

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 45

John 4:15 ***"The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. ¹⁶ Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. ¹⁷ The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: ¹⁸ For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."*** (John 4:15-18)

SHE SAID THE TRUTH

INTRODUCTION

When a person is willingly in the presence of Jesus – even if they do not know who He really is – Jesus will not break their inquiring spirit. He will not push them away, although He will be straightforward with them. That is the evidential view – but it goes much deeper than that. Jesus has a nature – a *"Divine nature."* It goes with Him wherever He goes. If He is in the presence of something that agitates that spirit, He will do things like cleansing the Temple (John 2:13-16; Lk 19:45-46), and publically castigating the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:2-39). When His disciples ask an unwarranted question with an improper spirit, *"He rebuked them"* (Lk 9:55-56). Jesus is kind, but He will not conduct Himself contrary to His nature, and no one should expect Him to. When He walked among men, He was not looking for someone to rebuke, or for an occasion when He could vent His wrath – even though He would not ignore the presence of obstinance and unbelief. He came to *"seek and to save that which was lost"* (Lk 19:10). It goes without saying that such people were, to some degree, discontent with their lostness. There was some measure of quest in such people, although they probably could not have delivered a discourse on the subject. But Jesus knew the hearts, thoughts, and intentions of those He encountered. He could see beneath the surface, rough though it may have been. For the seeking soul, that is a comforting thought. For the rebellious one, it is a fearful one. Now, in this text, Jesus has encountered a woman who was woefully ignorant of the real God, had only an introductory knowledge of God sending someone into the world to bless men – and she was morally deficient. Yet, even in that state, she was willing to hold a conversation with Jesus, who was obviously different and superior to herself. It was this posture that moved Jesus to speak to her personally, rather than simply delivering a discourse on the errors of Samaritan religion.

"GIVE ME THIS WATER"

John 4:15 ***"The woman saith unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."***

Jesus had spoken words to this woman that were refreshingly different. He has led her to think of a different kind of water, without giving her any real definition of what it was. She is admittedly thinking about the kind of water that is for the body – but she is

now thinking off the beaten path, so to speak. If a person is going to profit from Jesus, they are going to have to think outside, so to speak, of the box of "ordinary." In this case, it was thinking of a kind of water that not only satisfied, but that eliminated the necessity of repeating drawing it from a source external to themselves. I may be a bit naive here, but I am persuaded that many professing Christians have not even thought of this kind of spiritual sustenance. To this very day, they cannot think of spiritual satisfaction as drawing from a source outside of themselves. Such people must submit to the words of Jesus concerning knowing "the gift of God," who Jesus is, "living water," never thirsting, an inner well, and water "springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:10,14). Those are certainly not customary concepts, and they cannot be defined by any standard dictionary or lexicon. They are outside the periphery of the flesh, the ordinary, and the common. However, if you are going to really profit from Jesus, you must get within the boundary of thought that includes such things.

SIR. Most all versions use this word: "Sir." Some variations include "My lord," ^{MRD} "Mister," ^{IE} "Master," ^{ABP} and "Lord." ^{NUB} The other 48 versions that I have all read "Sir."

As it is used here, the word from which "Sir" is translated [kurios] means, "TITLE OF HONOR EXPRESSIVE OF RESPECT AND REVERENCE, WITH WHICH SERVANTS SALUTE THEIR MASTER," ^{THAYER} "AS A FORM OF ADDRESS SHOWING RESPECT SIR, LORD." ^{FRIBERG}

This woman sees someone in Jesus she immediately respects – like an authority on matters, and one with an ability to give something she needs. This is the lowest level of respect for Jesus – but it is a legitimate beginning level. The difficulty is that Americans have been cultured to think of themselves as the primary people, and hence do not have respect for people of ability and means. There is now a generation of people who will not acknowledge anyone superior to themselves. But this is how Jesus must be seen if anyone is to gain an advantage from Him. He cannot be seen as a peer, simply a member of the human race, or as someone that is ordinary. That kind of consideration of Jesus will immediately terminate any benefit being realized from Him. As a practical matter, our children must be raised to respect those who are greater than themselves, both in how they address them, and in how they conduct themselves before them. As rudimentary as that may seem, it is a view fast disappearing.

GIVE ME THIS WATER. Every version reads the same way, with come variations like "give me some of that water," ^{NUB} "give me of that water" ^{TNT} and "give me a drink of that water." ^{CEV}

Notice that the woman believed what Jesus said about this water. She did not say "sell me this water," because Jesus said He would give it to her (John 4:10). She did not ask to know the way to a well, for Jesus had said once she drank of the water it would be a springing well within her (John 4:14).

