

### What to Expect from Church.

***“The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.””***

If I walked into a restaurant, there are certain things I expect. I expect the hostess to seat me at a table. I expect a waitress to come with a menu, take my order and bring me my food. I expect the hamburger to be hamburger on a bun. What do you expect from church? When we think of church we think of music and choirs. We think of coffee and potlucks. All of this is true, but is that it? Our text says no. We may not have woken up this morning thinking, “I am going to meet Jesus,” but that is what is suppose to happen. The Samaritan woman came to the well for water. She never thought she would meet her Savior. Thank God she did. He was actually waiting for her because he came to look for her.

#### *I. A Seeking Savior.*

***“Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) ”***

It says Jesus had to go through Samaria. No he didn’t. Yes, Jesus was in Judea on his way to Galilee and between the two was Samaria. It would be like driving from Arlington to Norwood; you have to go through Green Isle, right? No, if you don’t want to. You can take the longer routes around Green Isle if you want. The highways around Samaria were well travelled. Israelites and Samaritans are like Russians and Ukrainians today, or the Hatfields and McCoys. They avoided each other as much as they could. Most Jews travelled around. But not Jesus.

As he rested by the well, he didn’t have to speak to the woman, but he did. How often have you walked in the mall and didn’t make eye contact with the person you passed, let alone strike up a conversation? Friends, this is Jesus. Jesus wants to meet and talk with everyone. This is the same Jesus who described himself as leaving ninety-nine sheep in the middle of the field to find the one lost sheep, or who would turn a house upside down to find one lost coin. He wants to talk to you, to anyone, to everyone because he has some unimaginable promises to make to us.

#### *II. An unimaginable promise.*

***“Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?” Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.””***

What a crazy promise. We are told we need 6-8 glasses of water every day. The most people can go without water is six or seven days. Everyone knows you can’t stop drinking water. Did you catch the sarcasm in this woman’s voice? She didn’t believe Jesus. Of course, Jesus wasn’t talking about H<sub>2</sub>O water. He was talking about eternal life. But she still didn’t get it. It is as if the words, “eternal life” went in one ear and out the other.

I ask you, were you thinking about eternal life last night during supper? Were you thinking about eternal life when you wrote out the bills? It is like asking a third grader what his plans are for college. He will look at you funny. “I have too much going on now in Third Grade.” Eternal life seems so far away and so much is asking for our time and attention now. But there is a difference. The third grader is nine years away from college; eternal life could start today, and where will you spend it, heaven or hell?

So, don’t be surprised if Jesus gets you thinking about eternity. And he has a interesting way of doing this, by reminding us of the uncomfortable truth of our sins.

#### *III. An uncomfortable truth.*

***“He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.””*** This woman would be considered normal in places like Hollywood. She had gone through five divorces and the man she is living with is not her husband. Even her fellow Samaritans looked down at her; that is why she came at noon to draw water, a time when no one else was around to stare at her.

There is a reason we put lids on our garbage cans or curbies. It keeps the smell in. I remember when I vicared in Caledonia, Wisconsin. I had purchased a jug of orange juice, drank some and forgot it in the back of the refrigerator. When my vicar year ended and I was cleaning out the apartment, I found that jug and for the fun of it, unscrewed the cap. Big mistake. It stunk terribly. Capped and in the fridge, it didn't smell. But uncap it and watch out.

Friends, if you come to Jesus, you will find him welcoming and loving. But he will also tell you the uncomfortable truth about yourself. He will uncap your life and let the rotten smell of sin out. It stinks, and we know it. That is why we hide it or blame others for it. This woman knew all the while something was wrong. Now that it was out in the open, she began to think about eternal life, or eternal death in hell. Good. That is why Jesus tells us the uncomfortable truth about our sins. He wants us to think about what will happen to us because he has a wonderful message for us.

*IV. He is more than a prophet.*

***"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared.*** I might be wrong, but this sounds like she is trying to change the subject away from her sin. But she at least is beginning to talk about religion.

***"Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he.""***

The Samaritans didn't really know what they worshipped. They rejected the Bible except for Genesis through Deuteronomy. The Jews had all the Bible and thus knew more about God and the Messiah. That is what Jesus meant when he said that Samaritans worshipped what they did know. She must have gone to church or Sunday School at some time in her life. She knew a little bit about the Messiah.

Yet, she tried one last time to dodge this religious talk. Let's wait and hear what the Messiah will say when he comes, she suggests. And Jesus said, ***"I who speak to you am he."*** Friends, suddenly things we can't see happened. The Holy Spirit was working on her and we see the spark of saving faith. How do we know she began to believe? Look at what happened.

She left her jars at the well and ran back to town to tell everyone about Jesus. This is odd. She runs back and says, "Hey this stranger knew I was a fornicator and adulteress." That doesn't sound like a great pitch to invite people to church, "Come and we will expose your shameful secrets." But why did she do this? Her knowledge of the Messiah was a bit foggy, but she believed a Savior was standing before her. She believed her sins are forgiven. She believed she will inherit eternal life despite her sins. So a woman who was ashamed to be seen in public is running into that public to tell them about their Savior. And Jesus spent two days in Sychar undoubtedly teaching the people more about himself.

Notice Jesus didn't tell this woman to go to church in Jerusalem and maybe her life would get better. He simply said, "Here I am." We are right and good with God by faith alone. It is like thirst: we constantly have to drink. Before God we constantly have to be perfect. And we quickly see we are not perfect no matter how hard we try. But with Jesus we will never thirst again. We have forgiveness and heaven yesterday and today and tomorrow and next year. He did all the work at the cross so we can receive the eternal gift from God. Wow. This is not what this woman expected that day. Maybe you were not thinking about that when you dressed for church today, but that is what you get, eternal life.

This week we begin our Lutheran elementary school week. We are blessed to have that school. You will find in our school things you expect to find in a school: crayons and desks, smart boards and books, teachers and students, recess and grades. But when you enter a school like ours, you will also meet Christ, but he is not just a picture on the wall. Almost a hundred and fifty years ago our ancestors in our congregation thought it would be nice to let children meet Jesus five days a week and not just in devotion, but in every subject. We still feel that way.

This is what the school or church, Sunday school or bible class is all about. Jesus is there waiting for you. He is there to offer you living water. Maybe you were not thinking about that when you got up. But that is what you get. Drink so you will never be thirsty. Amen.