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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 11, 2018
Mission Festival

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 52:7-10; Romans 10:10-17

Hymns: 508; 283; 770; 507; 496; 48

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 4:5-17; 27-38; 39-42

So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰Jesus 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 given you living water."

¹¹The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"

¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Understanding Mission work

One might think that this would be automatic for any Christian, indeed it ought to be. An earnest desire to share that faith that brings us joy and comfort and hope in the face of this life's trials and tribulations is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that is to be present with every Christ-believer. That is one of the lessons that Paul presented in our epistle lesson this morning.

However we also have another voice that discourages us from confessing with our mouth the very truth that fills our hearts with joy. Perhaps we are fearful of the reaction we will receive from other people. After all, our society has become increasingly focused on being politically correct and not spiritually correct. If you say something that might offend anyone you could be accused of being bigoted and hateful. Perhaps you are afraid you may say something wrong. I know it happens. We have all misspoken somehow at one time or another. And that can be embarrassing. We may also hesitate to speak for fear that the individual we are talking with will ask a question and we won't know the answer.

So it just seems safer to leave it to others. Safer for whom? If someone we know and love doesn't know Jesus as Savior and Lord but clings to the false hope that being nice will get one into heaven that is definitely not safe for him!

Professing our faith is something we can grow in doing. It is something the Lord would like to have us do. He trusts us with the gospel not only to hold it as precious within our heart, but also to share it with others. So on this Mission Festival Sunday we shall listen and learn as --

THEME: Jesus Teaches Lessons in Evangelism.

In our text we found Jesus --

I. Engaging in an Unlikely Conversation.

Jesus was traveling on foot from Judea to Galilee. The district of Samaria lay between them. Most Jews chose to walk around Samaria. It wasn't a shortcut! It was pure avoidance. There was enough tension between the Jews and Samaritans that it could be hazardous, at the very least unpleasant to walk through the middle of Samaria. Yet Jesus took the direct route. Jesus took the direct route purposefully. It didn't matter to Jesus that Jews and Samaritans didn't get along. Jesus didn't look down on the Samaritans because they weren't "pure-blooded." Jesus led His disciples right to the Samaritan city of Sychar where Jacob's well was located. There Jesus sat to rest while the disciples went into the city to buy some food.

While resting there a Samaritan woman came out to the well to get water, and Jesus engaged her in an unlikely conversation. He opened their dialogue with a request for a drink of water. Perhaps that doesn't seem so strange to us, but most Jews would have preferred to die of thirst before they would ask a Samaritan to share some water, especially if it meant drinking from something a Samaritan had touched but less drank from. So Jesus obviously a Jew, captured the Samaritan woman's full attention.

And so the conversation began. Jesus quickly turned the conversation to the living water which He alone can provide, that water which alone can quench the sin-parched soul.

What lessons can we learn from this encounter? There are several. We must begin with our view of other people, especially those whom we see as being different from us. The Samaritans had a corrupted syncretistic religion that mixed some truth with a lot of paganism. It would have been easy to see this woman as unworthy of the gospel. After all, she had her false religion. But Jesus wasn't willing to let it be like that. And yes, for that matter Jesus knew that this woman was a sinner. She had gone through a string of husbands and she wasn't even married to the man she was living with. So she was indeed a sinner. Just the kind of sinner Jesus loved enough to come into this world to suffer and die, just the kind of sinner Jesus was willing to offer that living water which would spring up within her unto everlasting life.

So let us learn from Jesus a lesson in evangelism. When we see other people, perhaps people that are very different from us, perhaps people whom we can pretty much tell have their religion, don't despise them and turn away. See them as Jesus sees them. Yes, they are sinners, we can be sure of that, we can be equally sure that they are sinners for whom Jesus died that He might ransom them from death. They are sinners to whom Jesus would offer that living water of the gospel that it might spring up within them a fountain of living water unto everlasting life. Maybe if we see them as Jesus does we also might find ourselves engaged in an unlikely conversation.

LET US SING HYMN 507:1-3

We read

John 4:27-38 “And at this *point* His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do You seek?” or, “Why are You talking with her?”

²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ²⁹ “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” ³⁰ Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

³¹ In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

³² But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

³³ Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?”

