

# **“Worshipping God Relationally: In spirit and in truth”**

## **Isaiah 58:1-12; Luke 18:9-14**

**SJSM Sermon 14 and 15 Feb 2026 | Ven Wong Tak Meng**





# AUTHENTIC RELATIONALITY

**Seeing God and others as persons to know and love, rather than objects to use.**

**Placing relationships above our own needs, viewpoints, routines, programmes and desired outcomes.**

**Having the intrinsic ability to relate lovingly, rather than merely interacting transactionally, even in challenging situations.**

1

**Walk with God spiritually  
and deeply as a Person**

2

**Walk with  
one another  
as fellow  
pilgrims**

**SJSM Focus 2026**

**Authentic  
Relationality**

3

**Witness  
winsomely  
through  
genuine  
relationships**

**As we enter next week into the  
Season of Lent:**

**How does God want us to  
relate and walk with Him?**

# 1. God cares more about our **Attitude** than our **Attendance** in Church Activities

## Self-righteousness

- **trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and
- ...the Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' (Luke 18:9, 11-12)

## Penitence and Trust

- ...the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, '**God, be merciful to me, a sinner!**' (Luke 18:13)

## **2.** God wants a **meaningful spiritual relationship,** not an **empty transaction for blessings**

### **Pretentious Performative Piety**

2 ...they seek me daily  
and delight to know my ways,  
**as if** they were a nation that did  
righteousness  
and did not forsake the judgment of their  
God;  
they ask of me righteous judgments;  
they delight to draw near to God.

3 **'Why have we fasted, and you see it not?  
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you  
take no knowledge of it?'** (Isa 58:2-3a)

5 **Is such the fast that I choose,**  
**a day** for a person to humble himself?  
**Is it** to bow down his head like a reed,  
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under  
him?  
**Will you call this** a fast,  
and a day acceptable to the LORD?  
(Isa 58:5)

## 2. God wants a **meaningful spiritual relationship**, not an **empty transaction to get blessings**



**Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday** - Not a sign of blessing, piety or divinity, but an act of humility, penitence and need for God's grace.



**Lenten Fasting** - Not an achievement or scoring points with God, but denying the flesh, and relying wholly on God.



**Feet Washing on Maundy Thursday** - Not a status symbol, or signal of virtue, but a genuine reconciliation and servanthood.



**The Breaking of Bread** - Not just a memorial, but a fresh experience of Christ giving up His life for us, fed by Christ's real presence in us.



**The Wine Poured Out** - Not just any beverage, but the bitter cup that Christ accepted to be the sacrifice for our sin, that we may drink with Him when He returns.

# 3. God looks at **how we relate to others** whom He has **made in His own image**

## Treating others with **Contempt**

- ... treated others with contempt:
- ... The Pharisee prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' (Luke 18:9, 11-12)
- ...you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers... you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist ...hide yourself from your own flesh ...the yoke..., the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness (Isa 58:3-4, 7,9)

# 3. God looks at **how we relate to others** whom He has **made in His own image**

## Treating others with **Compassion**

- to **loose the bonds** of wickedness,
- to **undo the straps** of the yoke,
- to **let the oppressed go free,**
- and to **break every yoke?**
- to **share your bread** with the hungry
- and **bring the homeless poor into your house** (Isa 58:6-7a)
- when you see the naked, to **cover him,** and **not to hide yourself** from your own flesh
- If you **take away the yoke** from your midst, **the pointing of the finger,** and **speaking wickedness,**
- If you **pour yourself out** for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted (Isa 58:7b, 9-10)

# John 4:23-24 How God desires us to worship Him

- “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.**” (John 4:23-24)
- **Let us worship Him relationally in spirit and truth**

# Reflection Questions

- 1. How can I pay more attention to my Attitude as approach God in daily devotion and weekly worship, than merely my dutiful Attendance?**
- 2. How can I keep my acts of prayer and worship more meaningful and relational, rather than mere performances seeking God's blessings?**
- 3. How can I remind myself to let my walk with God influence my life and interactions with others?**