

Jesus doesn't have favorites; He teaches everyone the same message

John 4:5-30, 39-42

Rev. Ruberto Ek Yah March 12, 2023

May the mercy, grace and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with each one of you.

Let's pray.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, oh Sord, our Rock. Help us, oh, Lord, by Your Holy Spirit to recognize the living water that Jesus wants to give, and give us the spirit and the strength to teach it to others. In Your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Today is the third Sunday in Lent. In the past weeks, with God's help I have tried to get people to get closer to God and to focus on His Word as a form of fasting. Normally in Lent people try to do some kind of fast by giving up eating something, or to stop doing something to be good with God. But, thanks be to God, I, together with my congregation are fasting in the sense of feeding on the Word of God.

In one of the Bible classes I recently had, I invited the congregation to increase the number of verses they read from one day to the next. People who have just started reading the Bible can focus on one verse. They can meditate on that verse all day while they are going about their daily chores and activities.

To others, I gave the idea of reading a whole chapter of the Bible or a complete section of the Small Catechism. When they come to the Lenten services during the week I ask them to find key words that capture their attention in the Bible reading, and we meditate on them together.

When I read a book of the Bible or a whole Bible story, and then go back and read it again later, I always notice things I didn't notice before. There is one of those things I noticed between the Gospel of John from last week and the reading we heard today.

The theme for today's sermon is "Jesus doesn't have favorites. He teaches everyone the same message." Maybe you remember hearing last week about the talk Nicodemus had with Jesus. Today we heard about another talk Jesus had with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

The Holy Spirit inspired Saint John to place these two conversations close to each other. First, Saint John recorded the conversation with Nicodemus where He talked about new birth of water and the Spirit. Then he recorded some verses that describe Jesus' teaching His disciples to baptize near the place where John the Baptist was baptizing. Then, the following verses tell us that Jesus went north through Samaria to meet with the Samaritan woman at the well and speak to her about living water.

The story of Nicodemus and the story of the woman at the well are separated by this ministry of baptism that Jesus taught His disciples. The two stories invite us to make some comparisons.

Last week we heard John 3:1 *And there was a man of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a governor of the Jews.* The first thing we can see is that Nicodemus was a teacher of the Law, a Pharisee, a Jewish leader. Nicodemus was from what we might call “high society”, someone who was highly respected. Today we hear that Jesus was sitting by Jacob’s well when a Samaritan woman came to get water. We hear that this woman had been married five times and was actually living with a man who was not her husband.

Can you see the comparison? Nicodemus was a Jewish man. The woman was a Samaritan woman. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a man with a very good reputation, while the Samaritan woman was living in adultery. Many people point to Nicodemus and would say, here we have an example of the best. The same people would point to the woman and say, here we have the worst.

Jesus had three good reasons not to talk to this Samaritan woman. First, she was a woman. Second, she was a Samaritan. And third, she was an adulteress. Any of these things would have been enough to prevent communication between a Jew and a Samaritan. No one would blame Jesus for ignoring this woman. In fact, the whole world would expect Him to ignore her.

The Holy Spirit inspired John so He might tell us another important fact - the time of this conversation. John 4:6 says, *“Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour (noon).* It was the hottest part of the day when the sun was beating down in full force. One thing was that a weary traveler like Jesus would be at the well resting in the middle of the day. Another thing was that the woman came to the well alone at the hottest part of the day. What was the context of the people who lived near this well? They would go to the well after the sun went down a bit and it began to get cooler. Most people in the town would have come at that time of day to get water for their homes.

The fact that this woman would go out in the middle of the day tells us that she was not welcome in the community. But even so, Jesus had some hard teachings for this woman just as he had with Nicodemus. Jesus tore down the barriers between himself and this woman and showed that His teaching is for all people at all times and in all places.

Jesus crossed over the cultural barriers between Himself and the woman in a very simple way. He just asked her for a little water to drink. But look how the woman responds: John 4:9 *Then the Samaritan woman said, “How is it that you, being a Jew, asks me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink, since Jews have no dealings with Samaritans?”* Here we see clearly that Jesus will break down whatever barrier that tries to keep Him from doing what is right and fulfilling His mission as Messiah.

Once Jesus broke the cultural barriers He began to teach this woman just as He taught Nicodemus. John 4:10 *“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”* The woman struggled with these words, but she answered, *“Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?”¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”* The woman expressed confusion because what Jesus said didn’t make sense from her point of view. She was thinking in terms of the flesh and not of the Spirit.

