

March 27, 2022
The Fourth Sunday in Lent
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Witnesses to Christ – The Foreigner”

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. Well as you know this Lent season, we are exploring what it might have looked like, or what it might look like if we could call witnesses from the past to come forward for a trial, a courtroom setting. Jesus on trial; He claimed to be the Messiah on trial. And in the first week our first witness was John the Baptist who proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Last week we had the insider, a pharisee, someone on the inside and what they were thinking about Jesus. Nicodemus and the other members of the Sanhedrin knew that He must be from God because He did things that only God could do. Yet they didn't seem to be able to quite put it together.

This week we go from the insider to the outsider, a foreigner. And I imagine in the courtroom, it would begin something like this. Thank you for coming and being a witness in our trial today. My understanding is that you are a single, Samaritan woman. Is that correct? Yeah. And do you understand the purpose of this trial? Oh, absolutely, yes! It's about the validity of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. Correct. So, getting right to the point, what is your opinion of Jesus of Nazareth? Well, that's a pretty complicated question. Because you have to understand, I had that initial opinion of Him, but then then I had a second opinion of Him, and then the third, I have a third opinion. And all opinions were actual, they were factual, they were real. They were transpiring in a time that things were just moving very quickly for me, but all based on facts. So all three opinions put together are the whole, or the whole truth.

Oh, well that's not quite what I was expecting. It's very interesting why don't we just begin with opinion #1. Great! Thank you! I was so hoping that that's exactly what you would say. Why? Well, because it's a little embarrassing, but I think that when I give my answer, well we're in court and I have to speak the truth, right? I have a feeling you're going

to dismiss me as a witness. What? I don't understand. What are you talking about? Well, let me explain. First of all, I'm a Samaritan and Samaritans are terribly looked down on by the Jewish people. Second, I'm a woman and so in a court of law according to the Jews, my testimony means nothing. But third, I'm more than both a Samaritan and a woman. This isn't in Israel. This this isn't a Jewish court, what does being a Samaritan woman have to do with it; why would they hate you? OK, let me let me just fill you in a little bit on the history here. They see us as half breeds. It goes back to the time of Isaiah. The northern Kingdom called Israel was overrun by the Assyrian army led by Sennacherib and when we were overrun the outcome for the people of Israel was one of three things. They were killed or they were taken off into captivity or there was a small portion that were allowed to stay and inhabit the land. But they brought in people primarily from conquered countries throughout Mesopotamia to come and resettle the land and so my ancestors intermingled with them and ended up, you know, marrying some of them. And so, I'm half Jew, I'm half Mesopotamian.

But you know that Jewish part of our ancestry really kind of took hold. We held on to that Jewish heritage. And so, we have our own Pentateuch, our own five books, first five books of the Bible. And we have our own views of things and of course this is what the Jews, you know they hate. Because well, we're half breeds. And they see that what we believe in as being heretical. And so, we're not even allowed to worship in the court of Israel, in Jerusalem. So, we built our own temple here in Samaria on Mount Gerizim right over there. And you know, that's where Father Abraham settled. That's where Father Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. We have our own history, and we are living where Father Abraham lived, and this is our history. You should understand that.

What do you mean I should understand that? Well, you're a learned man. You've been to school; you passed the bar. I'm sure that you were taught U.S. history when you were in the university, were you not? Well, yes. About George Washington, Lincoln, and all of those guys? Well, yes of course. Why? Well, isn't there now a new history being taught based on what's called this critical race theory? Yeah, that's just a bunch of garbage! Uh-huh, and so you look at those people, the way that the Jews

look at us. That ours is an alternative history, it means nothing. And so that is why there is tension. It was tension that got so bad in the 1st century that Rome actually came to bring peace. And they did it by arresting anybody that was causing the tension, and crucifying them. I see! OK, well that explains why as a Samaritan and a woman, that people might look down on you. But what's the "and more" that you were talking about?

Finally, we get to it. Samaritan=bad, woman=bad, I've been married five times, divorced five times, the guy I was living with, well it wasn't my husband. And so, the Jewish people would look at me and say fornication, stone her and to be honest the people in my own town; they held on to the Pentateuch. They looked at me and said divorced five times, living with a guy who is not her husband, we probably should stone her. And you know, I figured you'd probably want to let me go after that. Well, yes, I think that's exactly what we are going to do. That was not in my notes.

