

JOHNS CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Meeting the King

Sunday, June 30, 2019

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John 4: 1-19, 25-30, 39-42

You want to know the saddest thing in the world? People who are not in touch with Jesus Christ. As Wesleyans we believe that the spirit of Christ is within everyone whether they believe it or not. Some choose to embrace it. Others do not. I have ministered to many people from all walks of life in all kinds of circumstances and I can tell you there is a huge difference in the quality of life between those who are in touch with Christ and those who are not. Are you in touch with the Savior today? An encounter with Christ makes all the difference to your life.

I will never forget when I had a significant encounter in my life. It happened when I took my in laws golfing a few years ago. I wanted to impress them by taking them to play on a nice course. I called up my buddy Bill Barnes, Lead Pastor of St. Luke's UMC in Windermere, Florida. Bay Hill Country Club is right in his back yard. For the uninitiated, Bay Hill is Arnold Palmer's playground. Well, Bill came through for me and got us on the course.

We had a wonderful time playing this magnificent golf course. At the end of our round, my mother in law stopped into the pro shop to buy some gifts. My father in law and I were just sitting on the front porch of the pro shop when a golf cart whizzed in front of us. And who got out of the golf cart? Arnold Palmer! He walked up to me, shook my hand and asked, "Hey, young man! Did you enjoy the course? Isn't it in good shape?" I couldn't believe I was shaking hands with Arnold Palmer and he was talking with me!

I don't remember what I said. My jaw was probably wide open as I uttered some unintelligible sound. I will never forget that day. I had met the King of Golf face to face!

Our scripture lesson for today is about the ultimate encounter an unknown woman had with Jesus. By chance, she met Jesus face to face at Jacob's Well.

Someone wrote a great poem about this encounter years ago:

I had walked life's way with an easy tread,
Had followed where comfort and pleasures led,
Until one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for my goal,
Much thought for my body, but none for my soul,
I had entered to win in life's mad race,
When I met the Master face to face.

I met Him, and knew Him and blushed to see
That His eyes full of sorrow, were fixed on me;
And I faltered and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles melted and vanished away.

Melted and vanished and in their place
Naught else did I see but the Masters face.
And I cried aloud, "Oh, make me meet
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet."

My thought is now for the souls of men,
I have lost my life to find it again,
E'er since one day in a quiet place
I met the Master face to face.

-author unknown

This is the encounter that the woman at Jacob's Well had with Jesus. She met the master face to face.

I want us to see a few remarkable things in this passage today. I recall hearing a sermon by my mentor Riley Short on this very passage of scripture. He uncovered some simple wisdom in this encounter that I want us to reflect upon. Notice in this story that Jesus DOES NOT IGNORE the woman. Jewish Law said that he should have. Jewish Law forbid men from speaking to women, especially if they were alone. What's more is that this was a Samaritan woman and Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Yet, Jesus completely disregards these laws and restrictions and speaks to the woman first!

I Met the Master Face to Face

This encounter shows me that Jesus does not ignore us either! Life likes to put us in all kinds of categories and boxes. The world likes stereotypes that are based on where we are from or how much money we make. The world labels us by the jobs we have or our ethnic origin. And the world expects us to stay in those categories. The woman at the well felt this way. She asked Jesus, "How is it that you speak to me? Why would you notice me?"

Ever been ignored or put down? Even been reduced to a category or stereotype? Even been told that you are "only" something? Well, let me tell you something today. When you encounter Jesus, you are no longer an "only" anything. Do you know that? The world is going to say you are only this or that, but when you meet the master face to face, you are lifted up as a child of the King of Kings!

The King's Speech is a great movie. It is the true story of how King George the 6th was thrust upon the throne during the pivotal moments just before World War II. To say he was reluctant to be King would be an understatement. He suffered from a terrible stammer which paralyzed him as he tried to address his people. Fortunately, he overcame his stammer and became a great leader. It is a wonderful story.

I recall seeing a picture of King George 6th visiting a shipyard in England. He was looking down at a little boy who was eating his lunch on a dock. The boy had dirt on his face, and one sock was up and another one was down. The interesting thing about the picture is that you cannot see the face of the King. You can only see his back. You can only see the face of the boy. But you know he is looking at the King because he has wide eyes and a big smile on his face.

Can you imagine the face of the woman at the well when Jesus told her who he was? Can you imagine the surprised joy in her eyes when Jesus did not ignore her, but engaged her?

Also notice in this text that Jesus DOES NOT REJECT the woman. Jesus knew all about her. Jesus knew that she had used men and men had used her. She had five husbands and the man she was living with was not her husband. But the woman knew this better than anyone. She knew that she was not the person she wanted to be. She knew deep down that all of her escapades had not fulfilled her. They just left her disappointed.

Ever been there? If we are honest, we know we all have. All of us have moments in our lives when we think that things of this world will satisfy us and they never do. We are disappointed over and over again. Jesus knows that about you and he knows that about me. Jesus knew that about the woman at well. Yet, Jesus does not reject her, but instead tells her that if she wants it she can have living water that will enable her to never be thirsty again.

