

## **Now we Believe, for we have heard Him Ourselves**

John 4:24-30, 39-42, Mission Sunday

October 5, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....Many of you know this week I attended the funeral of my grandmother. At the funeral, my wife and I noticed at the top of the bulletin the three dates of her birth, her baptism, and her death. The bulletin said she entered God's Kingdom of Power, February 18th, 1915, God's Kingdom of Grace, February 21st of the same year, and God's Kingdom of Glory, September 24th, 2008. God's Kingdom of Power are all things that fall under the power of God, namely all visible and invisible creatures. When we are born into this world, we enter God's Kingdom of Power. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." We are born in sin. God's Kingdom of Grace is the True but Invisible Church, made up of all true believers. You and I were born into God's Kingdom of Grace as soon as the Holy Spirit by the Word gave birth to us. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Thus when my grandmother was baptized, being only three days old, she entered into God's Kingdom of Grace. God's grace through baptism was upon her, and not His wrath. The Lord in His mercy also kept and preserved her faith until her soul departed her body and she died. She entered God's Kingdom of Glory immediately upon death. Because Jesus paid for her sins upon the cross, she likewise trusted in her Savior. Upon death her Savior took her to His own bosom in heaven. So it is when each child of God dies. On the cross of Calvary Jesus said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Today our focus is primarily God's Kingdom of Grace on earth, the True Invisible Church. On earth God's Kingdom of Grace grows and spreads by the teaching, speaking, and preaching of the Gospel Word, and also the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In our lesson today we see that the Samaritan woman was instrumental in bringing the Word of God to those who lived in her city. She was the tool, the instrument, the carrier of Jesus' Words to others. But we also see that the Samaritans believed not because of her words, but they believed when they heard the Words of Jesus, which is the Word of God. Since today is Mission Sunday let us remember three things: 1) God gives us the opportunities to speak His Word to others, and we should seize that moment! 2) It is not our job to convert or turn the hearts of men, but the Holy Ghost through the Word converts. 3) For our own selves we must always remember the words of the Samaritans to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

I. Sinners must first see their lost condition. We begin first with Jesus and the Samaritan woman who met at a well of water. Jesus, being thirsty, had asked her to draw water from the well for Him. She was surprised that Jesus being a Jew, even spoke to her. For the Jews considered the Samaritans to be a half-breed, an exceptionally low class of people. But Jesus was not like other men who focus on outward appearance. Jesus looks upon the heart for repentance, for faith. Jesus said to her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." Jesus had what this woman needed, namely the forgiveness of sins, a well of water which springs up to everlasting life.

The problem was this woman was not spiritually thirsty. She was both spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and also secure in her sin. In order that she see her sinful ways, Jesus told her to get her husband. She said, "I have no husband" and Jesus said, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Married and divorced five times, and now living with her lover, she was living a sinful life. With these words Jesus rebuked her sinful life. As children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we too at times must admonish and rebuke the sins of others for their own good. For how can anyone know Christ to be their Savior if they do not first realize they are dead in trespasses and sins? Who can long to be forgiven except first they see their great need for forgiveness?

Long ago my childhood pastor taught me, there is no greater love for a person, than a love for their soul. And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own soul? If we were the unbeliever, if we were in their shoes, living a rebellious life contrary to God's commands, wouldn't we someone to have the courage to tell us that our sins will only lead to our destruction? Wouldn't we want a Christian to say to us, "The way you are living is contrary to God's commandments and merits only His wrath. If you continue in your sins you will die in your sins and be damned. Please listen to me! You should sincerely in your heart repent of these sins and look to Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of the world! The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who shed His blood on the cross to pay for your sins and mine! Though we cannot save ourselves from sin by good works, the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!"

Truly that is the message we want to give to every sinner! But they cannot receive this message except first they see their sin. For example, if we have a friend who is using drugs, we do not go to him and say, "Rejoice with me, Jesus forgives you of all your sins and God takes everyone to heaven." The drug user will simply reply, "Great! Wonderful! Then I'm going to continue

living this way because I like it, and God knows we're all sinners anyways and we can't help ourselves." Such a person is yet unconverted. If we truly love their soul and care for them as God does, we must first speak to them God's law, so they wake up and realize they are dead in trespasses and sins. For if they die in their present state of unbelief, living in the pleasures of sin, they will suffer damnation eternally, and they will never make it to heaven.

II. The love of Christ, a love which surpasses all understanding. Believers do not want that for anyone, not even our worst enemy. When Jesus was nailed to the cross by His enemies, He said with a love that surpasses all understanding, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And God the Father in His heart did forgive the sins of all men, for Jesus had made all sins His own. Our sins of anger and wrath, our sins of lust and adultery, our sins of greed, pride, and selfishness, even our sins against our own precious children and loved ones, they were all there upon the cross, in the body of Jesus. Jesus made these sins, our sins His own, so that He could suffer for them, so that we would never have to. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all", and yet at the same time Jesus willingly made all our sins His own. Jesus did not die, Jesus did not yield His soul into death, until each and every last sin, of each and every last sinner was paid for in full. This is why the Bible says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Truly our sins our debts against God are all forgiven, so that our holy and righteous God can say to a world of sinners, "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace."

When we feel sorry for our sins in our heart, when we wish we could undo all the evil we have done, when we long to be forgiven, this is when we thirst for the living waters of Christ. What Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, Jesus also says to us, "Whosoever drinketh 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 into everlasting life." To drink the living waters of Christ, is to drink of Jesus Himself by faith. The living waters He gives is the forgiveness of sins. To drink of Him is to believe and to believe in Him is to receive life everlasting. Life everlasting does not begin in heaven, it begins here on earth when we enter God's Kingdom of Grace by faith. For Christ Jesus said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Jesus is that well of water which springs up into life everlasting.

When the Samaritan woman realized that this man Jesus standing in front of her was indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world, faith had begun in her heart. She was born again by the Word of the Spirit. She began to worship God in spirit and in truth. She entered into God's

Kingdom of Grace, by faith in Christ Jesus. She didn't keep that knowledge to herself, but she shared Christ with friends and neighbors. "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman." They then came out to meet Jesus, asking Him to stay. "He abode there two days." He gave them life, by giving them the Gospel Word. Many more heard His word and believed. We here today believe in like manner. Whether we were taught Christ by our parents, or a friend, or a neighbor, it was God's Word which brought faith to our heart. We too can now say with the Samaritans, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Oh how God is glorified by these words! For it is never the words of the Christian.....it is never the words of the pastor or minister that converts, it is God, the Holy Ghost Himself who through the Word does the converting! It is comforting to know that we don't have to convince anyone, we need only speak the Word so the Holy Ghost can do His work. God works through the means of His Word when we witness and share Christ with others. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

Beloved of the Lord, our Lord is not willing that any perish, but that all men should come to repentance. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. His name is the only name that saves. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is our duty then as Christians, to share Christ, to speak God's Word in love toward one another. It is not that we must go door to door as the Jehovah's Witnesses do. Heaven is not earned by our works but by the grace of God Christ Jesus. Nor dare we go about as self-righteous Pharisees telling everybody else that they are sinners while we are good. We are not good, but we are evil, and only by God's grace are we saved. Nevertheless let us simply recognize that God will give us the time, those precious opportunities in life when we are to open our mouth and speak the life-giving words of Jesus. "Ye are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid..... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." For the sake of your neighbor, for the sake of your loved ones, speak God's Word in love. The Holy Spirit will produce the fruit. Amen.

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