Thank you. You may all be seated. Church, would you turn with me this morning to John chapter 4. John chapter 4. As you're turning to John, I would like to pick up a refrain. A theme that we will carry us through the next four sermons. And it's a very simple theme.

It's a theme that you see throughout Calvin's work on the necessity of reforming the church. It is that Christ reforms his church by his word for his glory. And I love that because his and Christ is in that statement a lot more than you and I. And we see as we think of just merely the title of Calvin's work, The Necessity of Reforming the Church, that word necessity. Necessity is a big word.

I want a lot of things. I want some more of that bread pudding from last night. But I don't have to have it. I need a lot of things. I will probably need a nap this afternoon. But I don't have to have it. But when you use the language of necessity, it is something of which that if I do not have, my life will fall to pieces, the world as we end will know it. And as we see Calvin is using this word of necessity, he says that the church was at a point in which reform could wait. No longer.

And as we discussed last night, we see how the time in which Calvin was writing in a time we see now, the glory of Christ was separated from the gospel of Christ. And we're gonna look at how that glory was separated through four main areas of the church. And we'll begin this morning by looking at how the Catholic church of its day and a problem of which arises still even in Protestantism, is that the glory of God has been separated from the worship of God. And so I wanna pick that thought up in our sermon in a sentence this morning. God's glory shines brightest where God's worship is purest. God's glory shines brightest where God's worship is purest.

Can we pray? Heavenly Father, Psalm 19 tells us that it is your word that revives the soul, enlightens the eyes, rejoices the heart, and makes wise the simple. And we ask that this morning that your spirit would take the words of Christ as they are opened and proclaimed and would do those very things to us to bring us wisdom, to bring us joy, to bring us life. And so, Lord, we come in dependence upon you and your promises, and we ask this in Christ's name. Amen. John 14, or John chapter 4, we'll pick up in verse 19, John 4, 19. Hear the word of the Lord. The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive you are a prophet.

Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. And Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming and is now here. when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. And the woman said to him, well, I know that the Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ, and when he comes, he will tell us all things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. And thus ends the reading of God's holy word. May he add his blessing to it.

Let me just recap where we are in John chapter four, in case it's been a few days. You remember John chapter three, Jesus visits Nicodemus at night. Well, in John chapter four, he is traveling through Samaria It is a part of the

world that Jews tend not to like to travel through. There's some animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans, but Jesus is traveling.

It's noon, and it's hot. It's a hot summer day, and Jesus stops at a well. The disciples go on to buy some food, and Jesus meets at this woman, this place, a Samaritan woman. And she's coming to the well at noon. Well, let's just say, you don't draw water at noon. I don't know if y'all have ever pulled water from a well. You do that in the morning.

She's there in the evening, in the hottest part of the day, because there is some shame, some stigma attached to this woman. And as we begin discussing with her, we find out that she's not married. But she's had five husbands. And the one that she has is not her own. And I will just tell you as pastor in a small town, small towns have long memories. She had a reason for being there at noon. Jesus offers her living water and when she perceives that Jesus is a prophet, we find that the conversation goes from the lack of water to the lack of marriage to questions about worship.

And we find that this question of worship is a very important question. We find that it's when Calvin is writing his book on the necessity of reforming the church, when he starts on what needs to be reformed, he starts with worship. And I wonder, is that the place we would start? We would start with doctrine, we would start with policies and procedures, I mean, Goodness, have y'all been to General Assembly? There's like 43 overtures on some minute thing in the second part of the Book of Church Order that you have to have a law degree to read sometimes. Rarely do our conversations turn around the issue of worship, but for Calvin it did, and for this woman it did.

As we begin to think of worship and Jesus's response to her question, I want to lay this out by discussing that there are two parts of worship that's very important. And I want you to think of diamonds for a minute. The first part of worship that is so important is the purity. The purity of the diamond is very important. So is the purity of worship.

But then you also see where the diamond is placed. You know, there's a very big difference between a diamond in a nice gold place setting and a diamond in the mud. You know, a diamond lost in the mud loses a lot of its beauty. It may be the purest diamond in the world, but it's in the mud versus being in a nice, crisp place setting.

