

THE "SAMARITAN EXPERIENCE"

Old Testament - Genesis 33/ 18-20

New Testament - John 4/ 7-10

One of the more memorable accounts in the Bible takes place at Jacob's well near the town of Sychar in Samaria. Jesus and His disciples had a ~~strong~~ ^{STRONG} and meaningful ministry in Judea. His followers were many. But, there were ~~others~~ ^{THOSE} there who were jealous of Jesus because of His growing band of believers. Some ~~were~~ ^{WERE} followers of John the Baptist... some ~~were~~ ^{WERE} the Jerusalem officials - the Pharisees ^(THEY) all "murmered" against Him ~~and~~ ^{AND} some became outright hostile.

So, Jesus decided to return to His home territory of Galilee. There, He thought He could carry on His ministry undisturbed. The shortest route from Judea to Galilee was ~~through~~ ^{NORTH} through Samaria. However, Jews traveling through Samaritan territory ran the risk of harassment, even death...or they could ~~cross~~ ^{TURN EAST} the Jordan River into Perea which was ~~predominantly~~ ^{PREDOMINANTLY} Jewish, ^(TURN NORTH) and then ^(TURN WEST AND) recross the Jordan near their destination. Jesus and His ^(NORTH) followers chose the direct and shortest route through Samaria.

A Samaritan, according to the Jewish view, was an ethnic mixture resulting from the intermarriage of local Jews with pagan colonists brought in when the territory was overrun by the Assyrian conquest around 720 BC. The Samaritans shared some of the religious beliefs of the Jews. They worshiped one God. They accepted the five books of Moses as The Law, and they observed the same holy days and festivals.

The Jews , through the teachings of the prophets Amos, Hosea, ~~Isiah~~ ^{ISAIAH}, Jermiah and others, had come to a fuller knowledge of God than the Samaritans who did not accept these teachings.

When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity around 520 BC, the Samaritans offered to help them rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. They were rejected by the Jewish leaders because of their mixed blood and mixed beliefs. Their offer of friendship and help rejected , the Samaritans then tried to hinder ~~the~~ OR ~~the~~ STOP the rebuilding. From that time on a deep-seated antagonism grew and festered between Jews and Samaritans.

So, Jews and Samaritans had this deep hatred of one another. Samaritans believed that they were the true followers of God ~~the~~ the Father. Jews believed that they were the true followers. Usually a Jew and a Samaritan would not speak to each other if they could avoid it. Some Jewish rabbis claimed that Samaritans were more pagan than Gentiles. ~~The Samaritans must have left~~
~~Jerusalem by the wall Jericho by the way, as usual,~~
~~they understood Jesus~~

③

The road from Jerusalem in Judea to Galilee was hot and dusty...especially when the wind was blowing in from the desert. After Jesus and His followers had walked all morning - from about 6AM until noon, they came to the village of Sychar in Samaria. Sychar is thought to be another name for ~~Scherem~~ ^{Sycar} ~~Scherem~~ ^{SHEREM!}. The village was famous because it was the place where ~~there~~ ^{THE SAMARITANS!} revered ancestor, Jacob, had built an alter to God. ~~There~~ The deep, ever-refreshing well nearby was named after Jacob. It was large as wells in that area go...seven feet across and over 100 feet deep. Today, the area is a bustling transportation hub with busses and other vehicles rumbling in and out. The water in the well ~~is~~ is still cold, sweet and refreshing. It was a sacred place for the Samaritan people. Jesus sat down to rest beside the well while His disciples went into the city to buy food ~~and~~ ^{THEN THEY} would return to Him.

As He rested there, thirsty and tired from the long morning's walk, a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water, and Jesus said to her..."Give me a drink." And, with this simple request hundreds of years of hatred and ~~ancient hatred~~ ^{SUSPICION!} came tumbling down. And then began an encounter with Jesus that would change the woman's life...and the lives of many Samaritans.