Considerable progress has been made when the seeking individual realizes that what Jesus gives cannot be obtained from any other source. It cannot be manufactured by the individual receiving it. What Jesus gives has to be personally appropriated and ingested, and it must be appropriated from Him alone. It seems to me that our religious generation does not comprehend these things. That is the reason for the phenomenal growth in self-help programs, reform programs, counseling, seminars where a consensus is sought, etc. I know this is a sensitive area for some, but when we are speaking of spiritual life, Jesus has to be at the center of things – not at the center of humanly-devised programs, but in the place where God has exalted Him.

THAT I THIRST NOT. She knew what Jesus was saying, even though she did not yet know the extent of what He said, or how to experience the benefit of which He spoke.

She now knew of a water-source that eliminated the need for all other water-sources. Drinking this water would eliminate droughts, as well as repetitive journeys to a common, and sometimes inaccessible, well. This was water better than that which Jacob had accessed, superior in every way.

NEITHER COME HITHERTO DRAW. It is obvious that there was some inconvenience involved in coming to this well. We are not told how far she came. It was evidently not a great distance. But she had to carry a vessel there, fill it up, and carry it back. This meant she could not have a vessel of considerable size, and therefore had to come frequently. The thought of not having to do this was appealing to her. Once she knew more about this water, she would learn that drinking from it did involve effort –but not tedious and weakening effort. The inner well must be cared for by letting it flow freely. The freshness and invigorating effects of this water depended upon its unhindered flowing – out-flowing rivers of living water (John 7:38). These waters cease to flow when the Spirit is “grieved” (Eph 4:30), “quenched” (1 Thess 5:19), or “resisted” (Acts 7:51). The suppression of spiritual life is lethal – yet there are multitudes of professing Christians that are continually doing just that.

CALL THY HUSBAND

“¹⁶ Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. ^{17A} The woman answered and said, I have no husband.”

We learn from this text that exposure to Christ Jesus is exposure to the light – the light that exposes the thoughts and intentions of the heart, as well as the moral status of the individual. Divine help and assistance is experienced within the framework of reality, not philosophy or supposition. While it is true that much of the “Christianity” of our day is philosophical (i.e.– chiefly speculative rather than through observational means), as compared with being substantive, when dealing with the Son of God, that room will not be occupied. The woman will make a valiant effort to turn her discussion with Jesus in that direction, but He will not subscribe to the suggestion.

GO CALL THY HUSBAND. Jesus is not referring to social protocol, as though she should not be speaking with Him without her husband being there (some do allege this to be the case). You should know that Jesus does not subscribe to social customs and practices when dealing with the truth of God. If He is “*Lord even of the Sabbath*” (Mat 12:8), much more is He the Lord of customs!

Here the Lord is probing her heart – providing a proper context in which to elaborate on the “*water of life*.” To this point the woman had not demonstrated sufficient interest in “*living water*.” Nor, indeed, had she yet perceived in Jesus anything other than an ordinary Jewish man. To this point, all she was interested in was convenience – not having to come to Jacob’s well for water. However, that is not sufficient reason to have extended dialog with the Lord Jesus Christ.

AND COME HITHER. Other versions read, “*Go, call your husband and come back,*” ^{NIV} “*get your husband and come back here with him,*” ^{BBE} and “*Go to your husband, and bring him here.*” ^{GWN}

As is revealed in this very text, Jesus knew her marital status very well – but the woman would have to face her condition, and do so seriously. To be sure, she needed the “*living water*” of which Jesus spoke. However, she was completely unaware that was water for her inner man, not the outward man. Jesus had given her a strong statement concerning this when He said, “*the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of*

water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). This had completely escaped her understanding. She did not comprehend a well of water within, or a well *"springing up into everlasting life."* Therefore, Jesus shined the Divine light on her marital life – a moral matter. He will bring her to see she needs life within.

In seeking to bring people to Christ, care must be taken to illuminate their need of Christ. Peter pointed out to his hearers they had crucified the very Christ God had sent to them (Acts 2:23,36). Jesus reminded Saul of Tarsus that he had been persecuting Him in his opposition to the church (Acts 9:4). Paul told the Athenians that God had commanded all men to repent (Acts 17:30-31). Paul reasoned with Felix concerning the necessity of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). John the Baptist told Herod he was out of moral bounds in having his brother's wife for his own (Mk 6:18).

This kind of approach is essential because the primary reason for Jesus coming and laying down His life was to address the matter of sin. His incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension were not required to resolve moral and social issues. Sin had to be taken away en mass – and that is precisely what Jesus did (John 1:29; Heb 9:26). The water that He gives is in light of Himself dealing with sin. Mind you, Jesus will not set Himself in the context of marriage, and that is not what He is doing here. He is rather bringing the woman to see that what she really needs is not a good water supply for the body.