Then Jesus brought her a special kind of water. He said, *Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty again. The water I give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* Here we can see another way Jesus prepared someone for baptism. He spoke of the spring of water that gives eternal life. These beautiful words of Jesus invite the woman to change her focus from her short life here in the world to her eternal life.

From here on, Jesus begins to deal with the woman's bad decisions in her life style. He confronts her life style with a simple request. *Go and call your husband to come here.* This was a reasonable request. In fact, according to the culture of that time, this is what Jesus should have done in the first place. Men normally did not interact with women outside their family. Normally a man went through another man who was a close relative of the woman, a husband, a father, an adult son, or other close relative. However, this request of Jesus started a process that led the woman to face her guilt. *The woman answered and said, "I have no husband.."*

Then Jesus exposed her sins. *You have spoken well when you said, "I have no husband," because you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. You have told the truth.* Jesus exposed her adulterous life style, a sin that was punished by death; a sin that is still evil in the sight of God today; a sin that deserves eternal punishment.

How many of us like to hear the truth about our lives? Nobody! For many of us God seems cruel when He makes us face our sin, But that's not true. In reality this is part of God's love for us. When the Holy Spirit shows us our sin, He shows us that we cannot save ourselves. He shows us that we should receive our salvation from outside ourselves. He shows us our need for a Savior. This confrontation with the reality of the Law prepares us for the living water of the Gospel.

Once the Law of God has softened our hearts, the Holy Spirit uses the living water of the Gospel to show us Jesus, our Savior. Pay attention to how Jesus brought the Gospel to the Samaritan woman. ²⁵ *The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."* ²⁶ *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."* The same Jesus who showed the woman her sin now shows her the salvation from that sin. Jesus is the Gospel in the flesh. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. He is the Savior for all of our sins.

The Holy Spirit used these words to work faith in this woman. It was just as Jesus said. The living water of the Gospel changed her quickly into a fountain, a spring of living water. ²⁸ *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"* The living water in her produced an instant missionary. She wanted everyone to know the forgiveness she received.

God used the living water of the Gospel that flowed from this adulterous woman to work a great miracle. A Samaritan town asked a Jewish rabbi to teach them. Jesus taught them for two whole days.

The wonderful this about this miracle is that the people of this town confessed, *"It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."* These people only had the Books of Moses, but that was enough. They knew that this was the Seed of Woman that God had promised Adam and Eve in the

garden. They knew they were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through whom all the nations of the world would be blessed.

The people of this town knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the sacrifices required by the Law of Moses. They knew that this was the sacrifice of God who would give His Son for the sins of the world. Because Jesus lovingly struck the Samaritan woman with the Law, a Samaritan town came to know God's salvation from a Jewish rabbi, a Jewish rabbi who is their Savior.

It is interesting that the Holy Spirit appeared to convert this woman at the well more quickly than He converted Nicodemus. We see this throughout the gospels. The tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners came to Jesus. Meanwhile, the people who considered themselves righteous stayed at a distance. The people who should have received Him did not, and the people who should not have received Him, received Him with eager hearts. The people who felt the most guilty were the first to turn to Jesus. The people who felt the least guilty were the last to turn to Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, the main message of the Bible is that the Son of God took on human flesh, lived a perfect life under the Law, and died on the cross to save all sinners. Hear that message. Through that death we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation. So, it is the duty of every redeemed sinner to proclaim the truth of salvation. The Samaritan woman, now forgiven, could go and proclaim it to her people guided by God. This Lent God is calling us too. And today God calls us and sends us to go and share what He has given us: forgiveness, life, and salvation. [As Psalm 107:2 says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so..."]

How many times have we heard this story of the Samaritan woman? Many times, I'm sure. But every time we read it God teaches us about His love for us. We have many Samaritans near us who are thirsty for righteousness, thirsty for the peace that only God can give. So I strongly encourage every repentant sinner, Do you want to fast for the Lord? I do because I'm grateful for His love, and His forgiveness. Because He loves me just like He loved and reached out to the Samaritan woman.

Then let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand that Jesus doesn't play favorites. He teaches us all the same message. He leads us to springs of living water. Living water comes to us in His Word. So this Lent let us feed on His Holy Word, but let's also share it with every person God puts in our path.

May the peace of God that surpasses all understanding guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.