

# “This is Indeed the Savior of the World”

John 4:5-30; 39-42

In our Gospel lesson today, we witness something that is a rarity in Christ’s ministry. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, He was continually sought after and people came in massive numbers to see Him perform a miracle or heal the sick. But there in Samaria, after the people had heard that Jesus had told this woman “all that she ever did,” (and that was the only miracle He performed) they wanted Jesus to stay, not to perform more miracles, but so that they could hear His Word for themselves.

And after listening to the teachings of Jesus for two days, they said to the woman who first told them about Jesus: “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Miracles may peak our interest, but it is only the Word of God that creates and nurtures faith. These Samaritans demonstrate that there is a huge difference between hearing about God and hearing the Word of God.

Throughout the Gospels, we witness people who praised and honored Christ with great joy. We see the people on Palm Sunday who praised God and welcomed Jesus and sang “Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Where were all of those people on Good

Friday? The Jews who witnessed the miracles of our Lord did not trust in His words in the way that these Samaritans did.

The Jews knew Jesus only as the “bread king” who could feed them 5000 at a time, and as the miracle worker who healed the sick. Jesus heals the 10 lepers. One of them, a Samaritan, returns and gives thanks.

The disciples lived with Him for over three years and confessed that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, but they didn’t want to hear about it when Jesus said that “he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” [Mt. 16:21]. One of the times, Peter even objected. All of the times that Jesus predicted His suffering and death, the disciples did not want to hear that Word. When He was arrested, put on trial, and crucified, all but John deserted Him, and even he remained silent. It was not until after Christ’s resurrection that the disciples finally started to show an understanding of God’s Word.

The disciples find Jesus speaking to this Samaritan woman. You have to understand that most Jewish men would rarely even speak to their wife in public; let alone another woman; and certainly not a Gentile. But the disciples have at least wised up enough to keep their mouth shut and not ask the questions that John records they clearly wanted to ask: “Why are you talking to her?” “What are you seeking?”

The only time a man would speak to a strange woman was when he was seeking out, shall we say, a woman of poor reputation. And He found one. The disciples want to ask Him, “What do you seek?” Jesus has

already told them, “I have come to seek and to save the lost.” That was a message the disciples struggled with also. Do not begrudge the Gospel to those lost souls who you think are less worthy than you.

The disciples are just like the rest of us. People have always wanted to keep their preconceived notions of who God is, rather than discovering who God is from God Himself. In other words, it has always been mankind’s desire to create God in man’s image. We like to define God and God’s will by our standards, rather than by the truth of God’s Word. Our Old Adam thinks that God should think like we do in regard to judgment, punishment, forgiveness, salvation, and who deserves it. And our Old Adam never wants to be put into a position like the Samaritan woman at the well who had the most glaring sins of her life exposed. Here is the reality: There is no one less worthy than me.

This is why Christ’s church has always had the confession of sin as a part of its liturgy, where we say, “I, a poor, miserable, sinner...I have sinned in thought, word, and deed.” I deserve both temporal and eternal punishment.” I deserve death and hell.” That is not the way we would choose to think, however, it is the truth.

Our sins need to be exposed before God. Because, like the woman at the well, we receive God’s “living water” – that “spring of water welling up to eternal life.” That “living water” is the forgiveness found in our baptismal promise and in our baptismal faith created when the Word was joined with that water.

These Samaritans apparently understood something that the Jews did not – that a miracle worker was not going to make any real lasting change in their lives. The healing that they needed was the forgiveness for their sins. When we begin to understand the fullness of God’s forgiveness, only then do we begin to understand God and the message found in His Word.

The people who have only heard about God have no relationship with Him, and have no understanding of the depth of His mercy and grace. There are so many in this world who see God as either an unloving, vindictive giver of the Law – holding people to impossible standards, or on the flip side, they see Him as a universal forgiver, the awesome Big Guy in the Sky, who has no standards and welcomes almost everyone into the kingdom of heaven. You literally have to be Hitler to not get in.

But the people of God, who actually know Christ, are very much like the people of that Samaritan village. We have asked Christ to remain with us and teach us the truth of His Holy Word. We have had the most embarrassing sins of our lives exposed before God Himself, and we give Him thanks and praise because we know that He has taken away our sins and He will never accuse us of them again.

We have received Christ’s “living water.” We have received forgiveness for all of our sins in His life-giving body and blood. We have heard the Word of God and have believed it. We have not just heard *about* God. We have heard *from* God Himself and now know that Jesus Christ is indeed the Savior of the world. Amen.