

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 88

"Encounters with Jesus" 2- Samaritan woman (Part 1)

Brief Talk on John 4: 1– 25

General Introduction

The truth that Jesus is everyone's rescuer regardless of their status, background or location is underscored by the contrast deliberately being made between the person Jesus has just been speaking to in chapter 3- Nicodemus, and the person he is addressing in chapter 4, the Samaritan woman. They are literally poles apart aren't they? Just think about it. Nicodemus is a man, a Jew, a religious expert, ritually pure, a member of Israel's elite inner circle. This is a woman (who remains nameless- she is that insignificant in the world's eyes), she is a Samaritan, a religious half breed, biblically illiterate, immoral and an outcast. And yet to both Jesus says they need the same fresh start by the Spirit and he is the only one who can give it. Now here is the answer to both of those who feel they are too good for Christianity and those who feel they are not good enough: Jesus offers his love to both and he is willing to go to extreme lengths so they can receive it.

Jesus takes this woman, and us, back to some of the most wonderful promises God made in the OT through prophet's like Isaiah for example- Is. 44: 3 ' I will pour water on a thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants.' So just as Nicodemus needed the work of the Spirit in his life, the woman needs the same work of the Spirit in her life.

We must be sensitive to the fact that there are often subtle reasons why people act the way they do. And it would seem that it was precisely compassion that was drawn from Jesus as he talked with this lonely woman on this lonely hillside. And that was when she began to see something that made her realise this was no ordinary man, for what he was to say was to have a delivering effect -v 19 ff, "Sir,".. "I can see that you are a prophet.

But Jesus is more than a Prophet as we shall see later in the second part of this study, and He made this abundantly clear to this lady. He is the source of God's living water.

Questions for discussion

1. When you were growing up, who were the people you were told not to associate with? What part of the city or country would you be warned about? What would have happened if you had gone there?

2. Why do you think Jesus “had to go through Samaria” on his way to Galilee (vv.1-4)?

3. As someone taught from birth to despise the Samaritans, how would you feel when Jesus decided to go through Samaria instead of taking the long way home?

4. The Samaritans were people of mixed blood and were thus looked down upon by the Jews. If this woman was in her early thirties at the time, it means that she had changed her partner just about every other year. (a). Why do you think this woman went to fetch water at noon and not at sunset as was customary for other women in Sychar? (b) How do you think this woman felt when going to the well alone every day?

5. Since “nice girls” did not come to the water well at noon (“the sixth hour”) why do you think Jesus risked his reputation to ask a favour (water) of this woman?

Note: We see here, how Jesus is willing to flout the social conventions of his day to give this poor soul a chance. Here is Jesus a man, and Jew to boot, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink and so the woman’s interest is immediately aroused v9 ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ Two barriers Jesus immediately breaks down. First the Jew/ Samaritan divide.

For centuries these people had hated each others' guts. But not this Jew. Secondly it was scandalous for a single man to address a single woman in the open. Some Rabbis had even devised a saying : A man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife.' In other words, women were non-people. But not to this man, Jesus.

6. What was the Samaritan woman really saying in reply to Jesus' question, "will you give me a drink?" (a) do you know who I am (an outcast)? (b) why would you talk to me? (c) you're giving me too much attention. What do you want? (d) you're threatening me

7. Describe what you think may have been the Samaritan woman's changing perception of Jesus from his questions or statements to her as outlined below:

Example (a) **"Will you give me a drink?"**.....She thought he was very strange, perhaps crazy

(b) **"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."**

Now she thinks.....

(c) **"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."**

Now she thinks

(d) **You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."** Now she realizes that

8. (a) How does Jesus' offer of "living water" contrast with what the woman thinks he means (vv.10-15)? (b) In the woman's reply, what is she really saying and how is she like Nicodemus? (c) What does this offer of "living water" mean in your life and experience?

9. (a) Why does Jesus change the topic of conversation to her personal life (v.16)?

9. (b) What strikes you about the way Jesus responds to her claim not to have a husband?

10. (a) Why do you think this woman changed the conversation to focus on a religious controversy (v. 20). (b) how did Jesus respond (vv.21-24).

Conclusion

The woman comes bearing a dry, empty pot, a telling symbol of her parched, barren heart. Jesus opens the conversation with a direct, somewhat disarming request, "Give Me a drink" (v.7). But she responds defensively to His simple petition. "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink..." In spite of the deep cultural divide, bothering on animosity, that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, Jesus was not deterred in his Mission to reach out to the high and the low of the Society.

Christ not only looks at her and speaks with her, He does so kindly and in such a way as to whet her appetite for spiritual things. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have.

Then Jesus said to the woman, "Go, call your husband, and come here." (v.16). The woman answered and said, "I have no husband..." (vv. 17-18) . Christ's sharp perception pricks her conscience, and the desolation and shame is more than she can bear. Even unbelievers do speak some truth and in this story, Jesus acknowledged the woman's sincerity. However, she shifts to a more comfortable conversation. "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet..." (vv.19-20). Sound familiar?

What about the unsaved in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, etc? How can God allow suffering and evil? What do you say about Sprinkling or Immersion ... King James or Living Bible?-Distracting questions about religious peripherals. This is the smoke screen she hopes will hide her blemished soul from the dawning light of Christ's penetrating gaze. But it is no use. There is no hiding from the gaze of God and there is no depth that his grace cannot reach.