Jesus was always direct and to-the-point. He was thirsty. The woman had a water jug with which to draw ~~the~~ water. ~~In one short sentence, Jesus broke through centuries of hatred and suspicion.~~ Small wonder the woman was astounded. A Jewish man had actually spoken to her! And, she was willing to give him water, but first she ~~would~~ ^{WANTED TO ASK HIM SOME} ^{QUESTIONS,}

First, she asked him why he , a Jew, would even speak to her, let alone ask for a drink. He had no bowl or vessel to drink from, so he would have to drink from hers, and this was unthinkable because Jews would not even touch a Samaritan eating or drinking utensil let alone eat or drink from one. ~~She asked him why he would even speak to her, let alone ask for a drink.~~
 Jesus answered her with a puzzling reply. He said, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is who is saying to you 'GIVE me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." Very puzzled, she ~~asked him~~ asked him "What ^{is} this 'living water'?" ... "and where do you get it?" ... "are you greater than our ancestor, Jacob who gave us this well?" Jesus answers ~~her~~ ^{her} saying, "Everyone who drinks from this well will ~~thirst~~ thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Now, the woman wants the water that Jesus has to give. ~~She is asking for something that makes no sense.~~ If she has this kind of water she won't have to come to the well ever again... a long trek on a ~~very~~ ^{DUSTY} hot day.

Now begins the part of the conversation that causes the woman to ponder. | Jesus tells her to go and call her husband to come to the well. | She tells him she has no husband. | Jesus tells her that she speaks the truth... in fact she has had five husbands, and the man she is living with now is not her husband. Now the woman sees Jesus as a prophet of some kind and decides to change the conversation to theological matters by questioning the Jews contention that the place to worship is in Jerusalem, ~~and~~ ^{and} her Samaritan forefathers

worshipped with nationalistic rites and ceremonies in their temple on Mount Gerizim. Jesus answers her saying, "Woman, believe me the hour is coming when neither ^{now} this mountain, nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and ^{now} is when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The woman is enthralled. She answers, "Know the Messiah is coming. ^(It is) He who is called The Christ. When he comes He will show us all things." Jesus answers, "I who speak to you am He." About this time the disciples return from the village with food, and the woman rushes off into the city telling all who would listen to come and see a man who told her all that she ever was and did, and they followed her out of the city and came to him.

The Bible says that many Samaritans from that city believed in Him because of the woman's testimony. They asked Him to stay with them. He and his ^{DISCIPLES} ~~disciples~~ stayed for two days, and many more believed because of His word. He didn't say that He was on a trip and had to get to Gallilee for a meeting, or was on a busy schedule and maybe they could "do lunch" sometime. No! He stayed with them filling them with the "living water" He had promised them.

"The Samaritan Experience"... something that many millions of people are searching for today, but do not know where or how to find it. They yearn for a more

meaningful life. They seek solutions to their problems by embracing strange cults and religions in their quest for personal happiness and relief from the pressures of daily living. This could describe the people of Jesus' day...the Samaritans and the Jews. But, some of them had "The Samaritan Experience". They met Jesus. They accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. They heard the Gospel...the Good News, and they believed in Spirit and in Truth...and some, like the Samaritan woman, went out and shared their new-found Gospel with others and led them to Christ.

~~A few weeks ago some 500 delegates plus hundreds of observers and visitors gathered to attend the 1989 Southern Baptist Convention in what is called "The Bi-Centennial Reflection". This was the first session of the East Ohio Annual Conference ever which he presided. It's a much larger and more diversified than the ~~1984~~ ~~1985~~ ~~1986~~ ~~1987~~ ~~1988~~ ~~1989~~ ~~1990~~ ~~1991~~ ~~1992~~ ~~1993~~ ~~1994~~ ~~1995~~ ~~1996~~ ~~1997~~ ~~1998~~ ~~1999~~ ~~2000~~ ~~2001~~ ~~2002~~ ~~2003~~ ~~2004~~ ~~2005~~ ~~2006~~ ~~2007~~ ~~2008~~ ~~2009~~ ~~2010~~ ~~2011~~ ~~2012~~ ~~2013~~ ~~2014~~ ~~2015~~ ~~2016~~ ~~2017~~ ~~2018~~ ~~2019~~ ~~2020~~ ~~2021~~ ~~2022~~ ~~2023~~ ~~2024~~ ~~2025~~ ~~2026~~ ~~2027~~ ~~2028~~ ~~2029~~ ~~2030~~ ~~2031~~ ~~2032~~ ~~2033~~ ~~2034~~ ~~2035~~ ~~2036~~ ~~2037~~ ~~2038~~ ~~2039~~ ~~2040~~ ~~2041~~ ~~2042~~ ~~2043~~ ~~2044~~ ~~2045~~ ~~2046~~ ~~2047~~ ~~2048~~ ~~2049~~ ~~2050~~ ~~2051~~ ~~2052~~ ~~2053~~ ~~2054~~ ~~2055~~ ~~2056~~ ~~2057~~ ~~2058~~ ~~2059~~ ~~2060~~ ~~2061~~ ~~2062~~ ~~2063~~ ~~2064~~ ~~2065~~ ~~2066~~ ~~2067~~ ~~2068~~ ~~2069~~ ~~2070~~ ~~2071~~ ~~2072~~ ~~2073~~ ~~2074~~ ~~2075~~ ~~2076~~ ~~2077~~ ~~2078~~ ~~2079~~ ~~2080~~ ~~2081~~ ~~2082~~ ~~2083~~ ~~2084~~ ~~2085~~ ~~2086~~ ~~2087~~ ~~2088~~ 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~~THE MESSAGE~~

