

Thy Will Be Done...in Judgment

Shepherd's Grace Church

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⁵So he came to a [Samaritan](#) city called Sychar, near the plot of [ground](#) that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his [journey](#), was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw [water](#), and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to [buy food](#).) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying 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 no [bucket](#), and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you [greater](#) than our [ancestor](#) Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who [drinks](#) of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a [spring of](#) [water](#) gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I [see](#) that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this [mountain](#), but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in [Jerusalem](#). ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for [salvation](#) is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is [speaking](#) to you."

²⁷Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸Then the woman left her water [jar](#) and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him. ³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³²But he said to them, "I

have food to eat that you do not know about.”³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?”³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.”³⁵ Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for [harvesting](#).³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is [gathering](#) fruit for [eternal life](#), so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.” (John 4: 5-42) (Also read Rom. 5: 1-11)

In the Children’s Time message this morning, I talked about paying attention to where we see God in our world. For those reading this from around the Arkansas City area, you know there is a part of our city dedicated to the message of Paul to the Romans. “While we were yet sinners, Jesus gave His life for us!” Most of us drive by this area several times a week. We see the message on the hill and from where we are the letters appear bold and bright, easily readable. The crosses just above them seem well maintained and painted. If we drive by at night, the crosses are lit and while the letters are not readable on the scripture quotation, there is still a statement...an ever present statement regarding the faith of our community.

The message on “Scripture Hill” recognizes God’s grace and our human frailty! The words help us as a community to focus clearly on God’s gift of life not just for those who live a perfect and prosperous life, but for all...“for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”(Rom. 3) The message reminds us that none...not one of us is perfect. From a distance we see the message and it looks very clear to us. If we pay attention to it, it can be a source of comfort to us. If we pay no attention, we can still take comfort because it is still there. In fact it is there and available to us regardless of our situation or circumstance.

The presence of the message is like the presence of the act itself. We believe we gain our salvation through faith. That faith is always available for us to draw on even when we have never drawn on it before. That faith is available not only to those who have always been believers but also to those who have never believed. The words say “Christ died for the ungodly!” The words give us hope which comes as a result of having developed character which comes from having known adversity and of course,

handling adversity comes from having faith! No one is successful at overcoming obstacles without believing in something. Some believe in themselves and their ability to handle a given set of circumstances. Others realize that in difficult times, we cannot accomplish what we need to accomplish on our own and in those times, we turn to God! We cannot see God but we believe and we trust.. Just like the message on the hill, God is present even when we cannot see God! Through faith we rely on God to help us overcome adversity and to celebrate great joy!

As we pass by the message we can see it clearly from a distance and we can recognize it. It seems so clear and simple. "Christ died for the ungodly!" From a distance it seems a straight forward statement. We say it almost without thinking. Last week we taught it to our children. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3: 16) We have it committed to memory but how clear is it? As we hear it today, as we think about driving by, do we read it for all it really means? Can we understand it for all it really means?

By now, you have probably thought of the dozens, perhaps hundreds of times you have passed by the scripture message. I wonder if you have ever gone up to the top of scripture hill to see the message up close. There used to be picnic tables up there. There used to be a place to sit and relax and enjoy the reality of a place set aside a long time ago for people to wonder at and contemplate the very nature of God's grace in their lives.

The interesting part of the journey up to the top of scripture hill is that when you get there, you can escape your world for awhile and enter a sanctuary but you can no longer read the words! When you get to the top, you can see only the rocks. The words are there but you are too close to distinguish them. It is in that moment that the old saying is true, "You can't see the forest for the trees!" The words look like individual rocks and not even the letters are distinguishable, one from another. It is not until we move back and gain perspective, put all the rocks in the context of the hill that we can begin to understand their meaning!

In much the same way, we often become confused as we read our bible. We look so closely at one verse or even one chapter that we lose sight of the meaning of the whole story. In Sunday School for adults we are currently reading "The Story," a narrative interpretation of the whole bible and we are reading it so we can comprehend the whole message and not just one piece of it! In the bible, in life, one point cannot be separated from the others and still have meaning in the contest of the whole!

When we attempt this in the bible it is called proof texting and it causes real problems in the lives of people.

In life, when we lift only one event from the life of another person, or even from ourselves, it is called judgment and I think we all know what kind of problems that frequently causes. If you are unaware however, the story of Jesus and the Woman at the well can help clarify judgments and the kind of harm they can do to relationships. Let's take a closer look!

In the very first verse, Jesus comes to Samaria! He has stepped out of Israel and is in a foreign country. This country has a relationship with His native land. It is in this place that Jacob gave Joseph a well. It is in this country that Jacob (later Israel) fed and watered his flocks and in this country Jacob built an altar to the Lord! Over the years, Samaritans came to worship at the altar and to believe that it was a true place of choice for God's people to worship.

