

An Afternoon Walk to a Well

Scripture: John 4:1 – 15

8/22/21

It is daytime and Jesus is traveling from Judea to Galilee. A ‘good’ Jewish person would not take the most direct route to Galilee because that would take them through Samaria and Samaria is where the low class, good for nothing, Jews live. The Jews and Samaritans had a mutually irritating relationship. The Samaria have inter-breed with other cultures and they were worshipping their own gods. In the eyes of ‘good’ Jews, the Samaritans had spoiled the Jewish bloodline and faith. ‘Good’ Jews would not be caught dead in Samaria.

(Act out the route ‘good’ Jews took)

So in this story of Jesus it is apparent that Jesus could have chosen to avoid the Samaritan people by taking the longer route around Samaria. But Jesus intentionally travels through that place that many others in his day did avoid whenever possible.

Have you ever heard of an area or town that people tried to avoid going through? Was there a place where people did not like to visit or pass through? When I grew up in Williamsport PA, it was South Williamsport. The city right across the Susquehanna River. People in South Williamsport were called ‘River Rats’! People on the north side of the river, hated the people on the south side of the river. You would not be caught dead in South Williamsport if you lived in Williamsport!

Also I was the Associate Pastor at the Benton CC for 1 ½ years then for 20 years I was the Pastor at the Millville CC (DOC). I learned that the people in Millville hated the people in Benton, a community just 20 miles away. The people in Benton also hated the people in Millville. This dislike goes back a long time!

While at Millville, I helped coach the High School boys' basketball team for several years. We had some very good teams and so did Benton. We were the Millville Quakers and they were the Benton Tigers, our arch rivals! Benton graduated 60 students and Millville graduated 40, two very small school districts. I found out that the districts had talked about combining to form a larger district. In fact, they had discussed a piece of land between the two towns. But that fell apart because they did not like each other.

The Millville Quakers basketball team had a large following to see our basketball games and there were people in Millville who would not travel to Benton, just 20 miles away, to see them play because they did not want to give a dime to THAT district!

Have you ever heard of people who disliked others living in another area?

The Samaritan woman in our scripture is an outsider, but not only is she an outsider; she is looked poorly upon by the local community because of her background. She lacks power and position with the Samaritan community. She is a whore within the community.

Jesus meets the woman at Jacob's Well and he reveals a better way! Jesus meets her in the middle of the day. Most women would go to the well in the cool of the morning to avoid the heat of the day, but our woman is going during the hottest part of the day to avoid contact with people within her community. So Jesus meets her where she is and he evangelizes her where she is located.

Similarly today, how can we bring people to Christ and to Christianity if we are nowhere near the people who need Christ in their life? If we do not go to the places where sinners gather, how can we evangelize to them? If we do not go in the heat of the day, how can we reach those who need to hear about Jesus? If we are not in their location, how can we meet them?

It is only by walking with them and alongside them that we can find the best opportunity to fulfill our mission of reaching others and inviting them into the Christian community.

So what well is Christ calling you to visit?

To walk with them is to be where they are. To walk with them is to be willing to really be with them. Just think of your life and the reason you learned to worship and glorify God. Was it not because someone was willing to meet you where you were to show you the way? Then you became a true worshipper by placing God at the top of your list each day and in every way. By being introduced to God, your heart was changed and you began to live a life of love and service as Christ lived. A true worshipper makes God first and gives thanks daily for all the blessings we have received, for all that God has done for us.

It is significant that Jesus stayed in Samaria for a while. The people there ask Jesus to stay with them and he abided with them. Let us look at the word – ‘ABIDE’.

Abide is a powerful word. It evokes other times when Jesus talked about abiding in him even as he would abide with us. Jesus needs to be that close to people if they are going to acknowledge him as the Savior of the world. How could they call Jesus their Savior of the world if they do not personally know him?

How can you call Jesus the Savior of the world if you do not abide with him each and every Sunday in worship? How can you call Jesus the Savior of the world if you do not call out to him each day in prayer? How can you call Jesus the Savior of the world if you make up so many excuses to not worship him weekly?

Evangelism brings about true worshippers. Evangelism breaks social customs and speaks to a woman at a well who was an outsider within her community. She was a foreigner in her own community. She was despised in her own village, but yet here is Jesus by himself because he had sent his disciples on into the city to buy food. During the heat of the day talking with this woman. Jesus spoke to her and asked for a drink, he said – *Give me a drink!* Jesus was willing to drink the same water vessel that she had used.

Jesus tells her that he can give her ‘living water’. She does not understand what Jesus is saying because she questions Jesus how he is going to do this because Jesus has no bucket to draw the water out. She tells Jesus that she wants this water but she does not know what Jesus is talking about. She asked Jesus if he was great than Jacob. Jesus says these great words – *Everyone who drinks this living water will never be thirsty again! Those who drink of the living water will have it gush up to eternal life!* The woman says – Sir, give me this water so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.

So Jesus, through this act of compassion, introduced her to living water. This is the water that the woman could never have found had Jesus not broken through the barriers to reach her. Jesus brought salvation to many in Samaria as he stayed with them for some time. Jesus ventured into the hearts of Samaria to bring living water to a sinful woman and her town.

I went on a long mission trip to India several years ago to go to the well there, to evangelize and serve Christ there. It was uncomfortable there. The fact that only 2% of the large population there is Christian, it was at times intimidating and hard. But in my two weeks there, I felt that I made a difference and served Christ well.

Jesus’ example at Jacob’s well in Samaria tells us that his message must be shared with everyone! The good news of Jesus must be shared to the ends of the earth! Samaria was more than the next geographical location for Jesus’ ministry, it was just the beginning and now is our turn to share the message of love and compassion on all people; to share Jesus Christ!

This can be the most difficult part of evangelism when we are called to share the good news of Christ with people we have prejudices against and do not like.

Probably the nicest thing said to me at the Millville CC (DOC) was when one of the elders shared that he did not like anyone from Benton, but he liked me even though I came from the Benton CC.

So where is Christ calling you to go? To what well are you called to go? During what stages of life are you being called? Is it during the heat of your youth or the coolness of later years? And please think about who you might meet at the well there? If you wish to stay today and talk with me about your thoughts on this message, please do so.

Let us pray:

O Holy Father, may we allow the waves of your love to crash over us so that these waves will produce a torrent like a stream of living water to bring others to you through us.

May the peace of God be with you as you flow like a living river. May you abide in others so they may abide in Jesus Christ our Savior. AMEN.