

“Caring About the Lost”

June 9, 2013

Text: John 4:7-10

**Just as stars are seen best against the darkest night skies,
Jesus’ gracious love/care for sinners is best seen in His
regenerating those who are most vile/undeserving.**

In Lk 5:31, He said=> *“It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. / I have not come to call the righteous but **sinners** to repentance.”*

Spiritually “sick” sinners can be very unpleasant people=> self-centered, self-indulgent, caring only for themselves, & creating havoc/heartache for other people.

But Jesus cared enough about such people to set aside His glory in heaven, empty Himself, come to earth, and die that they might be saved.

* It’s not too surprising that Jesus saved Nicodemus, when he eventually believed in X, because even though he was a self-righteous legalist, he was morally upright, & sincere/humble enough to come to Jesus for answers.

* But it’s very surprising that X would save the woman at the well in Sychar, because she had lived such a dissolute and reprehensible life.

Besides that, she responded to X in a rude manner, when He came to her in need & asked for a drink of water. But in spite of her sinfulness, He saved her, instead of walking away from her.

And He did so because He cared about her soul.

Today's text compels us to ask this of ourselves=> Do I care about people the way Jesus did, & does my concern for the unsaved cause me to share the gospel w/ them?

Keying off of our text, we can break this question down into

3 more specific questions=>

- * Do I really care about other people?
- * Do I care as much about others, as I care about myself?
- * Do I care enough about others to give them the truth?

*** Do I really care about other people?**

It's good to hone our evangelism skills, but genuine concern for others is even more important & more effective, as we seek to save the lost.

If we truly believe there's a real-heaven/real-hell where people we love/care-about will really spend eternity, we will do all we can to bring them to Jesus X for salvation.

Our evangelism techniques w/ them may not be the greatest, but that doesn't matter as much as our love for them.

I'm not talking about the gospel message we give.

That has to be accurate, & it has to be clear.

I'm talking about the method/technique by which we give it.

The most powerful/persuasive evangelistic tool we have, is their confidence that we are genuinely/urgently concerned about them, & that our telling them about Jesus is driven by that concern.

I am fully convinced that what ultimately caused my father-in-law to believe in X 2 weeks before he died, was the tears of love he saw in his daughter's eyes as she talked to him about his soul, & about X.

If it comes down to it, we'll simply plead w/ people to believe, because that's what selfless love would do.

Meanwhile, good technique is no substitute for deeply caring that others desperately need X, for their salvation from sin.

Jesus cared enough about the woman at the well to engage her in conversation, even though He had never met her before this.

[John 4:7]=> *“There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’”*

As we discover later in the text, X knew all about this woman, because He knows what is in the heart of every person.

He knew about the sinful life she had lived.

He knew she had been married to 5 different men, and was now living with a man to whom she wasn't even married.

She didn't yet know that Jesus knew all this—but He did.

Jesus also knew why she'd come to this particular well when there were other springs closer to where she lived in Sychar;

And why she came in the heat of the day.

Women normally made their daily trip to the wells in the morning before it got hot, or in the cool of the evening.

And most of them looked forward to friendly conversation
w/ other women while they were at the well.

But this woman had come at noon, when the others
wouldn't be there.

And she'd prob. come to this well, at this time, to avoid
contact/interaction with other women.

They undoubtedly scorned her, & may well have suspected
her of setting her eyes on their own husbands.

**It's easy to harden one's heart against a person like this—to
not care about her, but rather to shun her and shut her
out.**

In a small town like Sychar, she would inevitably become the
object of gossip/ridicule/nicknames/unkind-jokes.

Respectable men knew that even being seen talking w/ her,
could destroy their reputations.

It would be unthinkable for a rabbi (like Jesus) to have
anything to do w/ her at all.

Most rabbis would have looked down their noses at
her.

**But Jesus cared about this woman, He cared about her sin,
He cared about her eternal soul, & He cared that she
was constantly being held up to ridicule/mockery
because of her sin.**

And it was out of this concern for her personally, that Jesus had
engaged her in conversation.

He didn't wait for the woman to speak to Him first.

He also set Himself to overcoming all her misgivings about His motives in doing so.

After 5 husbands & at least 6 relationships, she prob.

looked at Him as she looked at every man—either w/
distrust & disrespect, wondering what exactly He
wanted from her;

Or w/ ulterior motives, wondering what she could get
out of Him.

Jesus met her on the common ground of His/her humanness.

He asked her for a drink of water, demonstrating His
neediness as He sat there exhausted/thirsty, and
appealing to her for sympathy/help, offering to put
Himself under obligation to her.

Here was the Creator of all water, requesting assistance in
obtaining a little of it for Himself from one of His
more sinful creatures.

