

The Bad Samaritan John 4:1-26

by David Servant

Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman shows God's love for all people and the importance of heart worship in salvation.

Scripture: John 4:9-25

Topics: "Gods Love", "Eternal Life"

Description

David Servant preaches on the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, highlighting God's impartial love for all people regardless of race or culture. Jesus offers the woman living water, symbolizing the Holy Spirit and eternal life, revealing her need for salvation. Despite her attempts to evade the truth, Jesus addresses her sinfulness and ultimately reveals Himself as the Messiah, challenging her to make a life-changing decision.

Transcript

The people who lived in the region of Samaria came from a mixed ancestry of Jews and Gentiles. Because of that, the Samaritans were hated by the Jews who considered themselves of purer ancestry, and the Samaritans hated them in return. It was the same as it is today, when people of different races or cultures hate each other only because they're different.

But God isn't prejudiced. He loves everybody, no matter what color their skin is or what language they speak. Today's reading provides additional proof that Jesus was God, because He loved a Samaritan whom an ordinary Jew would have hated. This woman was very surprised when Jesus spoke to her, because usually, Jews didn't even speak to Samaritans!

Jesus told her that if she knew who He was and what He could give her, she would have been the one to initiate the conversation, asking Him for some very special water. Obviously, when Jesus offered her living water, He was speaking symbolically of something else. What was it? Let's look at how Jesus described it.

First, it was something that only He could give. It wasn't available from any other source. Second, it was a free gift, not something that could be purchased or earned. Third, like water, it would go inside people, forever satisfying their spiritual thirst. And fourth, when the living water went inside, it would give people eternal life. Jesus must have been speaking about receiving the Holy Spirit and being born again. He was offering the Samaritan woman salvation.

She, however, didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, and she probably began to wonder if He was a little crazy. So she jokingly requested some of His living water so she wouldn't ever be thirsty or have to haul water again from the well to her house. She was probably thinking to herself, "How can I get away from this oddball?"

But Jesus knew how to make her seriously consider what He was saying. Before she could see her need for a Savior, she had to acknowledge she was a sinner. So Jesus told her to call her husband, and she replied that she didn't have a husband. By telling a partial truth, she was trying to hide a big secret of which she was very ashamed. And that is when Jesus really got her attention, telling her He knew that she had been married and divorced five times and that now she was living with a man who was not her husband. Now she knew she was talking with Somebody special! He must be a prophet to know things about her past, and she wanted to change the subject in a hurry before He began talking about anything else of which she was ashamed! So she quickly brought up a religious question about the proper place to worship.

Jesus downplayed the importance of what was at that time a big dispute between Jews and Samaritans. It doesn't make any difference where a person worships. What matters is how he worships. Just because a person is worshipping in Jerusalem or at Mount Gerizim doesn't mean his worship is acceptable to God. The important thing is the condition of a person's heart. The only kind of worship that is acceptable and pleasing to God is worship that is done by people who worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). That is, their worship has to originate from their spirits, or hearts, and it must be sincere, not just a ritual. They worship God with their lives, living obediently to Him all the time. Only people who are born again can worship that way, and that is exactly what this Samaritan woman lacked.

Still hoping to end their conversation, she tried an argument that guilty people have always used to evade their accountability before God: "People will always disagree about religious issues, but someday God will straighten us all out. So there's no sense in us discussing it now." This woman, however, made the mistake of saying that she figured that when the Messiah came, He would explain everything. So Jesus dropped the bomb, telling her that He was the Messiah! And He was explaining to her what she needed to know, so she had no more excuses! Now she was faced with the biggest decision of her life, but we'll have to wait for tomorrow to find out what she decided. (This is what is known as a "cliff-hanger devotional"!)

Q. Is it OK for Christians to be prejudiced against people of other races or cultures?

A. No. Christians should reflect the love that God has for all people. Jesus died for everyone, and the greatest act of love we can show anyone is to tell them about Jesus.

Q. Have you ever tried to convince someone of his or her need for Jesus, but, like this Samaritan woman, he or she keeps trying to evade the issues? What did you learn from Jesus about how to deal with people like that?

A. Don't let them direct the conversation onto what is really not important. Keep it centered on two things: their sinfulness and need for a Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only way anyone can be saved.

Application: Am I a person who worships "in spirit and truth," or am I just a religious person who practices certain rituals? Is worshipping God something I do just because I'm in church, or something I do because I love God with my heart? Is my daily life an act of worship to God?

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