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! ³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”

Let us now learn from Jesus about --

II. Recognizing the Task at Hand.

The disciples marveled that Jesus was talking to a woman. Not just any woman, a Samaritan woman! They could see a lot of impropriety here, however they didn't challenge the woman asking what she was trying to get from the Lord, or challenge the Lord about talking to a woman and a Samaritan woman at that. With all their suspicions and concerns for propriety and ethnic boundaries they didn't see what they should have seen.

Very quickly the woman was gone, even deserting her water pot at the well. The disciples might actually have been relieved that the awkward situation was over. But the strange returned when they tried to share some food with Jesus and Jesus wasn't interested in food. In fact He claimed to have the food He needed. That just confused the disciples all the more. They were focused on the physical, the temporal. Jesus was focused on the spiritual and eternal.

That's only natural. People have to live. People have to eat to live! Jesus was attempting to redirect their focus from the temporal to the eternal. Jesus saw that it was harvest time. The disciples thought harvest time was long ways off, another four months. Jesus knew of a more immediate harvest. Jesus knew the woman was sharing what she had learned. Some surmise that when Jesus pointed out fields white for harvest he was looking at the approaching crowd of men with all their white turbans bobbing as they walked towards them. Jesus knew more would be coming, and for that He was prepared. Indeed that was what energized Jesus even though He was hot and tired and thirsty and should have been hungry.

The disciples needed to be focused on laboring in that harvest that produces fruit for eternal life. It was going to be quite a day. A day for the disciples to remember. A day that would instruct them for their labor later in life. It was time for the disciples to recognize the task that lay before them.

And that, my friends in Christ, is the lesson Jesus would leave with us today. We all have jobs to do. We all have a great deal of duties that keep our lives very busy, things that need to be addressed in life time and time again. They may even be classified as being urgent because circumstances of life press upon us. However, we

need to focus our lives on the task that Jesus has set before us as well. We need to comprehend the lesson Jesus set before the disciples. That day was a day of harvest when they would have opportunity to reap souls for salvation. So it is with us each and every day. Each and every day should be seen as a possible harvest day. And yes, it is not only possible but likely that individuals we encounter have heard something about Jesus from someone else, but as we have opportunity we will share with them the reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and fear. (1 Peter 3:15)

The reason for the hope that is in us has nothing to do with how smart or capable we may be. It has everything to do with who Jesus is. He is the One who secured our salvation! All we need do is call attention to Jesus as being our Redeemer who came into this world to save sinners. He isn't to be regarded as merely a great teacher, or one who lived as a pacifist. Jesus came into the world to engage the devil in mortal combat, and to crush him, even though it would cost Jesus His life. He gave His life for us that we might be ransomed from sin and death.

See the task the Lord has set before us and realize this is why we are here on this earth; that we might work in the harvest of the Lord!

SING HYMN 507:4-6

John 4:39-42 “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I *ever* did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of His own word.

⁴² Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

Finally we learn a lesson regarding --

III. Reaping the Fruit of the Spirit.

We finish today with a couple of closing thoughts, albeit important closing thoughts. The Samaritan woman did indeed rush back to town and testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” She didn't have

to say so much. She knew that she didn't know that much, but what she did know that she needed to share. So this woman simply called other people's attention to Jesus. The Spirit took it from there. Many did go out to Jacob's well to check Jesus out for themselves.

There they heard the Word from the Word Himself. They learned about Jesus from the word Jesus spoke to them. Jesus stayed with them for two days, which probably meant camping out in the outskirts of town. What a result! What a harvest! Many believed in Jesus, not simply because of the woman who had that initial conversation, but because they had heard the truth of God's love and forgiveness, the truth of the gospel for themselves. The Holy Spirit works through the Word. They were convinced that Jesus is the Christ the Savior of the world.

That is the truth that we know and hold in our hearts: Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, of the entire world. But we don't have to convince others of that truth. We don't need to be eloquent or persuasive. We simply have to tell others the truth about Jesus and life and salvation, and let the Holy Spirit take it from there. If people spurn the truth that is not on us, or for that matter a failing of the Holy Spirit. But what a wonder of grace when people hear and believe and are saved! Even though it is not even a little to our credit, it is such a blessing, such a wonderful privilege to be included in the Lord's harvest of souls. It really gives meaning and purpose to this life on earth. And it is the one thing that is part of this life that goes with us to eternal life in heaven.

Praise the Lord for His grace that He would allow us to be witnesses of His grace to this world!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)