Then He tactfully/wisely used that, to open up a discussion w/ her
about water, that would ultimately lead into talk of spiritual
water.

And at no point was Jesus
disingenuous/patronizing/insincere.

Nor was the interest He expressed in what they talked about,
pretended, artificial, or intended only to manipulate
& control the conversation.

There was absolutely nothing phony about Jesus.

He spoke out of genuine concern for this-woman/her-plight
and her-soul.

People like the woman at the well, will almost never come to us,
looking for answers for the spiritual issues in their lives that
have resulted from their sin.

Seeking some clever means of drawing them into a spiritual
discussion by which to “sell” them the gospel w/o
sincerely relating-to/caring-about them personally on
a human level, is little more than slick religious
trickery.

That’s what people do when they want credit for sharing
the gospel w/ people, but don’t really care enough
about those people’s souls, to take the time to get into
their lives.

That’s the opposite of what Jesus did here, or at any other
time.

X was the master-evangelist from whom we should all learn.

He was not reserved/distant, and even when He was tired, He did
not keep to Himself, but reached out to this woman.

He did that because He cared about her soul so much.

He was a person whose every word/look communicated=>

“I would rather be here talking w/ you right now
than anywhere else in the world.”

People like that don't have to concern themselves about seeming cold to others, because they are winsome and warm-hearted, through/though.

They don't look on everyone/everything outside their own little worlds w disdain as a nuisance to be avoided.

There was nothing stiff/cold about Jesus at all.

We never read in the Gospels about Him laughing.

But everything we read about Him shows us His caring concern for others.

Everywhere He went, He opened up His heart/life to anyone who sincerely wanted a relationship w/ Him. He still does.

He constantly exuded the attitude expressed in His own words=> *"Come unto me, all who are weary and are heavy laden"* (Mt 11:28).

People loved Jesus, because they felt from the start that He loved them, & that's why they opened themselves up to believing in Him.

Even children felt free to sit on His lap, & there they felt perfectly safe.

X's example teaches us to draw close to the sinner.

It teaches us to draw him to ourselves, & to wrap him up w/ the warmth of our love, learning to truly care-about him in the process, as a fellow human being, who is lost.

But in addition, Jesus' example teaches us to aggressively pursue the ultimate goal, for which we are to draw close to people.

X hadn't come to that well simply to engage in chitchat.

He hadn't even come there just to make a new friend.

He wanted to move the conversation in the direction of this woman's spiritual need/neediness, and His own ability/willingness to lift her out of her plight.

So when He saw a way to enter into such a discussion through the topic of water, He immediately pursued it.

X knew that souls are forever perishing every day, and He determined to prevent that from happening this time in her case.

We don't like to think about it, but the reality is that, when we get to know people, and say nothing to introduce the gospel into our conversations w/ them, our actions imply that we're alright with their being headed for hell.

That when they're actually cast into hell someday, screaming for their lives, that will be said, but acceptable/forgettable.

I think it would be life-changing, if God caused us to see just one of them actually being thrown into that pit at the moment of his/her death—driving the point home to our minds that this is for real, & it's for keeps.

I doubt we would ever be able to forget that sound, or that sight.

I doubt we would ever again value people's souls lightly. **Jesus' discussion w/ the woman at the well would have been more difficult if His disciples had been present, but fortunately, they were gone.**

[Verse 8]=> *“For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.”*

Jesus had sent the disciples into the city to buy a supply of groceries.

The lit. word is “foods”—they were grocery shopping, and fortunately, that was going to take some time.

This is why Jesus was sitting all alone, when the woman arrived at the well.

He knew that His disciples' lack of compassion/concern for women like this would have resulted in an interruption/distraction.

As it was, verse 27 describes their actual reaction (when they got back to the well) like this=>

“They were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why do You speak with her?’”

They didn't say, it but that's clearly what they were thinking.

Otherwise, John wouldn't have mentioned it.

Since he was one of them, he knew what he himself was thinking.

And those are the attitudes which we too must replace w/ genuine/loving concern for people, if we're to become more effective in bringing them to trust/faith in X.

So we must ask ourselves, do I care about other people's souls, the way Jesus did/does?

The context of the next verse heightens this question even further:

*** Do I care as much about others, as I care about myself?**

[Verse 9]=> *“Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him [X], ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)”*

Jesus, being thirsty/exhausted after having walked/taught all morning long, had simply asked for a drink of water.

The woman seemed to use this as an occasion to gloat over the fact that the tables had been turned, in her favor for once.

Normally, Jews despised Samaritans for the reasons I mentioned last time, but now she had the advantage because this Jew appeared tired/weak/thirsty.