What Jesus is getting at in our passage is that God's glory shines brightest when it's purest, when it is from the heart, when it is pure, and when it's by the book, when it's placed in its proper setting. And so let's take those two halves, the purity and the placement, and see how Christ addresses this. That the glory of God shines brightest when worship is from the heart. We say, my father is seeking those who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

There's a sentence by J.C. Ryle that has stuck with me for almost a decade now. And J.C. Ryle says, the principal part of religion is the heart. Don't we see that throughout the scriptures? What does Deuteronomy 30 say? He will circumcise our hearts. We see in Ezekiel, I will take the heart of Stalin and I will give you a heart of flesh. I love the call that we hear wisdom making in Proverbs when he says, son, give me your heart. The heart, as a famous preacher titled a book, the heart is the target, which makes sense. God is spirit. He is not amazed at all the external things. He is aiming at the heart.

However, what we find in this passage is a problem that plagued this woman, is a problem that plagued the Catholic Church of Calvin's day, and let's just call a spade a spade. It's a problem that affects us here. When the external focus is used to mask an internal problem, When an external focus is used to mask an external problem, we see it in our passage. I mean, Jesus calls her out, she's got five husbands and one's not her own, and she begins to say, well, it's your church, you worship this way. You see that ruse, that distraction, that diversion that she is making? But Jesus turns it back to her and says, the issue is not the externals. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

He is not impressed by your hypocrisy. And isn't that the greatest issue that he is addressing, the hypocrisy? You want to argue about him selections when you had five husbands and the one now is not your own? Isn't that, what do we call that in the South, the pot calling the kettle black, is that right? It's a diversion.

And John is great throughout his gospel of highlighting this hypocrisy where our focus on the outside covers up our focus on the heart. The best example being John 18, verse 28, where, you know, the Pharisees, they beat a man, they bring false witnesses, they put him in a kangaroo court. And then they take him to Pilate after all this injustice and they say, Pilate, we can't come in because we want to be clean so we can keep the Passover. They're focused on this external cleanliness after injustice has completely defiled their hearts. Has this not been the critique of the prophets? What are the prophets?

Amazing line from Isaiah chapter one, where if I could put a southern paraphrase on it, God says, your worship makes me sick. Your worship makes me sick. It makes me want to vomit. It is disgusting. Yes, you keep all the form, but your heart's not in it. Your sacrifices are for nothing more than a mask for your hypocrisy.

We see this in Psalm chapter 50. We see this throughout the scriptures. It is a problem. And we saw this in the Catholic Church of Calvin's day. All their additions of which they had added to the worship of God, all the fluff, all the things that glitter in gold, they were simply to hide a problem of the heart. But can we not say the same thing happens to us today? The same thing happens to us today.

I mentioned last night I'm from Jones County where there was 364 churches in one county. And I knew a dear man that I come to know later in life would beat his wife every Saturday and sing, oh worship the king every Sunday. Do you know what you call that? Hypocrisy. But what does Jesus say here?

God is spirit, and those who would worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. God is pleased with the heart, not with the external things. What is it that, oh, who is it that says what pleases God the most, but that we listen to his beloved son? Is that all we see in the Mount of Transfiguration? What pleases him most is our love for his son that he loves more than all things, not going through the rope patterns, not fighting over carpet color, song choice, music style. What he is most concerned with is the heart.

We see this in Abraham. It's this beautiful line in John 8, verse 56, where it says, Abraham saw my day and was glad. He was glad. His heart was all in. Even when God called him to worship that would cost him his son, he wakes up the next morning and he goes because he is all in. He has given God his heart.

And what of us? We're in the new covenant. The Spirit has been poured out in greater measure. Should we have more joy than Abraham did? Should we have more desire for Christ, a more eagerness to worship, a greater desire to take off the mask and the hypocrisy and come to him and say, Lord, here is my heart. Revive it, enlighten it, rejoice it, make it wise. Here is my heart. Yes, I've had five husbands. Here's my heart. Yes, I've been an officer in your church for decades, but my heart hasn't been in it. Yes, I have sat in grandmama's pew for 40 years, but I never had grandmother's savior.

