

WHICH JESUS DO YOU KNOW?

Today's Text: Jn 4: 1- 43

Extracts:

The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ? Then they went out of the city and came to Him. ... And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” [Jn 4: 28-30, 39-42]

Rev. Jim Moats, 59, is a Pastor at the Christian Bible Fellowship Church in Newville, PA, USA.¹ He was fond of telling his family and parishioners of his exploits during his service in the US Navy SEAL,² the special operations arm of the American military forces recently credited with killing the Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden. He even buttressed his stories with a Gold Trident, a medal that is awarded to those who complete SEAL training. However, investigators, largely ex-Navy SEALs, recently observed gaping holes in the pastor's story and told it to reporters. It turned out that the pastor was in deed in the Navy but never a SEAL. What he knew about that elite unit came from his conversation with a SEAL supervisor and ideas from Steven Seagal's "Under Siege" and other movies. The Gold Trident he paraded as proof of SEAL training he actually bought from a military surplus store! Therefore, he knew about the SEALs but he was never one of them!

A similar thing is happening in the church concerning Jesus. The way some people talk about Him, you will think He is their co-tenant! Do they really know Jesus or they simply know ABOUT Him? In this week's Bible story, a Samaritan woman had an encounter with Jesus by the well at Sychar. Which Jesus did she meet and what did she ultimately discover? There is so much we can learn from the encounter to enable us to answer the question: which Jesus do you know?

¹ Based on "Pastor: My tale of being a Navy SEAL was just 'an ego-builder,'" http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42975023/ns/us_news-life/?GT1=43001 ; May 10, 2011

² <http://www.sealswcc.com/navy-seals-overview.aspx>

1. Background: Jesus reveals His true self to the Samaritans

A new employee has just joined your organization and you are going to share office facilities. A new teacher has just been assigned to your class. A new worshipper has just joined your church. In all those cases, you have observed that the new comers are trying to get close to you. They seem to know so much about you already even without your telling them anything. For example, they seem to know intimate details about your private life that you have hardly shared with others. How would you react to such “intruders”? Some of us would put up a high wall to block them off because they suspect ulterior motives that might not necessarily be good for them. Some others would be quite curious and want to find out what such “intruders” were looking for. They would seek to know more about them.

In this week’s Bible story, Jesus and His disciples came to a city of Samaria called Sychar where Jacob’s well was. They had walked a long distance because they were said to be wearied from the journey. They were also hungry because His disciples were said to have gone away into the city to buy food [**Jn 4: 5-6, 8**]. It was six in the evening, the time that women went out to draw water [**Gen. 24: 11**]. As Jesus sat by the well, a woman of Samaria came to draw water. He said to her, “Give Me a drink” [**Jn 4: 7**]. Her reaction suggests she was curious about the question and the questioner. Let us follow the story from there:

a) *Jesus is more than an eligible bachelor!*

You can imagine what the woman was thinking when Jesus asked her to give Him a drink. Remember that young bachelors tend to hang around where young women are likely to be found. For example, when Abraham’s servant was sent to find a wife for Isaac, it was to the well of water where “the daughters of the men of the city [were] coming out to draw water” that he went. When he saw a “young woman [who] was very beautiful to behold...the servant ran to meet her and said, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher.’” The woman turned out to be Rebecca who later became Isaac’s wife [**Gen. 24:11-27**]. The Samaritan woman that Jesus asked to give Him a drink was quite experienced in ‘boy- meets- girl’ conversations, having been married to and divorced from several men [**Jn 4: 18**]!

She wondered why Jesus, a Jew, should ask a drink of her, a Samaritan, since Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus drew her attention straight to Himself, the One that could give her “the gift of God” that He was offering her. Had she asked of Him, He was ready to give her “living water” [**vv. 6-10**]. In coquettish (flirtatious) language, she replied that Jesus had nothing with which to draw water and the well was deep. So, where was He going to get the living water from? Jesus raised the bar again by telling her that those who drank the water from that well would

be thirsty again but those who drank His living water would never thirst again. The woman replied, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.” At that stage, Jesus asked her to go and call her husband. She claimed to have none. That was when Jesus told her that, in deed she had had five husbands and the one she was currently with was not her husband [vv. 11- 18].