~~Consultation" would be held on the... The message that came from him was sharp and compelling. The source of his power and the clarity of his message were inescapably linked to the singularity of his focus on the Gospel.~~

Wesley was no thoughtless Bible thumper. He was -profoundly unapologetic,ally rooted in the massive themes of the Scriptures. That was the central source of his prodigious power. His authority and captivating clarity can be traced time and time again back to his intoxication with two Biblical themes... REPENTANCE:

I am a sinner. God please forgive me and GRACE: I love you and accept you without condition or reservation says our God....

-God's GRACE-

BUT WHERE IS THAT MESSAGE IN THE UMC TODAY?

~~that these two... are... from our... of the Gospel? God forgive us"~~

~~He continued... of the Church... Father... and... will... of God... I... that do power which was and is theirs will also be... The... hear... intendg~~

~~Comm... the East Ohio Conference in particular he said "First, I believe... are... to... we must develop a... structure in the East Ohio Conference through which to express God's~~

Today, the church that John Wesley founded - the United Methodist Church world-wide loses an average of 245 members a day. This has been going on for over 20 ~~years~~ ^{YEARS.} When you factor in leap years that comes to a total of 1,789,480 souls ~~it~~ ^{IS} any wonder ~~that~~ ^{THAT} laity and clergy ~~are~~ ^{ALIKE} - at the local church level at least are concerned. With little substantial, meaningful, appropriate help from the national beauracrazy of their denominations they are working in their local churches to help spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ. More and more it is laypeople who are witnessing to their individual and collective experiences of the energizing, spirit-filling of the Good News...the saving grace of, the Gospel.

The dynamic church growth and renewal efforts of the church today have been, and are largely led by lay people. The 1960s and 70s saw a dramitic impact of the "Lay Witness Mission" movement. Thousands of people came to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the saving grace of the Gospel message. All ~~done~~ ^{DONE} through the evangelistic crusades of lay people. ~~...~~

In the 1980s, and into the 90s we have seen the "Emmaus Walk" program bring more thousands of lay people and ministers to a closer walk with ~~...~~ Jesus and a clearer understanding of the Gospel. As a result of this effort an international fellowship has ~~developed~~ ^{DEVELOPED} among those who have shared the "Emmaus Walk" experience.

Perhaps the most revolutionary renewal of our time

(4)

has been The Promise Keepers". Hundreds of thousands of men have renewed ^(THEIR FAITH) or found new faith in Jesus Christ and have become better husbands, fathers and church members due to their association with The Promise Keepers."

I would submit that these three evangelical efforts led by lay people has had far greater impact on local church renewal than any of the ~~unweildly~~ unweildly cumbersome efforts of the National Council of Churches and the main line churches ^(BUREAUCRACY) combined.

All across America ^(IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS) in the main line churches there is a growing disinterest among the laity and clergy alike in what's happening ^(IN) the national and international governing bodies of their denominations.'

^(YOUNG) adults especially are not greatly concerned about what goes on in the world-wide spectrum of their churches. Their interest is with their families in their local congregations.

