

Into the Image of Christ (Part 3)

John 4:1-42

Preached: 7/26/2020, Germantown (Online and In Person Service)

SCRIPTURE READING: selected verses from John 4 – vs. 1-15, 25-34, 39-42

MESSAGE: ***Becoming the Image of Jesus***

We have been doing our sermon studies on the topic: ***Becoming the Image of Christ***. Paul says in Romans 8:29 - ***For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*** It is the plan of God for our lives as Christians, that we will be transformed or changed so that our lives are in conformity with the image of Christ. Manifesting the image of Christ in our lives is not an option. It is the plan or will of God. Jesus becomes the “Ruler” with which we measure our character. Do I look more like Jesus today than when I first began this spiritual journey.

But this process, this transformation into the image of Christ does not come easy. I recently came across a little book called **The Eternal Journey**, written by Jonathan Bailey. It is a study of an ancient spiritual discipline known as the Threefold Way. Bailey writes about the challenge of being changed into the image of Jesus.

- **There is a great disparity inside me: a gap between my longing and my living.**
- **Shedding vice and securing virtue – becoming like Christ – is not something that happens automatically. ...[it] happens over a long, frustrating, rewarding, painful and glorious period of time**
- **Christlike character is not something we get; we grow into it**

In this series of studies we are looking at some stories from the gospels where we see this process of **“growing into Christlikeness”** as it takes place in the lives of some of Jesus’ first disciples. As these disciples followed Jesus, they learned about His character. They learned what He was like as they watched his behavior, as they watched Him interact with God and with others. And as they saw His character, they discovered things that they had always believed or practiced, which did not match up with who Jesus was. I have been referring to those moments as “Clash” moments when who they were Clashed with who Jesus was. And those “Clash” moments became transformation moments or change moments where they began to be brought into conformity with the character of Jesus. This process of being changed into the image of Christ did not come easy for them. And they were not always perfect. They still made mistakes and their actions were not always in conformity with the character of Christ. But through Jesus’ influence – his teachings and example – they were changed. And as we join them in learning about Jesus, I hope that we will see changes in our character as well.

We are going to look at this story of Jesus and the Woman at the well today. I won’t be spending a lot of time looking at the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. As we are talking about the process of transformation that Jesus was bringing about in the lives of His disciples, I will focus more of our attention on Jesus’ interactions with them. As Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman we will discover that there is a Clash between His character and what the disciples thought about Samaritans and Women.

Robert Mulholland defines spiritual formation (this process of being transformed) like this: ***Spiritual Formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ, FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.*** Mulholland says that God is not changing us so that one day we will be on

display in a trophy case in heaven. He says that this process of conforming to the image of Jesus is so that **we can become what God created us to be in our relationship with God and with others.** This story shows us how this process of being conformed to the image of Christ will benefit others particularly Samaritans and Women.

The Clash: There are a couple of things we need to know as background as we look at this story. These background things help us understand the clash between the Disciples and Jesus.

The Samaritans: The territory that was known as Israel during the time that Jesus lived was divided into 3 sections: (Map) At one time this area was all one, it was united. It was all Israel. But the territory was now divided. The area in the north was known as Galilee. It was populated by Jews. This is where Jesus grew up – in Nazareth. The area in the south was known as Judea. Jerusalem was in Judea. Again this area was populated by Jewish people. The area in the middle, between Galilee and Judea was known as Samaria. As I said, at one time this was also populated by Jewish people. Several hundred years before Jesus, God punished the Jewish nation for their infidelity, their sin. The Jewish people were carried off out of their homeland and forcibly resettled in Assyria or Babylon. A remnant of Jewish people were left in Samaria. The territory of Samaria was then re-populated with people from other nations. They intermarried with the Jewish remnants so there was now a mixed race. They had beliefs and practices that were contrary to the beliefs and practices of Jewish people. And they did not get along. As the Samaritan woman says in verse 9, **Jews do not associate with Samaritans.**

Jesus had been in the territory of Judea, in the south, but wanted to return to Galilee. John tells us that Jesus had to go through Samaria. Well, he did not have to. Strict Jews would go around Samaria to get from Judea to Galilee. It may be that some of Jesus' followers would have preferred to go around. But Jesus chooses to go through Samaria. As he travels through Samaria he is tired and thirst and sits down at the well and engages this Samaritan woman in conversation.

John tells us that the disciples left Jesus at the well and went into the nearby town to buy some food. When the disciples return, John tells us something else that helps set up the clash between the disciples and Jesus. Vs. 27 – **“his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman.”** It was a male dominated world that Jesus lived in. The deep division between men and women was as sharp as the division between Jews and Samaritans. A Jewish man did not speak to their wives in public. Some rabbis' opinions of women was even worse. Michael Card says that some Rabbis taught **“Better that the law be burned then delivered to a woman”** So these are the thoughts that the disciples brought to the table

- Jews do not associate with Samaritans
- Men do not associate with women, especially in a public place like this.

The actions of Jesus clashes with that of the disciples. John told us that Jesus had to pass through **Samaria**. It is as if Jesus had an appointment he had to keep in Samaria. Here is a **woman** who was in need of living water – new life, salvation that Jesus offered. She was a broken woman. We learn in the story that she has been bounced from one husband to another – 5 husbands. But it mattered not to Jesus that she was a Samaritan. Her past did not matter to Jesus. She was eligible to receive what Jesus offered her in spite of what the disciples may have thought.

When the disciples returned from town, they were surprised by what they found. They really did not know what to say to Jesus. They tried to get him to eat something. I have always found this

part of the conversation to be a bit comical. Maybe they thought that Jesus was acting so contrary to what they expected because he was hungry. If he ate something he would come to his senses and come around to their way of thinking. But Jesus response to their invitation to eat something is quite revealing: **“My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work!”** Jesus declares that this is God’s plan! God sent him into the world to seek and to save those who are lost. So we have this “transformational” moment for the disciples. **Anyone whose life is broken by sin can receive living water no matter who they are.**

What was the outcome of Jesus’ willingness to go against what the disciples always believed and practiced? **Vs 39 – “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him!”** But as we look further in the book of Acts, we see that Jesus’ actions resulted in change in the lives of His followers. In Acts 8, the gospel comes to the territory of Samaria and many Samaritans believed in Jesus. The disciples welcomed them and recognized them as equal participants in the Kingdom of God. In Acts 10, when Peter is challenged to go to a Roman soldier’s home and tell them about Jesus, he is obedient. And many Gentiles – non Jewish people – came to faith in Jesus.

Peter and the rest of the earliest followers of Jesus had been influenced by Jesus teaching to welcome all. No one is disqualified from experiencing salvation because of their nationality, because of their gender, because of the sin in their life. There is living water for all!

I pray that we as Christ followers in today’s world would come to this same understanding. The good news about Jesus is for all people. No one is disqualified from the Living Water that Jesus offers.