

The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isaiah 40:3

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A WOMAN WITH AN HONEST HEART

Third Radio Sermon by Rev. W. Edmund Smith.

Text: John 4th chapter, verses 4 and 29: "And he must needs go through Samaria."

"Come see a man that told men all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

Why must Jesus go through Samaria? That was out of his usual line of travel. Well, he did not go that way to look upon some beautiful landscape so attractive to the tourist. He did not go through Samaria to see some great masterpiece of man's handiwork; He did not go through Samaria to visit some old acquaintance and to exchange greetings. Any of these reasons has made some of us change our course. But Jesus went through Samaria on this occasion, because He knew that in Samaria there was a poor woman enslaved by sin and longing for a better life.

So we see that Jesus and his disciples have deviated from their usual course, and are on the outskirts of Samaria, at Jacob's well. The disciples have gone into the town to buy meat and Jesus is sitting on the well.

Critics have contended that the Gospel of John was written for the exclusive purpose of bolstering up the doctrine of Jesus' absolute deity. I cannot believe this to be true, for in this Gospel we have a wonderful picture of his real humanity. There He sits weary, worn, hungry, thirsty, travel-stained. Truly he is a man of great limitations by this picture. He refused to exercise His divine power to exempt Himself from any of the hardships that were common to his disciples.

While sitting there, Jesus sees a woman coming from the town with a water-jug upon her shoulder, and perhaps, singing a popular song of the street. Why do I say this? Because often those that sing the liveliest songs and whistle the merriest tunes do so to cover their heartache and soul hunger. They do it to hide even from themselves the longing of their hearts.

Jesus sees in this woman a trophy for His kingdom; He must win her. But look at the handicaps that are against Him: First, she is a woman and, He is a man; He must make His approach with caution and discretion.

Again, she is a woman of Samaria and He is a Jew. He knows full well the bitter prejudice that is in her heart against the Jews, because of their manifest air of superiority. Again, she is a sinful woman—almost an outcast, and He is the sinless Christ; What a gulf between her sinfulness and his holiness! But Jesus will overcome all these.

The woman filled her jug and was about to leave the well when Jesus courteously asked her for a drink. With evident bitterness of spirit, she turned on Him and replied, "How is it that Thou being a Jew asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria; don't you know that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?" Yes, Jesus knew that very well. She might have continued and said "Don't you remember when you Jews were building the Temple at Jerusa-

lem, how we Samaritans wanted to have part in that enterprise, but you Jews spurned us. You told us to go and build our own temple, and worship our own god, and that we had no part in Israel!"

Jesus knew all this history, but He replied sweetly, "If Thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that asketh the drink, Thou wouldst have asked of Him He would have given thee living water", She, confusing the physical with the spiritual, said, "Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep, from whence hast Thou this living water?"

Then Jesus replied, "whosoever shall drink of this water shall thirst again, but, whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life."

The woman is interested and cries, "Give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw". She wanted to get rid of the hard labor of carrying water every day.

Then Jesus said "Go call thy husband", and the woman ready to try a bluff, replied, "I have no husband". Now it is that Jesus makes his awful thrust: He strikes right at the covered sin of that woman's life "Well dost thou say that thou hast no husband, for thou hast had five husbands, and the man you are living with now is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly."

Now right here we see the honest reaction of this woman to the truth. If she had been utterly debased, she would have resented the accusation of Jesus and turned on Him in anger and scorn. She would probably have said, "Who are you to make such accusation against one you have never seen before? Who made you a judge in Israel? I am going speedily back to my people and I will inform them of what a Jew said to me, and I would advise you to make tracks for all the town will be stirred against you."

But instead of resenting the accusation she meekly bowed her head as much as to say, "I see that God has been telling you things about me: My sin has found me out. I perceive that Thou art a prophet. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain but ye say that at Jerusalem men ought to worship." But Jesus refuses to be drawn into a controversy as to the relative merits of Samaria or Jerusalem as places of worship but he begins and unfolds to that poor woman the spirituality of His kingdom. He tells her that Samaria has no significance, and that even Jerusalem with all its glorious history and its wonderful temple has lost its prestige in this new spiritual kingdom that he has come to establish in the hearts and lives of men, by which they become the temples of the Holy Ghost—a habitation of God through the Spirit, so in this new dispensation of grace holy men and women can make a Holy Land anywhere. Wherever honest and sincere souls call upon God there God will meet them. Forms and ceremonies are no longer recognized, for "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, for such the Father seeketh to worship Him".

The woman is captivated by the message. She cried "I know that when Messiah is come that He will restore all things." And here it is that Jesus makes to this poor sinful woman the wonderful disclosure of His Messiahship—a revelation that he had not as yet made even to his disciples: "I that speak unto thee am He".

Now if that woman had been doubting and cynical, we might expect her to have met such a declaration with scorn and contempt. "You the Messiah! You so meanly clad and so lowly and weak in your person! You who had to ask me for a drink of water! You with all the marks of poverty and human weakness upon you calling yourself the Messiah! O no! The Messiah we look for will come clad in regal splendor; He will come in bright array to lead a conquering line; He will have might and power and beauty and will subdue all his enemies before him; this is the kind of a Messiah we are looking for."

But instead, she saw in Jesus, who indeed looked like a root out of a dry ground, the answer to the deepest longing of her soul. In her heart there was something that responded, "My Lord and my God. She quite forgot her waterpot, and hastened back to the town with the good news. That is just what people do when they become enthused with the spiritual; they forget the temporal for the time being. Into the ears of her towns-people she pours her happy message. "I have found the Messiah! I have found the Messiah! Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

Out comes the whole town to greet Jesus. They invite Him in. Homes are thrown wide open to Him, and, one and all show Him the greatest of hospitality. He who often had nowhere to lay His head, has now more rooms than He can occupy. Think, Jerusalem, so orthodox and so religious, had turned their backs on Christ, and had driven Him out. There was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him; but heretical and heterodox Samaria opened her doors to receive him. He abode with them two days. Would we not desire to know all that Jesus preached to those Samaritans during those two days; many believed on Him. The foundation was then laid for that wonderful revival that took place in Samaria after Pentecost, under the ministry of Philip, and all because of the testimony of that woman who cried, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

The saddest thing about sin is not that, it gains a place in the hearts and lives, of men and women, but that so often when the truth comes, or the messengers that proclaim the truth, they are not welcomed. When the mirror that reveals sin is held before the eyes, often the guilty want to break the mirror and the one that holds it before them. They refuse to see and acknowledge their sin. This was the trouble with the Pharisees who spurned Jesus because he uncovered their sin.

But in medical science, diagnosis is most important. When we place ourselves in the hands of a doctor we say, "Doctor I want to know the

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Rev. H. C. Sanders, Jan. 32