But when he calls us and says, what does he say in Proverbs, and what is he saying to this woman, son, Give me your hearts. God is seeking worshipers that would worship him in spirit and truth. And even to us today, I know it is Saturday at 9.53, when most of you would rather be spreading yellow acorns out in a field somewhere, but you are here, hearing the word of God, and yet I'm not. So young and naive to know that even in places like this, it is often the place where the mask is put on the thickest. And yet we see in our passage, God is seeking worshipers who will give him their heart. Today he asked of you, my people, where is your heart?

That's part of the purity. There is no mask, no makeup, no deceit, no deception, no diversion. It is bringing our heart freely and truly. However, that's the purity of the diamond. Well, it's got to be placed in the right setting, doesn't it? And so where we see the glory of God shine the brightest is, yes, when it's from the heart, but it's also when it's by the book. And isn't that what he says in our passage? God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. Well, what is the truth? He tells us in John 17, Father, sanctify them in the truth. Thy word is truth. It is worship according to God's word.

We can use that wonderful term that Presbyterians know and love, but no one outside of Presbyterianism uses it that I've found. the regulative principle. I like to define it, I pastor in a small town where you have to pastor every denomination under the sun, and I like to simply say it's worshiping the risen savior according to his word. However, you have to nuance that definition, don't you? When it says the Father is seeking those who worship Him in spirit and truth, it is not simply a bunch of rules. It is not simply a preference. My dear friend I have with me will tell you that my least favorite radio station is K-Love. So I really love coming here and singing hymns and psalms. It's beautiful. It's not a question of worship style. Rather, notice what she says in the passage. The woman said to him, I know the Messiah is coming who is called Christ, and when he comes he will tell us all things.

It is not simply a set of prescribed rules, it is rather an extension of Christ's mediatorial office. It is an extension of Christ's work to us as a mediator. Worshiping according to God's word is because it is words that come from the mouth of the risen Christ. He is the Christ, and I love the psalm of saving knowledge in which he writes, when Christ, his mediator, came clad in the offices of prophet, priest, and king. I love that language of clad. It is his armor. His implements by which He exercises His reign.

And we see in our passage, she acknowledges He is a prophet. And what do prophets do? They make known the will of God. for us and our salvation, and Christ has come as a prophet, and he has made known to us God's will, not just in our salvation, but in the entire experience of God. What does it mean to draw near to a holy God?

He lays it out to us in his word. But he's more than simply a prophet, isn't he? He also comes to us as a priest. He is that priest who has made a living way. Notice he says earlier, you worship what you don't know. We worship what we know, prophetic office. But then he goes on and says, it's not on this mountain nor that mountain, but in fact, salvation comes from the Jews.

And there was a time when Christ's priestly office was exercised in the Old Testament with sacrifices to the people could draw near to God and worship. Thank God that that has went away, that on this Saturday morning you're not all bringing me a bunch of sheep and lambs and goats to slaughter. Instead, Jesus Christ has come and fulfilled that priestly office, satisfying divine justice and making us a living way through his flesh. That as we see in the book of Mark, when Jesus is crucified, the veil is rent so that the first person to confess Christ is a Gentile who can draw near to the throne of grace.

Our worshiping by his word is worshiping through the way that he has set up for us. But as Christ, he's not just prophet and priest, he is a king. We are gathered as his people. He is the ruler. We are the ruled. He is the ruler. There are laws and ways in which we interact within his kingdom, the church. It is not simply a prescription of rules. It is a submission to a king. He is ruling and reigning, as he would say to Thomas. When Thomas says, Jesus, we don't know the way, and he said, Thomas, you do know the way. I am the way, the truth, and the life. He is to us our prophet, priest, and king that is open for us.

How do we bring to God our hearts? And I will just tell you, that brings me much comfort. Have you ever seen those t-shirts that say, follow your heart? I did that once, it didn't end well. He says, son, bring me your heart. And then he lays out for us, what does it look like to bring me that heart over and over and over in worship?

