind of music.” You can't imagine it? Read the Book! Look up some of the meanings of some of the words that say “*praise*” and “*thanksgiving*” and find out what “*rejoice*” really means – “jump up and spin around.” That'll blow your top! ☺

We're so – American. When we say “*worship*” I think slow and easy. And when we say “*praise*” I think “Yahoo!” ☺ But that's American – that's not the whole truth.

This is *all* going on in heaven, *right now* (Rev. 4,5). Oh, yes, it is! And you know – if you don't like it His way, the alternative is – very hot... ☺ (You think Phoenix is hot in August!)

Thanksgiving. Do we have to have one day set aside a year? Because some president was smart enough to say, “You know, maybe the American people could be thankful one day a year – if I specify it.” ☺ And so on that one day a year – everyone is thankful – except the turkeys, of course... ☺ But *thanksgiving* absolutely should be a way of life.

Do you know that thanksgiving – thanks giving – when you give thanks – is like spending the lottery? Oh, you're looking at me like: “I don't know that word.” ☺ It's like you hit some kind of jackpot *spiritually* when you learn the power of giving thanks. It really is.

Thanksgiving, in the Bible, is not so much for *God* as for *us*. “Be ye thankful” (Col.3:15). Not just “Give ye thanks.”

Isn't it sad that we think that we have to go down to the streets and see people with less than we have – physically, mentally, financially, certainly spiritually, – grabbing a cardboard box to stay warm... . Isn't it sad that we have to compare ourselves with them in order to be thankful? Come on, Church.

Isn't it sad that we see someone with more than we have – a nicer this or a nicer that – and we whine, “Don't tell me God doesn't have favorites”? Isn't that sad?

What do you have? A *life*. That's a good beginning. Every time you wake up in the morning, it'd be a really good thing to know: “Hey! I'm alive!” And you have – *hope*!

Did you ever meet a hopeless person? I have. The most hopeless person I ever met was a person who tried twice to commit suicide and was unsuccessful – both times. Now, that's hopeless! Quietly sobbing they droned: “I can't even do this – not even successful at that.” I could only reply, “You're right. That's really hopelessness.” But you have hope, my Friends. You have great expectations. God said so – He has great plans for you (Jer.1:5; 29:11).

You have *faith*. But I often hear something like this spoken so longingly: “Well, I'm prayin' for more faith.” Why? What are you going to do with it? Even His disciples came to Jesus and said, “Oh, we want more faith.” And His response was: “Why don't you use what you've got?” And I can hear them respond so plaintively: “Well, it's not very big.” So – plant it! It'll get bigger! (cf.Lk.17:5,6).

We want faith – to carry around and show off: “See my faith?” Well, we don't say it just like that. This is more accurately what we might say: “I'm believing God for...” this great thing – whatever it is. Are you?

“*Give us this day.*” I pray that often. I do pray the Lord's Prayer (Mt.6:9-13). I was praying it the other night – over my family: “*Give us this day, our daily bread.*” And I usually think of tangible things – necessities. But then it dawned on me – “No, that's not *only* that. It's – ‘Give me today the bread that You break – the bread of knowledge and understanding and insight and truth – that I need today!’” Today! Give us this day – all that we need! That's *faith*! I've got enough faith for today! When you get me a little beyond this week, I don't know, I have to kind of borrow from the Bank. That doesn't mean we don't have further vision, but I'm talking about *faith*.

I want you to know how much faith you have: you have faith for today! You have *faith*! You believed you were going to hear the Word of God by coming here tonight and you are! You believe that you're going to get home safely – and you are. You have faith that your prayers are being heard, and if they're being heard, they're being answered! (1Jn.5:14,15). That's *faith*! We mix up *faith* with *results*!

You're looking at me like: “Well, faith does get results.” But you still can have faith when you don't see results.

Faith is, itself, the foundation of the things you hope for (Heb.11:1). That's why we dare to say: “I know He's going to do it. I just *know* He's going to do it. I know He is... I have His promise.” (Jn.14:13,14; 15:16b; 16:23,24). It's not me dreaming up something and commanding Him about it. It's that He told me, and so, that's it. But today I need my daily bread.

Now, is thanksgiving – *worship*? Is praise *worship*? Is obedience *worship*? The answer is so obviously – “Yes!” Worship is not something separate from all that.

288 times in scripture, it says, “*rejoicing*,” 310 times it says “*singing*,” “*thanksgiving*” appears 137 times; and *worship* entails it all. The whole Book is about *worship*. Inclusively, those activities all constitute *worship*.