If we want it, we can have that living water too. We can have living water that will cleanse us, renew us, and satisfy us forever. It does not matter what you have done or where you have been. Jesus will never reject you. Instead he will give you living water.

One of my favorite books is, "The Help." I am sure many of you have read it. It has been on the New York Times Bestseller list. Millions of copies have been sold. It has been touted as the best book of its genre since "To Kill a Mockingbird." The book has been made into a movie which comes out shortly. I predict it will win the Oscar.

The author of "The Help" is Kathryn Stockett. She lives in Atlanta and was speaking to a church group in the city some time ago. My mother in law attended the lecture. Stockett said something at that meeting which blew the audience away. She told the crowd how many times her manuscript was rejected by publishers before one decided to accept it. 60 times! Can you believe that? Now, that is determination! Mountains can be moved by those who stick with Jesus and trust him. For Jesus will never reject you.

So what about you? Have you given up on your dreams? Have you given up on your goals? Have you given up on your relationships? Have you allowed your circumstances to determine your life? Have you allowed setbacks and rejections determine your attitude? Jesus is here, and he will never reject you.

One of the greatest examples of determination in the Bible is the Apostle Paul. Nothing would deter him from his mission to spread the gospel. We see his determination in our text for today: "This one thing I do. I forget what lies in the past and I stretch and strain forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Jesus Christ."

What was Paul saying? He was saying, "I have found a power that works! I turn my back on the past, which can drag me down and prevent me from growing. I forget all about it. Instead, I focus on the future. I

stretch and strain toward to what is ahead. I press on with God's call on my life." In other words, "With God's power I am determined to be determined!" Paul had discovered that God would never give up on him, so he was determined never to give up on himself!

Paul's words remind me of a great saying I came across – a Christian mantra if you will. I am not sure of the source of these words, but in any case, we all would do well to repeat them every day:

**“God believes in me; therefore, my situation is never hopeless.
God walks with me; therefore, I am never alone.
God is on my side; therefore, I cannot lose.”**

This encounter CHANGED the woman at the well. Did you notice a curious phrase in verse 28? “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man...’” She left her water jar. Riley Short wisely tells us that the water jar represents all the mundane things in life we think are so important – the minor things that we major in that aren't worth a dime.

When you have an encounter with Jesus, the insignificant things in life fade away.

What is the water jar in your life? What are the sins you are holding onto? What are the hang ups that weigh you down? What are the obsessions and preoccupations that waste precious time and energy? Like that water jar, it is time to leave these things behind with Jesus.

When the woman at the well encountered Jesus she not only changed on the inside, but she had a new purpose and direction. She left her water jar because she could not wait to tell others about Jesus. She said, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did!” When you have an encounter with Jesus you want to tell everyone about it.

You see, the church is simply a group of people who have had an encounter with Jesus and want to share the love of Jesus with the world. The gospels are filled with people who had an encounter with Jesus that changed them. And those stories need to be shared...

One of the greatest stories in the Bible is the story of the woman who suffered from a hemorrhage (Matthew 9). She went to healers and nothing worked. Then she heard about Jesus, a healer unlike any other.

She thought that if she could just touch the hem of his garment she would be healed. When she finally reached Jesus, he was surrounded by a mob of people, but she was determined to get to him.

She managed to push her way through the crowd. She got close enough to Jesus to reach out and touch him. She reached out and touched the hem of his garment. At that moment, she knew she had been healed because she felt the power come through her whole body.

Jesus stopped and said something interesting. He said, "Who touched me?" Peter replied, "Uh, Jesus. You are surrounded by people. Everybody's touching you! What do you mean?" Jesus said, "No. Somebody touched me. I felt the power go out." And the woman, who was shy, finally came over and said, "I touched you. It was me." And Jesus said to her:

**“Go in peace, my good and faithful servant.
You are healed by your faith.”**

When she finally reached out and allowed the power to come into her, she was healed! That's how it works! It can work for you! All the power you need for life is available to you. Just reach out to God and open your heart to him and trust him.

There is a great hymn that is based on a psalm. It is called, "The Strength of the Lord":

**“It's not in trying, but in trusting,
It's not in running, but in resting,
It's not in wondering, but in praying,
That we find the strength of the Lord.”**

When you stop trying and begin to trust, stop running and begin to rest, and stop wondering and begin to pray that you will find the strength of Jesus.

Jesus is with you right now, and he wants to give you living water. I don't know what you have done or where you have been, but I do know this – Jesus loves you and wants to make you whole again. If you desire this living water, simply pray: “Lord, I am tired and I have run out of answers and excuses. I want your living water. Come and cleanse me of my sins and refresh me with new life. Give me a new direction and purpose. I want to follow you.” Welcome to the greatest relationship in the world! Amen.



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