I.e., He appeared needy & she had what He needed.

In Jn 8, the Pharisees in the Temple felt so irate towards Jesus, they said the meanest, most spiteful thing to Him they could think of

at the time=> *“Do we not say rightly that You are a*

Samaritan and have a demon?” (8:48).

The general feeling of contempt which Jews felt towards Samaritans was reflected in a statement, found in the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus (50:25-27)=>

“[They are] a stupid people living at Shechem.”

Jews despised Samaritan women even more than Samaritan men, & the Mishnah said=> “The daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle” (i.e., they are always ceremonially unclean).

Even Jesus’ disciples seem to have despised Samaritans.

When one Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus after discovering that He was on His way to Jerusalem, James/John asked X=> “*Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven & consume them?*” (Lk 9:54).

The woman at the well knew Jesus was a Jew, either because of His speech, or because of His Jewish appearance—possibly His sidelocks, or the blue tassels Jewish men attached at their waists, in obedience to the Law (Num 15:38).

In her mind, this Jewish man must despise her (a Samaritan woman), & would never take anything from her hand (including water) unless He desperately needed it.

So this was when she—the usual object of people’s disdain—had an opportunity to disdain someone else for a change.

She was going to rub it in, & she was going to savor this moment and enjoy it.

It is situations like this that cause a person to ask=> Do I care as much about others as I care about myself?

My “self” feels indignant that I’m being subjected to humiliation like this for simply trying to help someone, who in turn is mistreating me.

It leaves me feeling outraged—not benevolent.

I feel like saying, “If you want to face God’s wrath in hell forever, go ahead. I no longer care.”

“Condescension” is not a popular word, because we often think of it as 1 person acting as if he were superior to another, when in reality, they are equally valuable souls before God. But when one Person truly is superior to others (as Jesus, the God-man, is superior to all of mankind) His condescending to treat others as equals is true humility on His part.

And that is exactly how Jesus was treating this Samaritan woman, even appealing to her for water, which He had created Himself, preparing to put Himself in her debt.

His wonderful condescension causes us to bless His name, wanting to kiss/anoint His feet.

He, about whom Psa 104:28 says, He opens His hand & fills all His creatures w/ good, asked humbly for water, and was put down.

When He asked it of one of the worst violators of His Law, she used her momentary advantage over Him in His apparent weakness, to mock/rebuff Him.

This woman's response to Jesus in His suffering, was rude at best.

And yet He did not rebuke her, or even ask the obvious question—"Do you realize to whom you're talking?"

And He certainly did not give up on her, and walk away.

He intended to have her heart, so He tenaciously went right on in His plan to bring her face-to-face w/ her sin, and then to graciously offer her forgiveness and cleansing from it.

X did not condemn her, for her ungenerous reply.

Instead He continued to pursue her poor/impoverished soul in order to save it.

That is condescension in its most gracious possible sense.

It's the condescension that cares more about others, than it cares about oneself.

It's the condescension that ultimately drove X to the cross, for you/me.

*** Do I care enough about others to give them the truth?**

Again we discover that Jesus did=>

[Verse 10]=> "*Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the*

gift of God, and who it is who says to you, “Give Me a drink,” you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’”

Jesus is not saying, “If you’d have asked for it, I’d have given it to you, but now you’ve blown it, so I won’t.

The problem which was ruining the whole life of this poor woman at the well was her spiritual ignorance.

She didn’t know the truth.

It was keeping her from coming to know the gift of God— which is Jesus X Himself.

For God so loved the world that He gave it a gift—His only begotten Son, so all who believe in Him would have life.

Spiritual knowledge, by contrast, is knowing God, & that is the essence of eternal life.

John 17:3=> *“This is eternal life, that they may **know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

If the woman at the well had known that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He had come to earth in order to give people eternal life, she would have asked Him for it, and He would have given her *“living water.”*

“Living water” has 2 meanings in Scripture=>

* It can mean fresh water, constantly running from a water source.

E.g. an artesian well, or a mountain stream.

At first, this woman, who had come to draw water from a well, prob. thought that's what X meant=> an endless flow of good, delicious, refreshing, satisfying H₂O.

* But, secondly, it can also have a figurative meaning in Scripture, and soon the woman would realize that was what Jesus was actually talking about.

Being a Samaritan, this woman would only have believed in the 1st 5 books of the OT, & there's not much said in those books about "living water."

But she would discover the meaning of "*living water*" experientially, when she placed her faith in Jesus.

And what joy that was going to bring into her life!

We, on the other hand, find a rich tapestry of meaning connected to this word throughout the whole Bible.