Today, Jesus comes to this place. He comes near the altar and to the well which Jacob dug and gave to his family. As he is sitting alone at the well a woman approaches and begins to fill her Jar with water to take to her home. It is about noon and there is no one else around. The fact that there is no one else around gives some insight into the background of the woman. Most of the women come early to fill their water jars. They do this for two reasons. First, it is cooler in the morning and much easier to carry the water in the cool of the day. Second, it is a time for social gathering. Just like the men of many towns get together to have coffee early in the day, so too the women of Sychar come together at the well. They come to gossip and to gather news of events in town and to accomplish their chores.

This woman, however comes in the middle of the day, when it is hot and when there is no one else around. Immediately, we are curious about her, this single stone in the words of our story that seems to mean nothing to us. She does mean something to Jesus however! For Jesus, the man, she is one who can provide him with a drink of water. He is thirsty and asks for a drink. The woman recognizes him as a foreigner. She recognizes him as someone who Samaritans have no respect for.

In an instant, this woman who was hoping to remain invisible, even in the middle of the day, now sees herself in a position of power. She recognizes that even she, one who is shunned by others in her community has power over this man, this Jew who has no status in her country! Suddenly she is feeling superior to someone. Suddenly she has the upper hand over someone! Here is an immigrant, asking for a handout! Here is someone who is in her country and she doesn't know if he is there legally or illegally but she does know he is asking for something for nothing.

You can skip ahead if this story sounds familiar! The situation I have described today is eerily similar to the situation we encounter in the United States today! People who have no power, people who are shunned by society and forced to work at places where they do not want to work because they can see no other opportunities, encounter other people who have come to our country. They look different. They speak with a different accent, and perhaps they do not even speak the language but they are recognized as being “less than” others by those who do have power. Suddenly, the ones who are shunned now have the opportunity to shun others who have even less power than they do!

In Saturday’s Wichita Eagle, there was a report that two separate stores were vandalized. Both stores were spray painted with graffiti saying, “Kill the Jews!” Police are investigating as if this is an act of juvenile delinquents and it may well be, but the perpetrators still perceive that they have no power, no worth and they seize an opportunity to promote hatred of another group they believe has even less worth than they do! Racism has not changed much in the last 2000 years. People are racist because they perceive themselves as powerless. Racism allows them to escape their perceived worthlessness for at least a moment! For a moment, they can be “more than,” and not “less than!”

The woman at the well plays the race card in her immediate assessment of Jesus. You are a Jew, I am a woman of Samaria. What makes you think I would give you anything, much less something for free! Go and earn your drink, earn your way! You deserve nothing here because you are “less than!”

Jesus, knowing that the woman has come at a time inconsistent with the traditions of the community recognizes her racism and reacts in a way that gives her another option. He says, “what if I give you something.” Well, he doesn’t really say it that way but that is what he means. He implies that he might have something the woman needs and He says, “If you knew the gift of God,” you would ask me and I would give you “living water.”

As John’s congregation hears this question they remember Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. Remember Nicodemus? He is the one who came at night in chapter 3. He sees the works that Jesus does but does not understand the fullness of who Jesus is. In John 3: 16, Jesus tells him! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son!” Jesus tells Nicodemus that He is God’s Son and He also tells him and us that he, Jesus, is the gift from God given for the salvation of the world!” The congregation now knows the “gift from God!” We now know the gift from God!

The woman however, not knowing this gift takes Jesus literally. She looks at him and thinking he does not have the tools to do the work necessary says, “You have no bucket! The well is deep! Where will

you get this water?" Jesus, the outsider says, "look, I am new around here but even I can see that people have to come here everyday to refill their jars. I will give you the 'water of life!' and you will never be thirsty again!

The woman, who wasn't about to give Jesus anything because he was different now can't wait to get what he has! Not only that but she expects to get what He has for free! "Give me this water she says so I never have to come here and be humiliated again!" I find it interesting that some are unwilling to give away that which costs them nothing but are unwilling to pay to others for that which will give them everything! The woman at the well seems to be on the verge of making that demand of Jesus! Then something happens!

Jesus says, "I will give you all if have but you have to share it. Go and get your husband and return." In that moment of invitation, the woman is faced with all she has ever done. We cannot say how she comes to the conclusion she does. Perhaps it is because of the persistence of Jesus or because she is just tired of dealing with the choices she has made. Perhaps it is because she recognizes that making choices the way she has always made them has not worked! Whatever the reason, the woman makes a bold choice. She speaks the truth!

