

Articles and Sermons :: "Go, call your husband..."

"Go, call your husband..." - posted by followthelamb (), on: 2015/1/19 14:20

"Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." (John 4:15) Beware of giving up on people too soon. This woman seems hopelessly carnal. She can't see beyond her physical senses. But Jesus aims to make her a worshiper of God in spirit and truth.

So now he touches the most sensitive, vulnerable spot in her life -- "Go call your husband." The quickest way to the heart is through a wound.

Why does Jesus strip open this woman's inner life like this? Because he had said in John 3:20, "Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed." Concealed sin keeps us from seeing the light of Christ. Sin is like spiritual leprosy. It deadens your senses so you rip your soul to shreds and don't even feel it. But Christ has set his sights on this woman's conversion. So he lays bare her spiritual leprosy. "You've had five husbands and the man you're sleeping with now is not your husband."

Now watch the universal reflex of a person trying to avoid conviction. She has to admit in v. 19 that Jesus has extraordinary insight ("You're a prophet!"), but instead of dealing with her guilt she tries to suck Jesus into an academic controversy: "O, so you're a prophet, well, where do you stand on the issue of where people ought to worship?" Verse 20: "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." A trapped animal will chew his own leg off. A trapped sinner will mangle his own mind and rip up the rules of logic and discourse. "Why, yes, as long as we're speaking about my five husbands and my adultery, what is your stance on the issue of where people should worship?" Brothers and sisters, that kind of double-talk and evasive, verbal footwork is very common. And texts like this incline me to think that wherever I hear it someone is hiding something. If your conscience is clear reason can hold sway; if it's not, you will be instinctively irrational.

It's interesting, though. Jesus never goes back to the issue of adultery. It was a thrust against the sealed door of her heart. But now his foot is in and he is willing to take the very issue she raised and use it to finish his saving work. She raised the issue of where people ought to worship....

Verse 21 turns her attention from where to how: "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.'" In other words, it is not the location that makes an act of worship authentic. Worship is not merely an external act that you can accomplish by going to a place. Jesus said in another place (Mt. 15:8): "This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me." Worship is first and foremost an experience of the heart. Prayer without heart is vain. Songs without heart are vain. Confession and creeds and liturgies and sermons that don't come from the heart are empty and worthless in God's eyes....

Then verse 22 introduces the question of whom you worship.

"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews." When all our efforts to be gentle and sensitive and respectful of another person's religion are done, the time eventually comes when you have to say: Biblical worship is true worship and yours is false. That will often be thrown back in your face as a statement of arrogance. But it isn't. If there is truth, and you have bowed humbly before it, then to try to persuade another person to bow with you is not arrogance. It is love. The Samaritans rejected all the Old Testament except for their version of the books of Moses. Their knowledge of God was deficient and so their worship was deficient. And to tell them so was as loving as telling a person with lung cancer to stop smoking.

So in verses 21 and 22 Jesus directs the woman's attention away from the external question "where" to the internal question "how" and the theological question "whom." Worship must be vital and real from within and it must be based on a true perception of God. Now verse 23 sums this up with the key phrase "in spirit and truth": "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." The two words, spirit and truth, correspond to the how and the whom of worship.

Worshipping in spirit is the opposite of worshipping in mere external ways. It's the opposite of formalism and traditionalism. Worshipping in truth is the opposite of worship based on an inadequate view of God. Together the

words "spirit and truth" mean that real worship comes from the Spirit within and is based on true views of God. Worship must have heart and worship must have head. Worship must engage your emotions and worship must engage your thought. Truth without emotion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full of unspiritual fighters. Emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates flaky people who reject the discipline of rigorous thought. True worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine.

Therefore, as a pastor I agree with Jonathan Edwards when he said, "I should think myself in the way of my duty, to raise the affections of my hearers as high as I possibly can, provided they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with."

- John Piper

Re: "Go, call your husband..." - posted by Heydave (), on: 2015/1/19 18:03

I like the things brought out in this by John Piper. Thanks for sharing it.

