

# A SERMON: True Worship Idea

By the REV. STEPHEN M. PAULSON, D.D.

*The hour cometh, and now is, when true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth.—John 4:23.*

A friend showed me an excellent photograph he had taken from the slope of Mount Gerezim, the sacred mountain of the Samaritans. In the distance appears the little town of Sychar, and near it a fertile garden in which is situated the most famous well of all antiquity. It is the well which Jacob dug some 3,600 years ago, still in use, and one of the undisputedly authentic spots of Bible history.

More than 1,900 years ago an event took place there which made that little garden forever sacred to the Christian heart. Jesus, walking up from Jerusalem, came along the very road seen so plainly in the photograph. And there He rested in the heat, sitting by Jacob's well.

## Asks for Drink

A woman who came down from the village of Sychar to draw water, found Jesus sitting by the well. He said to her, "Give me to drink." She was quite taken aback, and said, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (For, a Jew would not look or speak to a Samaritan.) Jesus answered: "If you knew the gift of God who is asking you for a cup of water, you would ask of Him, and He

would give you living water, and whoever drinks of that water shall never thirst."

Jesus was speaking of that universal satisfaction for a thirsty soul, not to be found in Jacob's well or any other earthly source, but only in the Fountain of Life, which is Christ Himself.

The woman said, pointing to Mount Gerezim, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men should worship." Then comes the answer which takes away all barriers of nationality and sectarianism, and unites in one all those who lift their hearts in worship to the Father: "The time is coming, it is here now, when true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and such does the Father seek to worship Him."

To worship God is man's highest glory. He was created for fellowship with God. And of that fellowship worship is the highest possible expression.

## Was No Philosopher

It is doubtful whether the Samaritan woman understood what Jesus meant when He said, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." She was no philosopher, this woman, but one who had lived rather a sordid and soiled life. And yet let us note that the words were spoken not only to

the woman at the well, but to all people in all ages.

Thus we see that the worship of God is not a question of place. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem is the place," said Jesus. It is no question of cathedral, or church, or chapel, or hall. But wherever a human heart yearns for God and pours itself out in prayer and devotion there is God's house and God's blessing.

## True Idea of Worship

Neither is it a question of time. If this true idea of worship is once grasped, that it is not an outward form but an inward spirit, that it is not the bending of the knee but the presentation of a lowly and a contrite heart, that it is not in ceremonials, but in the sincerity of love and faith—then we begin to know that all hours may be hours of worship—in home, office, or factory.

God is not tied to particular places. He is not confined to temples made with hands. And in all ages devout souls, alone in mountain or valley, or solitary home, have found themselves in God's presence. "When thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret," is Jesus' prescription for personal devotion. And yet our social instincts cry out for common worship in a place set aside for the fellowship of believers. There is a blessing upon such gatherings.