It is obvious from her responses and Jesus’ final revelation about her life that the woman saw Jesus as another eligible bachelor. She changed men like fashion, having been married to five and living with a sixth. In fact, it was time to raise her bar of flirting by marrying a dashing young Jew like Jesus! *Many of us relate to Jesus* in like manner. We see Him *as our bread winner, the one to solve all our earthly problems. We want His bread but not the Bread of life [Jn 6: 48].* We look for or follow Him to heal our diseases and bless us materially. *If that is the Jesus you know, you are merely looking for an eligible bachelor but this one is not available because He already has a bride- the church [Rev. 19: 7]!*

b) *Jesus is more than a Prophet!*

As soon as the Samaritan woman realized that Jesus was not wooing her but talking of serious issues, she said, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.” Then, she raised her discussion too but this time to discuss *religion*. Their fathers worshipped on that mountain but the Jews said Jerusalem was the place where one ought to worship [Jn 4: 19-20]. Again, Jesus drew her attention to *true worship which had little to do with where you worship but much to do with who you worship* for “true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth... God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” [vv. 21-24].

By the time you are talking of place or mode of worship, you are talking about religion. That enables you to compare Jesus with Moses or the prophets, Muhammad or Buddha and other major religious leaders. You reduce Jesus to a prominent prophet or founder of a major religion. The one-world religion concept becomes very attractive. *But Jesus is more than a prophet.* For example, Jesus once took Peter, James and John up a high mountain where He was transfigured before them. The apostles saw Moses and Elijah talking with Him. In awe, Peter requested to make three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them and a loud voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” [Matt. 17: 1-6]. Peter recalled that event later in one of his epistles as proof of Christ’s incomparability with anyone else [1 Pet. 1: 16-18]. Jesus is more than a great prophet.

c) *Jesus is the Messiah!*

The Samaritan woman raised the bar again by saying, “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus replied her, “*I who speak to you, am He.*” We are told that the woman left her water pot, went her way into the city and said to the people there, “Come see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” [Jn 4: 25-26, 28-29].

From the forgoing, *we can conclude that Jesus is more than your bread winner and a great prophet. He is the Messiah that God has sent into the world to save it from sin.* Right from the beginning, *the woman knew much about the Messiah but the moment she encountered Jesus in person, her perspective of the Messiah changed.* She dropped her water pot of human greed and went to preach the good news of the accessible Messiah to her people. They came to Jesus and begged Him to stay with them and He was with them for two days. The people said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and *we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*” [vv. 39-42]. That is the true Jesus but is that the one that you know?

2. How to cultivate your knowledge of the true Jesus

It was Jesus who made Himself accessible to the Samaritan woman because He is the one that chooses us [Jn 15: 16], just as it was His Father who took the initiative for our salvation by sending His only begotten Son to the world to save it [Jn 3: 16-17]. Nevertheless, Jesus has also said that whoever comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out [Jn 6: 37]. God rewards those who diligently seek Him [Heb. 11: 6]. *Jesus is forever there, waiting at the door of your heart and knocking. Are you willing to open so that He can come in for you to have a close encounter of the best kind?* Here are a few suggestions to enable you to cultivate the desirable knowledge of the true Jesus:

a) *Develop an acute hunger for Him!*

Some people have food but they have no hunger or appetite for it. Some people are very hungry but they have no food to eat. Jesus is always there but are you hungry for Him? The Psalmist says, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God*” [Ps. 42: 1-2]. Therefore, it is not enough that all you know about Jesus is what your pastor tells you or what they have taught you in Bible College. Otherwise, when seducing spirits confront you with false doctrines about the person and divinity of Jesus, you could be left with doubts and despair. So, *you must let the Jesus of the Bible come alive in you and live in you.*