I HAVE NO HUSBAND. Other versions read, *"I don't have a husband,"* ^{CSB} *"I have not a husband,"* ^{DARBY} and *"But I'm not married."* ^{LIVING}

Still, the woman is unaware of the Person with whom she is talking. She speaks with him as though He was nothing more than a ordinary Jewish man. But Jesus has now changed the direction of her thinking, and shortly she will acknowledge Him as someone who is by no means normal. Even then, however, she will dodge things pertaining to herself – at least for the time being. Later, Jesus will tell His disciples, *"the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). That means they are penetrating, causing the attention of the mind and the soul. They will *"divide asunder"* the soul and the spirit, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12). All people cannot survive such an encounter– i.e., the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, and chief priests. In fact, two men – *"a certain lawyer"* and *"a certain ruler"* – asked Jesus what they could do to inherit eternal life; but neither could handle the answer given to them (Lk 10:25-37; 18:23).

Even so, when we speak to people about Christ, and about obtaining eternal life, we must take care not to stoop too low – into the arena where the flesh dominates. We cannot ourselves cause people to believe on Jesus. But we can deliver words the Holy Spirit will use, and not cloud the vision of the person with whom we are working with too much of ourselves.

THOU HAST WELL SAID

" 17^B Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."

JESUS SAID UNTO HER. You sense that in His answer Jesus is not looking for something that will disqualify her from obtaining *"living water."* There probably was not much good that could be said about this women, but Jesus will find something!

THOU HAST WELL SAID. Other versions read, *"you are right,"* ^{NIV} *"You have said rightly,"* ^{BBE} *"You are right to say,"* ^{CEB} *"You have correctly said,"* ^{CSB} *"All too true!,"* ^{LIVING}

"You are quite right," ^{ISV} *"Yes, you spoke the simple truth when you said that,"* ^{PHILLIPS} *and "That's nicely put."* ^{MESSAGE}

That was a most gracious reply. I am sure the woman was not speaking with accuracy and rightness in mind, else she would not have spoken as a single woman or a widow. It is clear she did not want to divulge any details about her married life, but neither was she willing to construct a lie about the whole situation. Thus Jesus views her answer in a very gracious way, saying that she certainly had said the truth when she said she had no husband.

THOU HAST HAD FIVE HUSBANDS. The Lord, however, does not let the matter go. She *"had five husbands."* We do not know if she was a young woman or an older woman – whether her husbands had died, put her away, or she was dominated by lust. But Jesus will not be distracted to a lengthy conversation about her past. Now she knows that He knows about it – and that is the point He was making. If she was to receive *"living water,"* she had to know that the One giving it to her knew all about her – not just on that day, but about her past as well.

HE WHOM THOU HAST. Now, Jesus gets very personal. This woman was living in a state of adultery. The man she was living with was *"not"* her husband. Jesus did not recognize what men call "common-law marriages – that if two live together long enough they will be considered married. If that is true, the manner in which Jesus assessed her present situation would be open to question.

Water is generally considered to be for everyone. But it is not so with *"living water."* That water will not be dispensed to people living in sin. If this was not clear to the people, the ministry of John the Baptist clarified the matter. He prepared people for Christ by calling them to repentance (Matt 3:8; Lk 3:3). This is what Jesus preached and taught (Matt 4:17; Lk 5:32; Mk 6:12). Peter preached it (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:32; 2 Pet 3:9). Paul preached it (Acts 13:30; 26:20; Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:10).

In our time there is not much preaching on repentance, or calling upon men to *"repent."* There are all kinds of programs that are said to help people manage their sin. However, the answer to dealing with sin is repentance, which is always successful, because it is *"not to be repented of"* (2 Cor 7:10). Paul summarized his preaching to the lost in this way: *"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that **they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance**"* (Acts 26:19-20). When Jesus sent His disciples out to preach, he said, *"that repentance and remission of sins **should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem**"* (Luke 24:47).

In our time there has been some kind of influence that has turned men aside from this solemn commission. It did not come from Jesus Christ, was not inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is not sanctioned by God Almighty. I have an idea that the reduction of preaching repentance is largely owing to the focus on institutionalism and careers.

Take, for an example, the growing generation of young people. What is the general view among them of repentance – of the need for it, that *"godly sorrow"* leads to it, and that it is *"unto life"* (Acts 11:18). Paul wrote to Timothy that repentance leads to *"the acknowledgment of the truth"* (2 Tim 2:25). Should not more be said in our time concerning repentance?

IN THAT, SAIDST THOU TRULY. That is, in saying, *"I have no husband,"* she had said what was true – even though she was living with a man. Whatever that relationship

was, it was not that of a husband and a wife. That means it was an adulterous affair, and it was something that had to be resolved.

Jesus is leading this woman to repentance. He is doing it with compassion and a desire to give her *"living water."* But He will not mask her sin, or pretend as though it was not there. It appears as though she knew enough about herself, and enough about God, to realize she was not living in an acceptable manner. However, she also needed to know that the Man with whom she was speaking also knew about her circumstance in all of its sordid details.

Outside of His disciples, there are very few accounts of personal dialogs Jesus had with individuals: Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:9-43), a certain centurion (Matt 8:8-13), and the two on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-32), to name a few. Actually, this woman was someone that the Father was drawing to Jesus (John 6:44,65).