

St. John's Gospel

Session #5

We left off 2 weeks ago having discussed both the Jesus turning over the money changers tables in the temple in Jerusalem, and Jesus encounter with Nicodemus.

We mentioned that John feels no reticence to move the story of the turning over the money changers tables out of Holy Week, where Matthew, Mark and Luke rightfully place it, and putting it in the very beginning of his Gospel. This story then leads into the discourse with Nicodemus.

Nicodemus, like the Jews in John's Gospel do not understand that with the incarnation of Jesus, the long awaited in breaking of the eschatological Kingdom of God is taking place.

In what is known as a Johannine spiral, Jesus uses his meeting with Nicodemus to proclaim that a person "must be born anew", by water and the spirit, a probable reference to baptism, to enter the Kingdom of God. In Jesus, A NEW ORDER IS COMING TO PASS.

Jesus claims that as with the serpent being lifted up on the pole during the wilderness wandering period under Moses, Jesus would also need to be lifted up on the cross to save people from death.

And we then concluded that in this NEW ORDER that Jesus is ushering in, we can all have eternal life because God did not come to "condemn" the world, He came to save the world. Where our eternity is to be spent is based on one thing alone: BELIEF. If you believe in Jesus death and resurrection and place your trust in Him, you will enter the Kingdom of God. If, conversely, you reject Jesus, you will be condemned by your own choosing.

Today we pick up with John 3:22-30, a continuing witness to John the Baptist, Jesus cousin. This will be John the Baptist final witness to who Jesus is in John's Gospel.

Vs. 22 – Jesus is now also baptizing in Judea, at least his disciples are. Vs. 25 – John the Baptist's followers come to John the Baptist and ask John about this rival ministry. They are concerned that Jesus is in effect stealing John's following. People are beginning to leave John to follow Jesus. Vs. 27-28 – John states clearly:

1. Jesus authority is from heaven
2. I am not the Christ, I am his forerunner. Jesus is the bridegroom, I am sort of his best man
3. And John's most famous words: "He must increase, but I must decrease"

John is confirming that the NEW ORDER has arrived. Jesus fame must grow and I must fade in significance. These are the last words that John the Baptist will speak in John's Gospel

Vs 31-36 - John is from the earth, Jesus from heaven. God is true. He whom He has sent utters the words of God. The Father has given all things into his hands. Vs. 36 – the ultimate testimony of John the Baptist - He who believes in the Son, has eternal life. He who does not believe, will not see life but the wrath of God rests on him

So chapter 3 ends with a clarion call for the Church to recognize the importance of our bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel, namely that the destiny of human souls, all rests in whether or not we believe (which means place our trust in Jesus). This is why St. Bede's and all churches must tell the Good News to the world. This is our primary mission at this church. Ultimately, the decision of faith is up to each individual. We cannot force faith, it must be found, but our duty is to tell people the story of Jesus.

Chapter 4 picks up the story of Jesus encounter with woman of Samaria at Jacob's well.

In Vs. 3 – Jesus leaves Judea in the south, and is heading up to Galilee in the north.

Vs. 4 - John notes that **Jesus had to pass through Samaria**

The Samaritans and Jews relationship was very strained, since historically after the fall of the temple in Jerusalem in 587BC, and the Diaspora into Babylonian captivity. This was a terrible blow when Yahweh allowed His people to fall. How could our God let us down. Of course the prophets railed that it was not Yahweh who was at fault, it was the Hebrew people who were unfaithful. At any rate the captivity was short lived and the Hebrews returned to Jerusalem and wanted to rebuild the temple. The Samaritans who considered themselves partly of Jewish heritage wanted to help the Hebrews rebuild the temple, but the Jews refused their offer leading to very hard feelings that over the next 5 centuries led to bad blood.

In Jesus day, if a Jew was traveling from Judea to Galilee or from Galilee to Judea, they would cross the river Jordan and bypass Samaria altogether. They did this because traveling through Samaria could lead to being harmed, robbed and even killed. This is why in the story in Luke's Gospel of "the Good Samaritan", the surprise of the story is that it is a Samaritan who stops to help the Jew who had been beaten and robbed. Samaritans and Jews had nothing to do with one another.

So when John says in Vs 4 that Jesus had to pass through Samaria, it is a tip off that something very important will be taking place.

In Vs 6 – Jesus comes to the town of Sychar, where the Patriarch Jacob had his well. Jesus stops to rest from his journey. John also notes that it is about the 6th hour, which would be noon, as the hours are numbered starting with the first hour being 6 AM when the light begins to dawn.

