

How to Witness (2)

Sermon January 29, 2022

Scriptures: Psalm 146:1-10 & John 4:1-26

Golden Verse: *Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

(John 4:13-14)

Last Sunday we started a series on the topic "How To Witness", based on John 4, where Jesus had a great conversation with a Samaritan woman, then with his disciples, then with the people of Samaria. In this chapter, the greatest Counsellor is teaching us how can we start and lead a supportive conversation, even though there might be major differences between us and the other person. A week ago, we saw the importance of contacting people and starting a conversation in order to share with them our hope and our living faith, which is our most precious value.

Jesus wants to teach us how we can build a bridge of faith between us and our children, siblings, loved ones, or even strangers. Jesus does this with unconditional love and care, with great sensitivity. We see how He creates a bridge not only between two people but also between two different worlds. If we can see other people's needs or their struggles, during this series we will learn how to help them through a conversation, how we can help them to see and do things differently, and how we can save their lives for eternity.

Jesus can see people's needs, and He wants us to see them as well in order to help them. Jesus wants us to help others start a conversation at that point where they are and to lead them to quiet waters, as Psalm 23 teaches us. Only those people will be able to make changes who might have you and me as a helper, as a leader, leading them out from their dark or desperate situations to a bright pasture.

Let us see now how who this woman was and how Jesus started a life-saving conversation with her.

On a very sunny and hot day, we see Jesus sitting at the well of Jacob. He was walking a long distance, and dealing with tiredness and thirst. He is resting at the well, but he has no bucket to get any water from that deep well. At that time, it was the women's responsibility to take a long walk from the city to the well of Jacob to provide water for the family and their animals. Women gathered in groups, going to the well either around 6 a.m. or after 6 p.m. The hottest hour was the noon hour when people stayed at home.

As Jesus was sitting there alone, he saw something very unusual. At noon hour, a woman, by herself, is approaching the well. She does not know Jesus. She sees in Him only a Jew, an enemy, who might hate her.

But Jesus knows this woman. Jesus knows her sadness. He can see her broken heart and broken life. He knows that she is coming at this unusual time and alone to get water because she has no friends, no company, and no support. People neglect her and gossip about her.

In the middle of the day, when the sun is almost burning her skin, this woman is coming to the well, not knowing that this is the day when her whole life will be changed. Although she is neglected by everybody, somebody is waiting for her at the fountain to change her life with a deep conversation.

This conversation did not happen just suddenly. Jesus knows about her, and Jesus wants to save her life. This is why Jesus decides to go through Samaria to meet her and talk to her.

Many times, when we see people struggling, we worry about them, and we are wondering what we could do for them. At the end, we often say:” Well, they have to figure out their own lives.” And with this, we give up on them, and we will not be God’s extended hand towards them.

Dear beloved, we have to understand that we don’t just live our lives independently. God, who created us, created a way for us. Until we are connected to God with our living faith, God will be everywhere with us. If we decide to not follow God’s will but our own desires and our own plans, we will experience a lot of hardship. We can totally destroy our lives, as this woman did. But even in those moments when we would continue to destroy our own lives and happiness, God with His unconditional love is able to intervene with His wise decisions to save us and reroute our lives in a different direction.

Now, take a second and think about people, whom you love but you feel are not in their right places, because their lives took a wrong turn. And, since then, they go in the wrong direction. You worry for them, you are sadly witnessing how they are spending their precious lives, and how they might end up in a ditch, but you think you cannot help them.

God cannot simply watch us as we destroy our lives. He intervenes in a very special way to save us. Often, God wants to use you and me in His interventions.

God does not push anybody away from Him, just because they already destroyed themselves. God's love wants to free everyone from the entanglements of their meaningless lives. Even today, Jesus would have a cordial conversation with shipwrecked people, with empty, joyless lives.

Once, a counsellor was talking to a young man, and the conversation went something like this:

- Are you Christian?
 - o I do not know.
- Unbeliever?
 - o I do not know.
- Do you know why you live in this world?
 - o I do not know.
- Do you know where you go after death?
 - o I do not know.

There are so many people who are in the same position.

Our responsibility is to buy up the opportunity to start a conversation and to talk to them. Jesus was alert to “buy up the opportunity”, turning the conversation to spiritual things. We have to step closer to our loved ones. We have to initiate a conversation even in those situations when they are doing their routine daily tasks. We don't have to wait for a special occasion, for a special moment. We can surprise them at any time with our questions, sharing with them our thoughts.

This woman went to the well that day to perform the same task that she had done hundreds of times. She had no idea when she left home that her life was about to change dramatically. But Jesus saw this open door and grabbed the opportunity to offer this thirsty woman the water of life.

We need to watch for common situations that present us with an opportunity for the gospel.

Years ago, I bought something at a store. The young cashier made a mistake, giving me too much money back. I paused and, in my head, I recalculated everything, and I realized that she gave me \$50 more back than she should have. I kindly told her that there was a mistake. First, she was afraid that she did not give me enough money back and this is why I would complain. I told her that she gave me \$50 too much and I could not take that money, because, at the end of the day, she would be shorter that amount, and her supervisor would ask her to pay that back from her own pocket. The young lady was shocked as I extended the \$50 to

her. Then I said: “I am Christian, and I cannot walk away with her money. That money would burn my palm because that would be stolen money.” I told her that I am returning this money to her, not because I am just a nice guy, but because Jesus Christ is teaching us to be honest and correct with everybody and in every situation. I told her not to thank me, but to thank Jesus Christ, the way the Lord is shaping His children.

Walking away from the store, I still remember how happy I was that I was able to witness to a stranger about Jesus Christ.

I did not want that cashier to praise me but to know about Jesus Christ, and to praise Him, the Lord.

Let us continue to witness in words and actions. Amen