Perhaps my own personal testimony may be relevant here. In September 1985, I received a prophetic word that my calling was to teach the word of God. Although I had been a Christian for 30 years at the time, I had never been challenged even at a Bible quiz, not to talk of teaching God's word. But as an academic, I am intellectually quite curious. Unfortunately, that was a wrong frame of mind with which to study the Bible, which sounded to me then like Shakespeare's plays! I was not going to write about a nebulous God that I hardly knew. I began to ask myself, "How can I prove empirically that God exists?" Then I stumbled on Hebrews 11 Verse 6 where I was told that without faith, no one can please God and that those who come to Him must believe that He is and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. That put me in a dilemma! I am asking God to show me and I will believe and He is telling me to believe and He will show me.

I wrestled with that dilemma for a whole year until September 1986 when my wife accompanied me to a professional conference in Hamburg in the then West Germany. Close to midnight on Wednesday, September 3, my wife was already asleep on the bed in our hotel room and I was reading Chapter 1 of John's Gospel: "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*" I became more confused than ever. At that stage, I surrendered. I knelt down beside my open Bible on the study table and prayed, saying, "O God, I am sorry for my foolishness. I believe that You exist. I believe that You so loved me that You sent Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for my sins," and so on. I switched off the bedside lamp and joined my wife on the bed.

All of a sudden, all the lights in the room came back on and a young man was leaning on the study table with his legs on the ground, arms folded, and looking reassuringly at me on the bed. He asked, "What is your problem?" Without asking who he was, I told him I did not understand what I was reading and added, "How can I prove empirically that God exists?" He laughed and I was unhappy that he was trivializing my question! He answered, "I am the empirical evidence that God exists!" Then I asked, "Who are you?" He replied, "You were reading about me just now. Look at verse 18." As I jumped up from the bed, the whole room was dark. I switched on the lights and read John 1: 18 which states, "***No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.***" My spirit was quickened. "You mean Jesus is the empirical evidence that God exists?" I asked myself over and over! As I shook like a leaf, my wife woke up and, after telling her my encounter, she steadied me up. That was how I came to know the true Jesus. That encounter is the origin of my "audacious" series that you now read every week.

b) *Practise and tell what you know to others*

After she had encountered Jesus, the Samaritan woman threw away her water pot and ran to her city to tell others about Him. You can be sure that her life was not the same from that point on. In like manner, it is not enough to profess Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. You must practise it because Jesus has said, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” [Lk 6: 46]. Ultimately, you will influence others more by the evidence of being Christ-like in all that you do than by your fiery sermons and loud crusades for “whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God” [1 Jn 3: 10].

c) *Live in the hope of His imminent return*

In the face of worldly pressures for instant gratification that lure people to cut corners, hoping in the untimed imminent return of Jesus can be quite challenging. When you put your children through college, you have a clear idea of the duration. You can bear the hardship because of the fixed duration. But when you preach to people to live righteously, how many of them can cope with its indefinite mandate? That is why *faith is crucial*. Jesus has asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” [Lk 18: 8]. That is why you must form the habit of walking by faith and not by sight [2 Cor. 5: 7]. *If you have the mind of Christ, you can know the mind of God* [1 Cor. 2: 16].

Jesus is real. You may not find Him in your religion but only in your heart, through a personal relationship with Him.

3. Conclusion: Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart!

Jesus loves the sinner but hates sin. Otherwise, why would He reveal Himself to a Samaritan woman who had had six husbands and not to the ‘pious’ religious leaders of His time? The Samaritan woman already knew much about Jesus before their encounter but she willfully chose what to focus on. It took the Lord’s encouragement for her to come to the truth. In like manner, you may already know much more about Jesus the Messiah than you currently show. So, throw away all cautions to the wind and declare Him in your life. *Open that door of your heart where Jesus is knocking right now so that He can come in and dine with you. You can be sure that in addition to your favourite dishes, He will add the living water of the Holy Spirit that you will drink and never ever thirst again!*

Bon appétit!