But, if we will not walk in obedience to the Word of God, you will hear Him say: “You call Me, Lord – where’s My *worship*?” What does He mean by that? Does He want me to just bow down and raise my hands and dance before Him all the time? All of those things are expressions of worship, but that’s not His complaint. His complaint is: “Don’t call Me Lord if you don’t *obey*!”

Remember what He said to the church of Laodicea? (Rev. 3:14ff). “*You’re neither hot nor cold! I wish you were one or the other! But you’re lukewarm.*” What’s He saying there? “*Because you are like that, just lukewarm, I’m spewing you out of My mouth*” (Rev.3:16). One translation says, “You make Me want to vomit!” That’s pretty graphic.

What He’s saying to us is: “Don’t pretend *worship* is what you are! Do you think you’re fooling Me with your *words*? Do you think you’re fooling Me with your *antics*? Your *expressions*? Your physical *responses*? Do you think that *fools* Me?” God says, “You’ve lived six days of disobedience and now I’m supposed to be *thrilled* with this one day?”

It’s kind of like living with an abuser. You know, one who just beats the socks off of someone else, and then one day out of seven, brings the flowers and the love-speech. That’s why it’s so hard to get the one being abused out of that situation – because they can only remember that one good day out of seven.

And yet we *abuse* our Lord. We ignore Him – ignore Him – ignore Him. In fact, in our attitudes, we almost curse Him. Well, I won’t say “almost” – we curse Him when we say things like: “I don’t know why the good Lord saw fit to do this.” Or, “I don’t know why – the Lord is...” – and then we go into our little pity-party routine. So soulfully we moan, “I’ve served Him! I’ve walked this walk. I’ve given up....”

You’ve given up what? You can’t give up anything that wasn’t first given to you! So – don’t give me that. (cf.Jas.1:17).

We whine: “I’ve just lost – everything.” Okay. Where’d you get it? Where did you get what you lost? “Well, I *earned* it.” Shall we go through the whole course? Where’d you get the strength to earn it? Where’d you get the job? Where’d you get...? It all comes back to God! Awww, Church! He owns it all! He owns it all!

Worship is dutiful! It’s commanded. “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.*” That’s a quote. That one particularly is from Luke 4, but it’s a quote from the Old Testament Jesus repeated. That was when Jesus said to satan, “Oh, please!” (Lk.4:8).

I just love His answers when the enemy tempted Him. Don’t you love to go through that story? The enemy says, “If You’ll do this, this, and this – I’ll give You that and that and that.” And Jesus answers through every temptation: “Oh, shut up!” (It’s worded a little different in the King James ☺). Because the enemy uses the Word, you know, against us. He piously says to Jesus: “It - is - written...” And Jesus responds, “It - is - also - written...” Hello?

Then He prophesies to the enemy: “The day’s coming when even you – you will worship. It won’t be true worship and it won’t be received, but it will be an acknowledgement that I am who I said I am and that God is the Almighty.” That day of acknowledgement will come!

We love to sing: “Every knee shall bow...” But you see, we think of it – because we’re so idealistic – we think everyone’s going to be in church bowing their knees in worship to God. Every creature in the world. Not true. But they will all bow in recognition: “*Truly this was the Son of God!*” (Mt.27:54;

cf.Mt.14:33; Mt.16:16; Jn.6:69). “Yes! He was the Messiah!” It won’t do them any good though – it’ll be too late.

When we sing: “Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” that’s because it’s who we are. I am acknowledging who I am: I am in Christ and He is in me! I’m a worshipper because I live worship. I’m obedient. I give thanks; giving thanks to His Name (Heb.13:15). Giving thanks – because I know what that name represents. Thanksgiving saves lives!

Actually – **worship is more to be experienced than explained.** You can tear the words apart in the Hebrew, like /shachah/, or /barak/ or /sachach/ and discover all the nuances of difference in word meanings and derivations, but it all comes down to this: to worship God is to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to pay homage to, to live in holy awe of, to have an awareness of the greatness of God – and far, far more!

If just one time, my dear friends, if just *one* time, God could open our ears and our eyes to hear *nature*. In one simple 10-minute session – you would never cease to praise Him yourself! Because all of nature, *constantly*, sounds out praises to Almighty God! Yes – that’s what the Good Book says (Ps.69:34).

The ocean fills up (just as we do) in the awesome awareness of His Presence. It fills up – and swells to a point of SHOUT! When those breakers come forth they shout: “**GLORY TO GOD!**”

The wind blows ::whhhhoooo:: “*He is Almighty!*” North wind! – south wind! – east wind! – west wind! “He holds us by His angels.” The Bible says that His angels hold them (cf.Rev.7:1). He looks over and says, “She can release a little of that and you can release a little of that and you can release a little of that.” When the wind blows, it is blowing under obedience to the Almighty Who has it all in His full control!

