

How to Witness (1)

Sermon January 22, 2023

Scriptures: Psalm 150:1-6 & John 4:1-42

Golden Verse: *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."* - John 4:10

When I studied at different universities, whether at Laurier in Waterloo, Guelph, or Toronto, I was always interested in which professors were teaching particular courses. If we want to study something in-depth, it is important to find the best teacher.

Studying psychology, I realized that the best teacher, who knows the most about human behaviour, is Jesus Christ. And this is not a surprise. Who should know more about our human nature than our Creator? Who should know more about God than Jesus Christ, God's only son? Who should know more about the creation, than the only one who said: *"All authority in heaven and earth was given to me"* Matthew 28:18.

Jesus Christ came to us to teach us, to gather us, as God's children, and to show us the way, the truth, and the life. With His teaching, in words and example, Jesus showed us how we should live and act, and how we should approach different people in different situations.

Everybody is different and everybody has to be approached differently. I have three siblings: two older brothers, and a younger sister. Our mother often told us that we all were different and she had to teach us differently. What was working for one of us, wasn't working for another one.

In the next few weeks, we will learn how our Lord Jesus Christ approached different people in different situations. He extended a special call in a special way, tailored differently to their personalities, inviting them to come into a living relationship with our loving God.

During this series, we will examine how Jesus Christ approached a Samaritan woman.

- Jesus was a Jewish man; she was a Samaritan woman.
- Jesus was educated, but women at that time did not have a chance to study.
- Jesus was a well-known leader; she isolated herself from the public.
- He was an acknowledged moral person; she was accused of being immoral.

- Jesus had great self-esteem, and this woman was ashamed of herself.
- Jesus knew everything about this woman; the woman did not know anything about Jesus.

This story shows that Jesus wants to save everybody. No matter who he or she would be, the grace of God should be extended to them.

In the next few Sundays, we will study how Jesus witnessed to the Samaritan woman at the well. And we will learn quite a few principles of witnessing, which we can use day by day to bring our loved ones and strangers closer to Christ Jesus, and to know His love.

During this series, we will learn more about Jesus Christ, we will learn more about ourselves, and also we will learn more about those people whom we love.

The story I read can be divided into five parts and helps us to have a better understanding of the details.

- In the first six verses, we see the setting of this story. In verses 1-6, we read that Jesus decided to go through Samaria, the part of the country which Jews neglected. He set down by the well, which was made hundreds of years ago by Jacob.
- Then in verses 7-26, we read detailed information about Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman.
- In verses 27-30, we read how the woman was acting after she spoke to Jesus.
- In verses 31-38, we read how the disciples reacted when they heard about Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman.
- At the end, in verses 39-42, we see Jesus having a conversation with Samaritans, who came to see Him and to know Him.

How does this story start?

The Pharisees around Jerusalem were jealous of Jesus because of His teaching and His wisdom, and because more and more people were listening to Him. For this, the Lord decided to go to the northern part of the country, to Galilee. On His way, He walked through Samaria. As Jesus was traveling from the south towards Galilee, around noon time he sat down by Jacob's well while the disciples went into the village to buy food.

Samaritans originally were Jews too, but their land was often occupied by Assyrians, who deported many Jews and repopulated their land with Assyrians. As a result, these Jews around Samaria intermarried with newcomers from

Mesopotamia and Syria, and mixed their beliefs with pagan religions and beliefs. Because of this, Samaritans were rejected and hated so much, that, if orthodox Jews wanted to travel from Judea to Galilee, they would rather take a much longer roadway, but they did not want to step on the land of Samaritans. For many hundreds of years, there was such dislike and hostility between Jews and Samaritans. This is why it is so interesting that Jesus decided to go through Samaria. And this is why it is so interesting that, in Jesus' parable of "The Good Samaritan", a Jew, who was robbed and beaten laying in the ditch, was passed by a Levite and a priest, and, at the end, a Samaritan helped him, saving his life.

The Samaritan town Sychar was about 30 miles/48 km north of Jerusalem, but the Samaritans were not allowed to worship in the temple in Jerusalem. As a result, they built for themselves a church at the top of the mountain Gerazim, which later was burned down by Jews, and Samaritans worshipped on the ruins at the top of the mountain.

Jacob's well was about half a mile outside of the city of Sychar. As I already said, as Jesus was traveling from the south towards Galilee, around noon time, he sat down by Jacob's well while the disciples went into the village to buy food. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman is teaching us many things about witnessing. Today, we will touch on only one major topic.

Contact people and talk to them

One of our biggest enemies these days is ISOLATION. People live isolated and distanced from each other. Neighbours don't even know each other's names. People are passing each other without even noticing the other person. I really like the message we have in front of our church kitchen: "Let No One Pass By Unacknowledged".

Jesus did not sit quietly when the Samaritan woman arrived at the well to draw her water. Jesus noticed that woman and initiated a conversation by asking her in a nice and gentle way to give Him a drink.

Day by day, we meet people. We hardly notice anybody since we are busy with our own duties. If we notice somebody we know, briefly we greet them and then we walk away, continuing our business. Our excuse is that our time is limited and we have to run. But we can spend hours in front of the TV watching the screen and, at the end of the day, we don't even remember what we watched.

If we meet people whom we know well and with whom we have common things, it is easier to start a conversation. We are happy when somebody notices us, when somebody cares for us and listens to us. Our whole day can be different after a great conversation. Unfortunately, we don't have too many great conversations which would lift us up. We don't really start a conversation just to help another person or even to listen to them, providing our ears and our hearts.

We need each other. We need great conversations. We all need some nice and gentle words and, often, great advice that could save lives from catastrophes. Many people are carrying their deep and heavy and painful burdens because nobody talks to them or notices them.

May God bless you and me with spiritual eyesight and empathy to see those people around us whom we should notice. Starting a conversation with them, we should pass to them our peace, our love. This is how we should bear spiritual fruits by feeding others.

One of our biggest problems is that, although we are Christians, we don't talk as Christians.

I read once about a gentleman who was travelling on a train and reading his book. Suddenly, he noticed that a woman, across from his seat, was crying, and quietly tears were falling down her face. Visibly, she was sad and disappointed. This gentleman gently asked her the reason she was so sad, but the woman did not say a word. She had an opportunity to open up and talk, but she remained quiet. Then, this gentleman told her that Jesus Christ is always near us and He is always ready to start a conversation with us. We can tell him everything, and He will listen with empathy. Also, He can show us the way out from a deep valley. We never judge ourselves but love ourselves with unconditional love. This gentleman directed this wounded-hearted woman to Jesus. He was sowing the seeds of hope.

Jesus noticed this wounded-hearted Samaritan woman and started a conversation with her. As a result, this woman started a conversation with many people from her town and they had a chance to meet Jesus. This way, Jesus healed a wounded-hearted population. Through one saved person, the whole city was saved.

Jesus is expecting you and me to start a different approach, noticing people and talking to them. Please be that one person who will start a conversation, even with strangers, sowing the good seeds of the gospel. Amen