This is what Calvin is driving at. This is what Jesus is driving at, where first he addresses the issue of hypocrisy, now he turns to the issue of idolatry. This idea of willed worship, it separates the worship of Christ from the glory of Christ. It is subtraction by addition. When we add to God's worship, we are always, always, always subtracting from his glory. Why? Because it takes the focus off of him and it puts it where? On me. Calvin says, every addition to the word of God is a lie. It distracts from the truth. And I can remember a dear friend of mine, he was having a pastoral problem.

His church, every Mother's Day, they had a cross in the front of the church and everyone would bring a little white rose during worship and they would put the rose in the cross and pray for their dear mother. And the whole, it just ate him alive because the entire service, guess who it was focused on? Mom. Was it focused on Jesus? It wasn't, and he knew it because he said, you know, I really think we should stop doing this on Mother's Day. And he sprouted three heads And it did not end well for him. He could stand in the pulpit and preach heresy on that day.

That's fine. But don't you mess with mother. Do you see the issue here? Who's being worshipped? It's not Jesus. Every time we add something, to the worship of Christ, we take away from the glory of Christ. We say that his wisdom isn't enough, that as prophet, he has not laid out everything we need to know how to draw near to God, that we minimize his work as if it is not sufficient, as it's not a living way, but no, there's another way, in addition, a side stuff that we can make.

It's a dangerous thing, isn't it? I once tried to make a shortcut between 1st Pres. Jackson and Clinton by driving through Woodrow Wilson. Never did that again. Got lost. Christ has opened a living way and when we take a detour we say, well, that way is not the best way. It distracts from his reign. Yes, he rules over us, but hey. When dad is away, the kids can play. When the cat's out of the house, the mouse can scurry.

So we will put aside his reign, his authority, his glorious kingship, and we'll do it, what's Burger King say, do it your way? You see, every single time we add to the worship of God, we subtract from Christ's glory. But Christ has come, as he said to this woman, I who speak to you am he. He has came that God may be more clearly known, that his worship would be both pure and in the right place, that that diamond would shine in greater luster. And friends, is this not liberty? Is this not liberty?

I don't know, we drove down the National Trace part of the way here, and we passed lots of people biking. And I don't know about you, but I would like to live to a ripe old age so I do not bike on the trace. Seems dangerous. You're having to share the road with other cars and vehicles, and almost none of them go 50 miles an hour. But you know what's great? When you go to a big city and they have a dedicated bike lane, Do you feel safe? You can bike as fast as you want and you know exactly where you're going. That lane that has been established by a law is there for your enjoyment and your protection.

We draw near to a holy God. I want to stay in my lane, but also draw near to a loving God. I want to enjoy him as much as I possibly can. I want as much glory. Christ has come not to thunder laws from Sinai, but the Christ come and looked at this woman who had five husbands and the one now was not her husband. And he says to her, be espoused. to God, and let me tell you not only what it means to give your heart to my Father, but what does it mean to worship my Father. Is there not a world of kindness to us that Christ would invite sinners like us into his worship? Church, I close simply with this.

Calvin makes an interesting statement. He says that God in many passages forbids any new worship unsanctioned by his word. It's clear. And since he declares that he is so grievously offended with our presumption, which invents such worship and threatens us with such severe punishments. It is clear that the reformation which we have introduced is demanded by strong necessity.

If we are to start anywhere with reforming the church, it's not doctrine, though doctrine's very important. It's not government, though I do love me some church government. The most important place to start is where we as Presbyterians started in the very beginning. What is man's chief end?

To glorify God and enjoy him forever. If we are to see the church reformed in our day and age, it begins with worship. So can we pray, and then we will stand and worship the living God together. Heavenly Father, I am thankful that you are seeking worshipers. For Lord, if you did not seek us, we would not be found Thousands of years of humanity testified to those who followed their own heart and instead worshiped the creature rather than the creator. And Lord, were it not for the grace of God, so go I. We are thankful that you've sent your son, whose blood cleanses every stain, and who calls us to himself, and who draws us near to worship And we ask, Father, that you would help to make our worship pure, that our hearts would be cleansed from every sort of hypocrisy of which is so prevalent,

and that our worship would be cleansed of all idolatry, that there would be nothing that would shine brighter than the glory of God in Christ Jesus. For, Lord, this is our greatest desire. And we ask this in Christ's name, amen.