

Scandalous Faith

Christians are supposed to reflect Jesus Christ in our daily lives. That requires having a lot of faith. Sometimes scandalous faith.

Introduction

Today we want to look at the interaction Jesus had with a couple of people during his ministry here on Earth. Reading about Jesus' life and ministry in the gospels is always rewarding and there are many instances of interaction with people and parables of how we should interact with people. It would take a year of Sundays to discuss all of Jesus' recorded interactions with people.

We are going to look at two interactions today and they just happen to be two of our favorites. The circumstances of both interactions were quite scandalous for that day.

A Woman Healed

The first interaction we are looking at includes a miracle and it is found in 3 of the 4 gospels. We will be reading about it in Luke 8 43-48.

Luke 8:43-48

(43) And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. (44) She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. (45) "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." (46) But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." (47) Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. (48) Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

When we read the context of this, we see Jesus is on his way to heal someone else. A local Roman official has called for Jesus to come and heal his daughter who is about to die. On the way there this woman presses in, hoping for relief from her condition and delays Jesus for a short bit of time. Now that we know what is going on, let's examine the woman's situation.

We see this woman has been bleeding for 12 years continuously. What a terrible thing to be dealing with. This posed many difficulties for the woman, the medical condition, the religious ramifications, and the emotional condition.

We read that no one had been able to heal her of this constant discharge of blood. We can surmise from this that she had gone to see doctors and other healers. No one had been able to help. I'm sure she tried everything. She needed to be healed so she could live her religious life.

The religious ramifications of this problem were real also. We read in Leviticus 15 that she was ceremonially unclean. Not only that, but anything she touched, laid in, or sat upon was also unclean and anyone who touched her, her clothes, anything she sat upon or laid upon was ceremonially unclean. She would have to isolate herself and not put anyone else in a position where they would come in contact



with her. She had not been able to have contact with anyone for 12 years! This leads to her emotional state.

This had to be embarrassing for her. She must have been very depressed. She could not have felt well at all. We can easily assume that she was desperate. So desperate she would risk pressing in through a crowd to get to Jesus. I'm sure she had heard of the miracles that Jesus performed. This is what she needed. She wasn't going to let anything come between her and being healed. She did the unthinkable at the time. She broke the religious law. She pressed in past the others as Jesus passed by, reached out and touched the edge of his cloak, and was immediately healed!

She didn't call out to Jesus. She didn't ask or even beg for a miracle. She was sure that all she needed to do was just touch the hem of his clothing and she would be healed, and she was! But we're not done. We still haven't seen Jesus' interaction with her.

As soon as she was healed, I'm sure her thoughts were to turn and run, or at least stand still and let the crowd pass by. She was probably already thinking about the 7 days she needed to go before she could go to the temple and offer the 2 doves as a sacrifice for her cleansing. But Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched me? I felt power leave me?" We believe Jesus knew full well who had touched him and why. He knew everything. He was God incarnate walking the earth and spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God. Nonetheless, he asked who touched him.

Peter, stating the obvious, said rather astonishingly, "Master, the crowd is pushing and pressing against you, and you ask who touched me?" Jesus wanted the woman to come out from hiding. He wanted to make a point. He wanted to teach everyone from that point on, including you and me, a very important thing.

Once the woman came and fell at Jesus' feet and shared with him her story, Jesus looked upon her with compassion and told her that her faith had made her well and to go in peace. He didn't consider himself ceremonially unclean. He didn't even consider it. He didn't scold her for pressing past all these people making them all unclean and unable to fulfill their religious duties for the remainder of the day. He ignored all of that, showed compassion, and filled her heart with peace.

We must always show compassion. It is always appropriate. We also see here that it is our faith in who Jesus is and what he can do that enables us to receive the miracles he has for us. Our faith, sometimes scandalous faith, is necessary to receive and do all that God has for us.

The Woman at The Well

The other interaction we want to look at today is with the Samaritan woman at the well. Let's read the passage and then discuss it. Let's read John 4:4-24

John 4:4-24

(4) Now he had to go through Samaria. (5) So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. (6) Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. (7) When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (8) (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) (9) 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.) (10) 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." (11) "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? (12) Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" (13) Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, (14) but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (15) The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." (16) He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." (17) "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. (18) 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." (19) "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. (20) Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." (21) "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. (22) You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. (23) Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. (24) God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

There are a couple of things we need to point out so we can fully understand this passage. The Samaritans were the result of the Northern Kingdom of the Jews being overrun and occupied hundreds of years earlier. In this case, half the Jews were carried off to captivity and the conquerors sent people there to settle intermarrying with the Jews. The southern kingdom, Judah, was also shortly thereafter conquered, and all were taken off to captivity but were later allowed to leave captivity and return to rebuild Jerusalem keeping their family and Jewish lines pure, unlike their Samaritan cousins. Because of this, and a disagreement over where to worship, the two groups did not speak. It was unlawful for Jews to associate with Samaritans. This leads us to the first two observations of this passage of scripture.

Jesus was walking through Samaria to get to Galilee because it was the most direct path. He was going to have to deal with Samaritans. When he sat at Jacob's well a woman approached, and he asked her to draw him some water. There are two things wrong with this according to the law at the time. First, she was a Samaritan and he should not have had any dealings with her. Second, she was a woman that he was not related to and he should not have been alone with her or communicating with her. Yet here Jesus is, sitting and talking with this Samaritan woman sharing the good news of the Kingdom of God. In other words, showing compassion and love for her as a father does for a child.

We noted earlier that Jesus knows everything. There is nothing we can hide from him, even if we try. This woman is no different. We learn here that we can't hang onto our sins and expect to receive the living water Jesus provides. When the woman asks for the living water, Jesus tells her to go and get her husband. He knows she is not married now. He knows her situation. She's been married multiple times before and is now living with a man she is not married to. Jesus then takes this moment to teach her something that we can learn from as well.



Life is not about religious duty. God does not desire religious duty from us. He wants us to worship Him. He does not care if it is here or there, He cares that it is truly from our hearts. He cares that we have confessed all our sins and are not holding anything back. We as believers can learn from both the woman and from Jesus here.

We learn from the woman that there is nothing we have done and no situation that we are in that we cannot come to Jesus just as we are with contrite hearts and expect to receive compassion and forgiveness. Again, here we see scandalous faith on the part of the Samaritan woman.

Conclusion

We learn from Jesus, that there are no barriers that should prevent us from ministering to others. We should look at everyone as one of God's children and treat them with compassion and the love of the Lord, regardless of societal expectations. We learn that there is no one place to go and worship God. He does not live in a house built by man or reside in a church building. We can and should worship Him wherever we find ourselves. We see scandalous faith, ministry, and teaching in Jesus as he ministers to both of these women.

Friends, take note of Jesus in these passages and how he interacts with these people. Above all, he shows compassion, love, and forgiveness to any and all he encounters. We should do the same. We are called to have scandalous faith.

