

The Essence of Christianity

Have You Ever Been Embarrassed by Something You've Done?

I've mentioned that I went to a small Christian college in Missouri. Coming from the west coast of California, snow and ice were not exactly regular occurrences, not even on the coldest of winter days. Before I left, I bought a huge orange down jacket that I thought would keep me warm. It was in fact like wearing a giant orange marshmallow and being very tall and skinny, everyone on campus could tell who I was from far away. One morning in winter as I was walking along the main sidewalk on campus, not being used to walking on ice, I slipped and crashed to the cement, landing on my tailbone, ending up flat on my back. The path was filled with students on their way to class and my fall was the highlight of the day. It was quite embarrassing. Sprawled out on the sidewalk in my giant marshmallow orange jacket, I instantly became a meme in the imagination of my classmates long before memes existed.

As we continue in this series on the transformation moment of Christian faith, we are going to do a deep dive into someone only John of the gospel writers mentions and even at that, he doesn't give her a name. She is traditionally known as "the Samaritan woman" or "the woman at the well". To say she was an embarrassment to her fellow villagers would be an understatement. I am guessing that she was an embarrassment to her parents if they were still alive, to any siblings she had and to her few friends. Not many of us ever reach the level of disdain she achieved.

The account begins with a rather innocuous statement that has been largely overlooked as far as its importance to understanding Christian faith. **The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria.** (John 4: 1-4 NIV) Notice that last sentence. "Now he had to go through Samaria." The original Greek literally reads, "He was compelling him to go through Samaria." In other words, the Father drove Jesus to go right through Samaria on his way from Judea to Galilee. What is fascinating is that Samaria was almost never the route Jews would take. It was much easier to go another way, but the Father wanted His Son to go through Samaria. You might say Jesus had a "divine appointment" and a shocking one at that.

Beware of thinking that anything is luck or random or a quirk. God is in it all and not even Satan can break in and do something God has not permitted. A woman not long ago contacted me because of one of my videos, very upset that a thief stole all her jewels and money in her house. "How could God do this to me," she raged. She chose to hate God over this and even went further, insisting that God does not exist. Now, I am on record as saying the thief could not steal all that money and jewelry if God was not allowing it to happen. Here is where faith operates in real time. God is good and full of love and although it may not seem like it at the moment, the loss of all that was taken is going to be proven to be good for the family if she trusts God in it. This is certainly a test and not easy to accept but if you want to see things as they are, then what God said was permissible and even a part of His will is going to work blessings for the family. God can certainly give the broken-hearted woman a hundred times what she lost if He thinks it is in her best interest. What seems like an accident or even a tragedy is never so for God's people who live in Him.

Jesus showed up in a little village in Samaria because the Father sent Him there. **So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.** (John 4: 5-6 NIV) Literally, Jesus sat down right on the well. It was not a time when women came for water. They would all arrive early in the morning and then just before it turned dark. When the sun was high in the sky wells in the middle east were abandoned. Gathering water at the community well was always a social event; something highly anticipated as the women took a break from their mundane chores, hung out together and chatted for a while. What is shocking in this story is that not all the women avoided the well. One showed up and because Jesus was literally sitting on the well they had to meet each other. **When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)** (John 4: 7-8 NIV)

The back and forth conversation between this woman and Jesus is fascinating and in many ways humorous but we only have time to look briefly at it. The woman was shocked Jesus even spoke to her. She was a Samaritan and Jews hated Samaritans. Obviously she was a woman and Jewish men did not speak publicly with women. It was a breach of proper etiquette and prejudiced practices at the time. **The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)** 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 :9-10 NIV) Living water was running water, fresh water. The woman thought Jesus had a place where she could get fresh water rather than the stale water from the well. Jesus was talking about something much more profound and impactful. **Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."** (John 4: 13-14 NIV)

When the woman told Jesus she wanted that water, the Lord ordered her to go get her husband and then return. **"I have no husband," she replied.** (John 4: 17a NIV) Jesus' response threw the woman off completely and paved the way for her transformation. **Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."** (John 4: 17b-18 NIV) Jesus then revealed to the woman something he almost never told anyone, that He is the Messiah. At that point the disciples returned after they had gone searching for food and the woman scurried off, leaving behind her water jar. **Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.** (John 4:28-30 NIV) This needs to be made clear. Jesus would have had no access to the information that the woman had been married previously five times and was not married to the man with whom she lived. It was in fact supernaturally given knowledge and the woman clearly knew that was the case.

She went to the people of the town and made a public spectacle. "Come see...!" This is most fascinating at a psychological level. The woman went to the well, and this seems to have been a regular practice of hers, at noon when no one else would have gone. She clearly wanted nothing to do with all the other women who would come much earlier and later. She was a pariah, someone no other woman wanted to be around, at least not the married ones. Avoided and shunned, an outcast perhaps by her own choosing, this woman made a strange turn. She came out...not for her sexuality but for her encounter with Jesus. Compelled, driven, she broadcast the news to her entire village that they should meet Jesus. Psychologically, how does one go from an "avoid people at all costs" soul to an outright public evangelist? There is a perfect explanation. The woman at the well was transformed by Jesus.

There is a stunning twist to this account that needs to be noted. The woman was not really sure if Jesus was actually the Messiah. The Greek grammar tells us that she thought it was a possibility but the woman at the well had doubts. It seems strange that was so. She was after all magnificently bold to proclaim the need to go to Jesus. But like many who are transformed supernaturally by putting their faith in Jesus, questions remain. You do not have all the answers when you begin following Jesus. You simply know He is the Lord and that is enough. Transformation by God is not always rapid or dramatic, sometimes it is full of doubt and questions. It is however real, and the transformation will move forward until you are perfect. There is a tremendous promise Jesus makes and it is often misunderstood. Let me share it with you as it is found in its original Greek structure. **You will be perfect ones, just as your heavenly Father is always perfect.** (Matthew 5: 48) The word translated "perfect" means complete or finished. Whatever your doubts or misgivings about having Jesus as your Lord and Savior will eventually be worked out by God and everything will become clear and right. Don't worry about what you don't yet know or understand. Clarity will come as you follow Jesus and obey Him.

The account of the woman at the well ends this way. **Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."** (John 4: 39-42 NIV) When you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, as the one who makes you new and gives you eternal life, a supernatural transformation will begin that you will not be able to explain in any way other than Jesus Christ has joined your life. The woman talked to people about Jesus. That was unexplainable. What about you? Are you ready to be someone only Christ can make of you? Are you ready to become perfect as you live with Jesus in charge of your life? Obey God on something you know He has told you to do and watch and see what Jesus does in your life. The world does not need better leaders. It needs more people like you following Jesus wherever He leads.