

Sermon John 4 5 26 3rd S in Lent

Sermon: 3rd Sunday in Lent

Text: John 4: 5-26 – The Samaritan Woman

Theme: Jesus breaks barriers to offer His salvation

Goal: To share the Gospel with anyone that God brings on our way.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Racial discrimination is a theme well known not only in South Africa but all around the world. Many of the conflicts and wars that are ongoing in several countries have their roots in the differences among people. There are not only racial discrimination, but social, religious, gender, age and other kinds of discriminations as well.

My wife and I experienced how big this problem is during the post-election violence in Kenya, in 2008. It was not just a political issue, but it was a tribal matter too. And more than one thousand people were killed.

The Gospel for this Sunday shows us that Jesus doesn't have any kind of discrimination feeling. He broke several discrimination barriers as He spoke to a Samaritan woman. His intention is not to judge people, but to save people from their sins and from eternal death. And as He did in our text, He does it nowadays through us, His disciples.

I - Jesus broke the barriers between Jews and Samaritans (Racial discrimination)

To understand a little better what is behind that story, let me share with you a part of the devotion of 20th March from the booklet MEDITATIONS, that all of you have. (I hope you have read it during this week.) *“The reason for the hostility between these two groups (Jews and Samaritans) goes all the way back to the days of the kings of Judah and Israel. King Solomon had died. His Kingdom split into the Southern Kingdom, whose capital was Jerusalem, and the Northern Kingdom, whose capital was located in Samaria. About two hundred years later, the Assyrians captured and*

destroyed Samaria. Most of the survivors were exiled to distant lands and new settlers were brought to Samaria. The Jews still living in the area intermarried with the new unbelieving transplants. - In Jesus' day, Samaria was the area between Judea and Galilee. Most Jews people in Jesus' time did the best to avoid walking through Samaria. But not Jesus. He had an appointment with one of its people. He would meet a woman there whom He would lead to faith.” (p. 24).

In spite of the differences and fights, Jesus asked the Samaritan for a sip of water. She was surprise about it! *“A Jew would become ceremonially unclean if he used a drinking vessel handled by a Samaritan, since the Jews held that all Samaritans were 'unclean'.”* (NIV notes). - The end of that story tells us that Jesus accepted the invitation of the people from that village to stay with them. And He stayed for two days there, teaching them about the Kingdom of God. And many believed in Him!

Jesus broke the barriers between Jews and Samaritans (Racial discrimination) for the sake of the Gospel. Salvation is not a matter of a specific race, but salvation is offered to all peoples!

II - Jesus broke the barrier between man and woman (Gender discrimination)

Jesus broke the barrier between man and woman (Gender discrimination) as well. When the disciples came back from buying some food, they “were surprised to find Him talking with a woman” (v. 27).

In some African cultures, the exclusion of women from several areas of life is a harsh reality. I read about it, and I heard from a lady, that in some tribes the men have priority; after them, the cows and goats; and after them, the women!!!

Jesus always had women in His group of followers. We know the names of several of them: Mary Magdalena, Johanna, Mary and Martha... Jesus restored the woman to her position beside the man. Unfortunately many societies insist to put the women in a lower level than the men, and oppress

them. Salvation is not a matter of gender; salvation is for all!

III – Jesus broke the barrier between 'holy' and 'sinners'

The Samaritan woman was not an ordinary lady. She had a strange past. She had had five husbands, and she was living with a man that was not her husband. We don't know what had happened to her five former husbands, if they had died or if she had divorced them. But she was leading an irregular way of life; she was living in sin!

In spite of her sinful situation, Jesus didn't despise her. Jesus put His finger on her wounds and revealed her sins, calling her to repentance.

“The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10) said Jesus in the house of Zaccheus. And again He said: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32).

Jesus broke the barrier between 'holy' and 'sinners' . The Holy One came down from heaven to live with the sinners and to rescue them from their sins – from our sins! He paid for our sins on the cross to free us from the condemnation. Anyone who recognize his sins and confess them to Jesus, seeking forgiveness and help, will be accepted by Jesus, without discrimination. Jesus offers and gives a new life through His blood, which was shed on the cross for all of us.

This is the biggest barrier that Jesus broke, the barrier between the Holy One and sinners. The way to God is open again through faith in Jesus. God comes to us and allows us to go to Him.

IV – Jesus broke the religious discrimination

After the barriers of race, gender and sin had fallen down, the woman rose a question about the right place to worship God. There was a big wall between the religion of the Samaritans and that of the Jews. Jesus first pointed to the prophesy that “salvation is from the Jews”, this means: The Messiah was promised to come from the Jewish people; and than He made a

universal statement: “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. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

There is no specific place to adore God. God is not restricted to a country or to a house. We serve Him everywhere, daily, wherever we are. And we come together to worship Him as His family in the place that is more convenient for us. We don't need to travel miles and miles to worship Him. We worship Him on our pillow when we pray at night; we worship Him in this house of worship to receive His Word, His Sacrament, His blessing.
- Jesus broke the religious discrimination's barrier.

V – He reveals Himself as the Messiah

A chat that began asking for a drink ended in the revelation that Jesus was the promised Messiah, whom the woman was waiting for in her faith. “I who speak to you am He”, reveals Jesus to the woman. The woman became so excited with that revelation that she ran down to her village and told everyone about Jesus. And the story finished reporting that “because of His words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (v. 41-42).

Conclusion: John wrote in Revelation 7(:9-10): “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” This is our hope, to be with that great multitude, - and the Samaritan woman among them as well, - in spite of our background, but because of Jesus' grace that accepts without discrimination sinners who believe in Him. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle - Cape Town, 27th March 2011