I sat out on the desert some time back – alone – I guess you’d call it in meditation (I’ll call it that because it will impress you if I use that word ☺). But I was just *musings*, I suppose, with God. My thoughts were – I don’t know that I actually said it, but my thoughts were: “Lord, all of nature sings praise to You, but out *here*, this is **TOTAL STILLNESS!**” It was nearing sunset, and as I sat there in the beauty and stillness of my surroundings, the rocks had cooled just enough from the heat of the day to make a creaking sound – and I got it!

“Just because you can’t always hear it, Iverna, these rocks do cry out!”

We sing: “Before the rocks cry out...” – too late! They’ve been crying out ever since creation! Some of their cries are: “*Please manifest the sons of God!*” (Rom.8:19).

I think every lake – every river – every place of beauty that we have... (Is “muck” okay to say? ☺) ...that we have “mucked up” to the point of filth – thrown our cans and our garbage around – every place that was once beautiful... I hear the sound of earth crying: “Oh, please! Almighty Creator! *Manifest the sons of God!* Let them come. Let it be a clean earth again! Let the beauty You created us with be returned to us!”

In spite of all this praise from His creation, there is something in the ear of God that causes Him to bend down toward humanity – toward the redeemed.

Picture it with me – All praise – from all of creation – at all times going on. Oceans – rivers – mountains – lakes – streams – trees – wind. All praise resounding back to its Creator. It was just made that way – it quivers toward its Creator (cf.Hab.3). Are you with me? Can’t you see it?

Now, God is used to this! He's on the throne – He's used to this great praise! The angels are used to it. When SUDDENLY! I hear the voice of God say, "SILENCE in heaven! This one, I want to hear!" And He tilts His ear toward earth, and there's one person singing so quietly and reverently a melody in the spirit: "I love You, Lord. I worship You. You're altogether love-ly."

And the angels say – "So what? All nature praises." I can hear His response to them: "You don't understand. All of nature is created without an option to worship – but the redeemed have been given choice. And when they worship, it is a result of their *obedient hearts*. And when it's a result of their obedience, it is My Son. It is My *Son!* And I want to hear Him."

Oh, Church, don't separate it: praise – thanksgiving – fast songs – slow songs. It's a *life* He's looking for. And when we put all those redeemed lives together into one Body.... I have a habit that I've done for years. Every time I'm riding in a car and pass by a church, I pray the blessing of the Lord on it – for the pastor and the people. When all those churches become God-conscious – they may not be doctrinally sound as we would think of it – but when they become **God-conscious**, can you imagine the thrill that it is to the Father to hear the Son? For there are not *many sons* out there – there's just ONE! When we become one in Christ, it's His Son! "Look Father, the many sons have become ONE in Me..." So, together, we're His Son rejoicing! His Son trusting Him! His Son praising! His Son giving glory! That is awesome to Him!

A sad story in the Bible is found in 2 Chronicles 26. We won't read it or exegete it scripture by scripture, let me just tell you what it says. A young man, 16 years of age, suddenly found his father dead, and he is assigned kingship. Just 16. He looks at everything his father did not do and becomes challenged by it. (Are you getting this sermon? ☺ Think along here with Holy Spirit interpreting.)

It isn't your chronological years that bring maturity – it's your brain! Get some sense! ☺ Look at us who have gone before your generation and say, "Well, I know one thing I'm not going to do." That's good; it's fine! That makes me a teacher! ☺ If you look at our lives – those of us who are older in leadership – and you don't like some things, then we have taught you *something!* Don't do those same things! ☺

Uzziah is suddenly in a position of authority and he does some marvelous things. He did "right" in God's sight – he had had *that* lesson from his dad. He built cities and walls and towers. Now, you understand how they did that, don't you? They had people under them – workers and so forth. But the flow of wisdom came from the head. That's why the pastor had us raise our hands (as the workers) and say, "These hands have been given to me, have been created, to give me the ability to get money to put back into the Kingdom – to be successful." Hello?

Authority does the same thing. If you're a mother or a father, you have authority. You may have 40 people over you on your job, but *you* have authority over something. And it doesn't matter your age, your chronological years. What matters is what you do with what you have.

If you understand the daily-bread request (Mt.6:11), you can say, "Lord, today, I need some wisdom." Don't just sort the pieces, if you're on an assembly line – don't just sort the colors and throw out the imperfect. Find a clever way of doing it that no one else ever figured out. That's wisdom from above. There's no such thing as a dull job. Lots of dull people – doing dull things. ☺

Uzziah built cities – he built walls and towers. He sought God.