Yeah, I figured. That's the normal reaction I'm used to it. I'm scum. But you know see that's the difference between you and everybody else, and Jesus. What do you mean? Well ostracized by the Jews, ostracized by my own people, and yet when I went to that well that day and Jesus is sitting there at the well, He looked at me and said, 'give me a drink.' I was like, 'you've got to be kidding me!' A Jewish man asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. That's absurd! And that's exactly what I said to Him. He looked at me, and He said, "if you knew the gift of God who it is that is saying to you give me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

OK, so let me get this straight. The difference between Jesus, the Jews, and me is that He actually talked to you and asked you for a drink of water? He was willing, if I'm understanding correctly, He was willing to become unclean by drinking water from a bucket that you as Samaritan used is that correct? Yeah, thank you, thank you so very much; you just made me feel so much better! I made you feel better, what are you talking about? You made the same mistake. I made a mistake, what mistake did I make? Jesus wasn't asking me. He was telling me to get Him a drink. He said, 'give me a drink.' I assumed He was asking,

and so I said you, 'would you ask me?' And He came back with the command, 'give me a drink.' But then He took it a step further and turned the tables on me and said that if I knew who He was, I'd be the one who would be doing the asking. I'd be asking Him for living water. Oh, that is intriguing. I don't think we're going to release you at that point in time.

What happened next? Well, I argued with Him. I pointed out He didn't have any bucket to draw the water with and that the wells deep. And I pointed out that he's being a bit of a snob, my first opinion. And thinking that He was better than Jacob, our father our heritage. And I was pointing out the well is here in Samaria, this is where Father Abraham was. This is where Jacob was. And I'm pointing this out to Him and then I thought I'd call Him on it, so where do you get this living water? And He said, taking me back to what I had just said, 'If you drink water from this well you're going to be thirsty again. But if you drink the water that I can give you the living water you'll never thirst in fact it will become in you a well gushing up and producing eternal life.' So I called Him on it. Give me the water! You know, put up or shut up. Give me the water! I don't want to thirst anymore! I don't want to have to come here anymore! I'm coming here in the middle of the day because of who I am. The other women, they come in the morning, or they come in the evening when it's cool. I come at this time, so I don't have to deal with them. Because they all look down on me, they think less of me and all that. And so, I called on Him to give me that water.

Did He? No. That's what changed my opinion from Him being a snobbish Jew to something else. Really, what? Well, when I asked him for it, He just looked at me and He said, 'go call your husband to come here. Bring him here. And I looked at Him and I said I had no husband. He looked at me and He said, 'well finally you're talking the truth. You've been divorced five times, Now the guy you're shacking up with is not your husband. Oh, my that's pretty brutal. Yep; ostracized by my own people. When I went to that well, I was not expecting this well. How did you respond to it? Well, I'm no dummy. I knew this man had to be a man of God. He was a teacher, or prophet. How else would He know? God must have revealed it to Him. But the nerve! He was rude, He didn't care about my feelings it appeared. So I still argued with Him I pointed out

that Jacob worshipped here, that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son here; and that he and the Jews feels that we have to worship and Jerusalem, they won't let us worship there. And He just came right back and said, "You know the hours is coming when you're not going to worship either on Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem, on Zion or in the temple. No, the time is going to come when people worship in spirit and in truth. And that's what God seeks, people who worship in spirit and in truth, beyond the location." That struck a chord. It brought back to me what my parents had taught me from the scriptures that when the Messiah came, He would come for Jew, for Samaritan, for Gentile. He'd come for all. And so I said to Him, perceiving that He was a teacher or a prophet; 'I know that Messiah is coming, He who is called Christ. He will tell us all things.'

And that's when my opinion changed again. Why? What happened? His response, 'I who speak to you am He.' What? You asked, He had just told me about the Christ, and said He was the Christ. And? I ran into town. I told the people in town, 'I know you don't like me; I know you don't think much of me, there is man out at Jacobs well. He confronted me with the truth. I'm divorced five times, shacking up with a guy, and I shouldn't be doing it. He knew it. And He claims to be the Messiah. Come and see.' Did they? Yeah, the whole town. And do you know what? He acted like this He stayed with us with for two whole days; even told His disciples that the Samaritans that were there, that they were like a field that was white with harvest. He was there for us, cared for us. He showed love for us, compassion for us. And at the end of the two days, a fair number of the people in town said, and I quote: "We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

You know, if we were in that courtroom and we had just heard that testimony; I have a funny feeling that the attorney would have simply looked at the judge and said, "Your honor I have no more questions." Because here is a person that you would not expect to be a witness. Someone who, to this day, we would look down on and yet maybe, just maybe, that's what may makes her a profoundly good witness. In our Savior's Name, Amen.