In Vs 7 – A Samaritan woman comes to draw water, unusual because that chore was usually done at 6 am hour because water was needed for cooking, etc. Jesus asks the woman for a drink of water.

Vs. 9 – The woman, undoubtedly aware of the bad blood between Jews and Samaritans, asks Jesus the ? – Why are you a Jew asking me a Samaritan (and a woman at that!) for a drink?

Vs. 10 – The theological nature of the conversation begins. Jesus tells her, that if you knew who it is that you are talking to, you would ask him for a drink , and he would have given you LIVING WATER.

Vs. 11 - The Samaritan woman says: but you have nothing to draw with. Where do you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

Vs. 13 - Jesus tells her that if you drink this well water, you will thirst again. But if you drink from the water I can give you, you will never thirst again. You will have eternal life.

Vs. 15 – She asks Jesus for this living water! Water that quenches our deepest needs.

Vs. 16 - The story takes another twist, or Johannine spiral. Jesus tells her to go find her husband and tell him to come here.

Vs. 17 – The Samaritan woman tells Jesus that she has no husband

Vs. 18 - Jesus says you are right in saying you have no husband. For you have had 5 husbands and the one you are with now, is not your husband, this you have said truthfully

It is probably at this point to give some interpretation to this dialogue. The 5 husbands that Jesus is referring to, represents the 5 false deities that the Samaritans worshipped. The Hebrew word for husband is BAAL, the same word used throughout the Old Testament for the deities of the various nations. Baal was a fertility God, and much of the nations in the middle east worshipped the cycle of nature. The prophets of the Jews railed against the Hebrews for what is called “syncretism”, whereby you assimilate the religion of the local culture into your own religion. The Samaritans worshipped many different Gods. Jesus reference to her current husband is probably a reference to a 6th false deity that they worshipped. Jesus is making a play on words, using the familiar BAAL to make his point with her.

Vs 19 - Apparently she has picked up on what Jesus is doing. She understands and states that she perceives that Jesus “is a prophet”, She speaks about how the Samaritans worshipped on Mt. Gerazim, and you say that Jerusalem is the place where I should worship.

Vs. 21 – Jesus says no – the time is coming (and now is in terms of the in breaking of the Kingdom of God), when neither Mt. Gerazim nor Jerusalem (the temple), will be the place where true worship will take place. In other words, the Samaritans and the Jews are going to be wrong.

Vs. 23 – The hour is coming (noon – the hour of the cross) and now is when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The new eschatological age is both coming and now is. The Kingdom of God is breaking in.

Vs. 25 – The woman says. I know the Messiah is coming, he who is called the Christ. He will show us all things.

Vs. 26 - Jesus says to her: “I WHO SPEAK TO YOU AM HE”. Jesus clearly is claiming to be the Messiah.

Vs. 27 – Jesus disciples come back from the shopping trip for supplies and they marvel that Jesus is talking with this Samaritan woman.

Vs. 28 – The woman goes back to her city and bears witness to Jesus - He told me all that I ever did – Can this be the Christ? So based on her witness, people from the city come out to meet Jesus. She has become an evangelist, by simply telling of her account and experience with Jesus.

Vs. 31 – the disciples ask Jesus to eat, but Jesus says he has food to eat that they don’t know about. His food “IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME”. That is what satisfies Jesus hunger, to accomplish God’s work.

Vs. 35 – The fields are white to harvest. The time is right for the Kingdom of God to come to pass. Let the harvest of God saving His people begin!

Vs. 36 – One sows, another reaps. Jesus sows, the disciples reap.

Vs. 39 - Many Samaritans from the city believed because of the testimony of the Samaritan woman. But Jesus then stops in their city for 2 days longer and many more believed because of experiencing His Word.

Vs. 42 - John concludes the story with the words: “They said to the woman it is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the World.”

This is why it is so important for us to bear witness to Jesus, so people can receive the living waters only Jesus can provide. Eternal life!

This story of Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman is the only account in all of the Gospels of Jesus having a ministry to the Samaritans, a foreshadowing of St. Paul’s work to bring the Gentile world to Christ.

As with all processes of salvation:

1. All people must first recognize who Jesus truly is, the Messiah
2. Then they must ask to receive the living waters. They must take in the living waters to receive eternal life.

We all know that water is essential for all living things, without water all things die. The woman is an evangelist and some come to believe because of her testimony. We are called to do likewise.