Now, verse 5 of that 26th chapter of 2 Chronicles is a powerful verse: "**As long as he sought the LORD**" he was under that blessed anointing. It's not a one-time thing. It's not a laying on of hands. I'm not against that, but I don't do a whole lot of it because I have different thoughts. It's okay, the laying on of hands for some impartation. But you see, the truth is you don't need someone to pray for you every

single service. *You* need to do it – seek God for your self and your situation – every single day! Or, every single hour of every single day!

Uzziah fought the enemy – and won.

I said, “He fought the enemy – and won!” You know, it’s amazing to me how many Christians make fighting the enemy – “the end.” I hear them moan: “I tell you, I’ve been in a battle.” You were in that same battle last year, weren’t you? You either need to let him kill you – or you need to get up and win!
☺

I don’t like to fight, yet I do lots of fighting in the spirit. But I don’t live in a constant state of battle. I refuse to do that – Jesus taught me I didn’t have to! Sometimes the victory is almost instantaneous: “In the name of Jesus, I command the release of – this!” At other times – and I don’t understand the whys so don’t come to ask me – at other times, it doesn’t happen like that! “In the name of Jesus! I said, ‘In the name of Jesus!’ I mean it – in the Name of...!” and then, this time, I have to really get into the battle.

When I run out of words, I’m so grateful for the Holy Ghost! He knows what to pray! (Rom.8:26, 27) and I’m out! ☺ “I prayed everything I know. I’ve commanded everything – demanded – cast everything out I can think of – and it’s still standing there – looming!” And I say, “Holy Spirit – Thou are welcome in this place!” Then *::TONGUES!::* and He comes out – and that thing is released!

Now, I come back to Him and say, “Can You give me those words again – on paper?” ☺

Some things are only broken in the Spirit. “*They that worship must worship in the spirit*” (Jn.4:24 paraphrased). It’s who you are! I don’t ever want the enemy to say, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but I don’t know you!” (cf.Ac.19:15). I want him to know *this* voice! When I speak, I speak with the authority of the Christ that lives in me!

Uzziah dug wells. He trained men. He was so successful. It was amazing! In fact, he even invented the first tanks – war machines. They didn’t have them before him. This young man was “tuned in” to Higher Authority.

But listen to this verse – 16 – “*But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to destruction for he transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the Temple to burn incense.*” That sounds good to me. Doesn’t it sound good to you? Oh yeah – but you see, he didn’t have that *positional authority*. God had laid out the “rules” of worship.

Uzziah was not of the Aaronic tribe. He was not a priest. He was not cleansed to be a priest. But his attitude was: “I have done all of these things successfully – there isn’t anything I can’t do successfully. And now, I’m tired of being just king. I want to take the place of another.”

That is such a common thought-weapon the enemy uses on God’s people: “You could do that better than he.” “They should have asked you to preach – you could beat her all to smithereens.” And that thing gets inside of a successful person – not a loser – not a wannabee – but a successful person. And they become agitated. Our words would be – “I just felt that I should do it.” What do you think “*not by might*” and “*not by power*” means? (cf.Zech.4:6). The kid (well, he’s not a kid at this point) served, what? 30 years?

“*Not by might.*” You have *might*. You’ve got – all this. And *power*. You have all authority. But you can not violate – regardless of your might or your money or your positional authority – you may never violate the placements of God!

“Well, that doesn’t seem fair.” Yes, it’s fair – because God knows who to put where and when and how long to leave them there. But there is no limitation on who can worship. He could worship out there in

the court with the rest of the people. But he wanted to worship where it would show off – with the incense – with the censer.

As he walked into the Temple, the priests said, “Oh, no! This is wrong!” And they gathered together and said, “Please, Uzziah! Don’t do this! This is to your destruction!”

He wrested away from them – pushed away – and declared, “I will want – what I want – when I want it.”
::clap-clap:: And leprosy hit him instantly. They had to take him out of the Temple and put him in a separate house where he lived till he died and was buried. What a waste. What a tragic waste.

Uzziah’s son Jotham became king and did wonderful things. But one flaw in his life – and you can guess why when I tell you what it was. He refused to ever go to the Temple. He followed in his father’s footsteps – in helping the people – in blessing them – in being a good king – but he said, “I will never set foot in the Temple where my dad was hurt.”

What does that have to do with worship? Everything. We make the mistake as leaders – I’ve done it myself – of saying, “Each one worship God in his own way.”

The Bible doesn’t say that. The Bible says, “*Worship God in spirit and in truth.*” Worship God – God’s way. He’s looking for those who are redeemed – or will be redeemed – but He does not want “sick” worship. He wants you to worship Him from the depths of your heart – with sincerity and honesty and even abandon. He’s looking for worshippers who will worship Him – because of Who He is.