It is encouraging in how we should see past people's surface responses.

I had not considered how ridiculous it was that the woman brought up the subject of how to worship when she had just had her life exposed in full view!

Re: - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/1/21 11:07

Interesting stuff! Jesus was not about to force Himself or any theology on her, but wherever this unorthodox conversation might be going, He has let her know that He knows her first.

She was in a dither, by custom He was not supposed to even speak with her at all. Not only did He smash that expectation, but laying her inner secrets bare was beyond extraordinary.

He thus opened a door to that whole village that had never been opened before. Wow. Thanks for bringing this one.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2015/1/21 14:23

I also find it interesting that the woman did not make any excuses or did not seem embarrassed or offended when Jesus confronted her about her lifestyle.

Must be something about the manner in which he said it-- perhaps with a smile on his face or a twinkle in his eye?

Re: "Go, call your husband..." - posted by Jeremy221, on: 2015/1/21 17:10

Psalm 45:11 KJV

So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

Lord is capitalized for us but not in Hebrew. The text is a clear messianic reference but relates to other passages dealing with a husband putting his glory upon his wife with fine clothing, jewelry and aromatics. God takes the temporal and shows the correlation to the eternal between Christ and the Bride. The people she was among did not love God though they had a form of worship, otherwise they would have cleansed all adulterers and adulteresses from their midst. In the context of their false worship that combined quasi-legitimate worship of God with the false gods brought from their home countries coupled with the separation during the rebuilding of Jerusalem, perhaps they understood there was a fundamental difference in their worship of God and that of the Jews.

I take issue with Piper on the woman's ability to understand. Part of Christ's mandate was to speak in parables such that even the Disciples who performed miracles in His name did not understand until after Pentecost when the Spirit brought the incidents to mind and gave illumination. Post Pentecost, we have the written accounts where the meaning of the Rivers of Living Water is spelled out for anyone to understand as well as several other key criteria of the faith.

This issue of worship has affected the Church fundamentally. Wives who consider themselves peers because of secular ideologies are like the Israelites that worshipped Baal (or lord) and The Lord, changing their allegiance on the fly.

The 'heart felt worship' doesn't guarantee true worship. Zealous worship without truth is still false.

Re: , on: 2015/1/22 4:52

This interpretation of the woman at the well, bears no resemblance to what I have read from various sources concerning how the Jews and most likely Samaritans treated women at the time of Jesus.

Although women had been treated much better in the Old Testament, even accepting them as prophets, by the time of Jesus they were little more than slaves, a piece of property, not worthy of being addressed in public, and liable to be divorced at the drop of a hat for the simplest of errors like spoiling the evening meal.

So one can assume that women might have had multiple marriages, as a woman would find it hard to survive in a culture where she had no social or financial standing, and we read of a hypothetical case in Matthew 22.25 of a case of a woman with seven husbands.

A woman with a string of husbands therefore, would not have been the instigator though perhaps one or more of them may have met an untimely death.

She was not a prostitute as some have suggested, as she had complied with the institute of marriage in the past, but now she was with a man whom in all likelihood was not offering to 'make an honest' woman of her, but I suggest that her neighbours were not aware of this.

She went for water hours away from the time her fellow women attended the well for socialising and collecting water, no doubt due to the shame she would carry for having so many past husbands. As always the victim is blamed.

The reason why I think that she kept hidden the fact that she was with a man who was not marrying her, which made her actually little more than a prostitute, but for her, the means to survive, was because Jesus knew the truth. He could have heard about her from someone else, she could not have known but no one knew the full truth and so she knew that He had access to divine knowledge.

He had uncovered her deceit, though we cannot be too harsh with her and she was at least honest with Him when she could have lied, and He commended her for that. We have an honest God fearing woman here who has ended up in dire circumstances and an outcast in her community who straightaway asks Jesus where the correct place of worship is, in order to atone for her sin. Jesus assures her that forgiveness is a heart matter.

Re: - posted by Sidewalk (), on: 2015/1/22 11:08

Well said, Brenda!