In our own United Methodist Church the ^(NATIONAL) governing bodies still hold on to the notion of ~~the~~ itineracy where pastors are moved around to different charges periodically. This was fine during the frontier days and it worked very well - then. But, we have changed.

^(CONGREGATION'S) churches that have good, caring, faith-emphasizing, ^{GOSPEL PREAMING} pastors want them to stay with them. Church growth experts tell us that ~~in~~ long-time pastoral assignments are much more effective and meaningful. Today the ^(LIMITED METHODIST) average length of a pastor's stay in ~~the~~ church is less than three years.

Now, what I am about to say, and have said, should in ~~no~~ way be interpreted as referring to our pastor Dr. Kline. He and I share the same views. What I am about to say comes from over 32 years as your delegate to the East Ohio Annual Conference. It comes from serving on Conference commissions, committees, task forces and study groups. It comes from almost 20 years as a special consultant to the Communications Director's office in the Conference...

There are many dedicated, caring Christians working in your East Ohio Conference office. Led by our brand new Bishop Keaton they are as concerned as they can be about the ~~United~~ ^(FUTURE OFFICE) Methodist Church. Our new ~~Bishop~~ ^(BISHOP KEATON) shares the belief that going back to the basics...preaching the unadulterated gospel is the only way to spread the word...and then the numbers will begin to take care of themselves. ^{NEBRASKA CONF.}

LESBIAN MARRIAGE

I agree with our Bishop and the hard-working people at the Conference office. They receive the concerned ~~comments~~ ^{COMMENTS} and pleas from the local churches and are trying their very best to respond to them. They have positioned themselves to provide hands-on experience and assistance to the twelve districts and 860 some churches in the Conference.

I submit that when the system of theological ^(REFLECTING) thought abroad today quits ~~reflecting~~ on what might be believed about Jesus Christ and proclaims Jesus as a personal Savior and Living Lord, then the ~~numbers~~ ^{NUMBERS} will begin to take care of themselves. It is interesting to note here that Trinity is one of the few churches in the East Ohio Conference that has shown a net gain in membership every year for the past six years.

I submit that when the boards, agencies, task forces, committees, commissions and study groups of the United

METHODIST CHURCH become more interested

(11) ~~scribble~~

in presenting Jesus Christ as one to be encountered
...to be experienced in a deep, personal way instead
of pushing a political agenda that does not reflect
the numbers
will take care of themselves.

Jesus said that if He would be lifted up, He would
draw people unto Himself. This is an age-old ~~thought~~ **FACT**
that made the church grow in the first place. Across
the ages, and today is still the way to effective
church growth.

We must center ourselves upon the affirmation that
Jesus is Lord. We must share His saving Grace...

with others within and without the church
Scriptures. This will go a long way toward bringing
a renewal and revitalization to the Methodist Church
and other denominations as well... and the

BEGIN TO
numbers will take care of themselves. THE WORLD NEEDS TO HEAR THE
CLEAR, UNGARBLIED WORD OF GOD'S GRACE - AND GOD INTENDS THAT WE BE THE MESSENGERS.

I submit that if we go out and share our "Samaritan
Experience"...share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with

others and invite them to join with us in OUR

Samaritan Experience," the numbers will take care of
themselves here at Trinity. We can't expect our

pastor to do it all. We can't expect our Evangelism
Committee to do it. We can't expect the Womens

Society, or the Mens" Club. We must all join in the
invitation. When we all work together to share the

Gospel with others, the numbers here at Trinity will continue to
take care of themselves. It's happening this very

day in churches all over the country. It is happening
here AS we HAVE AND SHARE "THE SAMARITAN

Experience" - ~~Amend!~~ Let us pray.

ADMINISTRATIVE
BOARDS

continue to

FATHER, Grant that we may feel
 the excitement that the
 Samaritan women felt when
she met Jesus. Give us the
FEVER, the will and the
boldness ~~to~~ to go out
 of this Sanctuary today
 and share the Gospel -
 the good news that you
 are our Lord and Saviour -
 with others - one on one,
 in a group, or to the
 masses as our talents
 provide us. In Jesus name
 we pray. Amen

Let us invite them to join us in THIS Gospel