The woman says, "I have no husband." In her confession she is immediately transformed to the truth of worship. Jesus agrees with her statement and affirms it as truth but does not condemn it. He does not chastise her for her past relationships. He does not remind her that she is "less than!" He does not dwell on the mistakes she believes she has made. Instead, he commends her for admitting to herself the truth! Worship can only occur when we recognize the truth in ourselves and our inability to accomplish all we want to on our own. True worship comes when we acknowledge the truth of God's grace and love in our lives and when we begin to accept that God loves us and chooses to redeem us in spite of our shortcomings! True worship comes in recognizing that God's grace is all we can hope for. We are sinners. We have no standing before God except when we are willing to drink of the living water, the water that bubbles up even to eternal life.

Jesus affirms this as he says, "It will not be important where we worship but the way we worship will be essential." His invitation here reminds me of the sometimes whimsical song we sing in church. "The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, open the doors and see all the people! I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together! All of God's people, all around the world, Yes we're the church together!" Worship on mountains is not important. Worship in temple is not

important. Worship in the heart is what is important! Sometimes we get so distracted with how we do church that we forget why we do church!

This day, the woman is invited to do church right there at the well as Jesus tells her that she is in the presence of the Messiah; the Son of God! As the woman contemplates this reality, just then the disciples show up. Their reaction to her presence is so often the difficulty we face in the church. Someone new comes through our doors and instead of responding with the same grace God responds to with us, we are astonished! We are aghast! We are suspicious.

The disciples see Jesus talking to the woman and they wonder at her motives and his seeming willingness to violate traditions. Notice however that none of them cares enough for the truth to ask about the motive of either Jesus or the woman. Instead they judge based on only their limited understanding. When new people come into our church, when they come into our country, quite often we prejudge their motives. We believe they have come for a hand-out; something for nothing. We believe they are in our presence under false pretense when in reality they have come to offer the truth!

The truth about people who are new to us is they can often help us refocus our energy on the work we are really to be about! That work is the mission and ministry of God who loves us, who cares for us, who redeems us, and who reminds us that His love and grace are for all people. The woman leaves everything she has at the well that day! She leaves everything she has at the altar where she is worshipping and she goes off to bear witness to all she has seen and all she has heard! She responds to worship in truth with a truthful action! She does the work that to this point the others have been unwilling to do! This person who is foreign to Jesus enters into a relationship with him and does that which He is urging her to do!

The disciples, those closest to Jesus however, respond with concern for their leader. Now, trust me when I say it is ok to care for one's pastor. Those of us who do this job appreciate the care of people who give so generously to the work and ministry we are all committed to. We know the risks of ministry and even as we accept them we wonder at their consequences. I am sure Jesus was aware He was taking a risk this morning. He was talking to a woman...and believe me, talking to a woman can be very risky! The results are not always what you intend them to be. (Read into that what you will!) Never the less, Jesus has taken the risk and the disciples are concerned.

As they try to fee Him, he says that he has food they do not know about! This time the disciples take him literally and wonder if perhaps someone might have given Him something inappropriate. Jesus

however is speaking figuratively. He has food that comes from doing the work He is called to do and in the moment, seeing positive results! Most of us can relate. When we do a good job we do not always see the immediate impact of that job. Sometimes the results do not bear fruit for weeks or even months. Occasionally, however, we are able to witness the fruit of our labor in the moment. It is an exhilarating experience. It sustains us for long periods of time and makes us feel as if what we are doing is truly worthwhile! This is the food Jesus speaks of today. It is the satisfaction of watching a woman tell the truth to herself, perhaps for the first time in her adult life, and watching that truth transform her into a person of faith instead of frailty!

The woman no longer fears relationships but faces them now with an openness and honesty that allows her to testify to others and be believed. The others come out! They are the fruit of her harvest. They are the ones who Jesus wants the disciples to see. They are that which is ready for reaping into God's kingdom and even though the season is not yet complete, it is time for the harvest to begin. God invites the disciples to open their eyes! God invites us to open our eyes!

We are called this morning to see that we are not to stay inside our comfort zone if we are interested in sharing the "good news" with others. We are to be at places where others are afraid to go. We are to bear witness to the truth of our lives and the lives of others reminding them of God's gift of Jesus Christ and allowing them to remind us! We are to learn from them and we are to teach them not by preaching but by sharing the love God has given us! In short, we are to be in relationship with others; with all others because God has created us all in God's image and God desires that not one should be lost! (John 6: 37 ff)

The Samaritans came out and listened to the immigrant, the Jew, the neighbor who was to be despised and they recognized that instead of His wanting to take, He had much to give! Perhaps the opportunity for us as we face the challenge of "others" coming into our world is to remember that they have much to offer! Perhaps the opportunity we have is to say, Thy Will Be Done...in our relationships with God and with all! Amen!