* e.g. when Jesus returns to establish God's Kingdom on earth, "*living water*" will flow from Jerusalem, half of it running westward toward the Mediterranean, and half of it eastward towards the Dead Sea

(Zech 14:8).

* It will be a life-giving stream, causing every living thing to flourish wherever it flows (Ezek 47:9).

* This water will be crystal clear, and its point of origin will be the throne of God, & of the Lamb (Rev 22:1).

As a metaphor, “*living water*” is a picture of all the soul-satisfying blessings of eternal life, that have become ours through a personal knowledge of Jesus X.

These include God’s mercy/grace, spiritual transformation, forgiveness/cleansing from sin, justification, reconciliation w/ God, the sanctification of the Spirit, & the peace & joy of an abundant life lived each day with our hands firmly holding onto Jesus’ hand.

It also includes both the imputed/personal righteousness received from X by those who hunger/thirst for righteousness (Mt 5:6).

Jesus loved the soul of this woman at the well so much, that in spite of all her sin, & even her rudeness to Him personally, He was telling her, “Just ask for it, & I’ll still give you the living water..”

What great condescension we find in this great God-man who says in Rom 10=> “*All the day long I have stretched out My hands [as an invitation] to a disobedient and obstinate people*” (10:21).

When we look at this woman, we are tempted to think=> “I wouldn’t have given that wretch a thing.”

But Jesus always says the opposite, to even the worst of sinners=>

“*Ask, & it will be given to you; seek, & you will find; knock, & it will be opened to you*” (Mt 7:7).

Ultimately, the question is not, “Did Jesus care enough about others to tell them the truth?”

It's obvious that He did, even when the person was wretched, undeserving, and would treat Him as rudely as this woman did.

He did it out of love, & in a humble, carefully thought-out manner, calculated to bring her to faith in Him, so she would drink in w/ joy the spiritual living water of eternal life He offered her.

But ultimately, the question for us is still=> Do *I* care enough about others to give them the truth?

Thousands of people around us do not know the Gift of God—Jesus X—who can deliver them from their sin.

If they are among God's elect, we know they will somehow be brought to Him by faith.

But that doesn't relieve us personally of the need to love others enough to give them the truth about Jesus.

Nor does it mean that, if they never believe, we are relieved of guilt, simply because they are not among the elect.

God has poured out His love w/i our hearts, so that we might love them on Jesus' behalf (Rom 5:5), as He loves them, and as we have a duty to love them.

Is there someone sitting near you, or living near you, who doesn't know X, and whom you haven't told, about Him?

If you know there is truly a real heaven to be had, and a real hell to be avoided, how can you claim to love that person, and not give him/her the gospel?

Loving your neighbor as yourself is God's command, & that is the best possible expression of such love.

Let me impose on you, to ask 1 final question=>

Is it possible you haven't told others about X because you don't really know/believe-in Him (or even in heaven/hell) yourself?

As soon as the woman at the well believed in X, she ran excitedly into town and told everyone else about it.

If so, I would invite you to pray to Him now, even if you've done so before, asking Him to save your soul.

Now hear me while I pray
Take all my sin away.
Oh let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

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June 9, 2013

Text: John 4:7-10

Today’s text compels us to ask this of ourselves...

Lk 5:31

*** Do I really care about other people?**

1. It is good to hone our evangelism skills, but genuine [16 concern] for others is even more important and more effective.
2. Jesus cared enough about the woman at the well to engage her in conversation, even though He had never [8 met] her.
[John 4:7]
3. Jesus cared about this woman; it was out of this [16 concern] for her personally that He had engaged her in conversation.
4. Christ was the master evangelist from whom we should learn; He was not reserved or distant, and even though He was tired, He did not keep to Himself but reached [8 out] to this woman.

Mt 11:28

5. In addition, Jesus’ example teaches us to aggressively pursue the ultimate [10 goal] for which we are to draw close to people.
6. Jesus’ discussion with the woman at the well would have been more difficult if His [20 disciples] had been present.

[Verse 8]

Jn 4:27

*** Do I care as much about others as I care about myself?**

[Verse 9]

7. Jesus, being thirsty and exhausted, had simply asked for a drink of water; the woman seemed to use this as an occasion to [12 gloat].

Jn 8:48; Ecclesiasticus 50:25-27; Lk 9:54; Num 15:38

8. It is situations like this that cause a person to ask, Do I [10 care] as much about others as I care about myself?

Psa 104:28

9. This woman’s response to Jesus in His suffering was rude at best; and yet He did not [14 rebuke] her.

*** Do I care enough about others to give them the truth?**

[Verse 10]

10. Spiritual knowledge is knowing God, and that is the essence of [16 eternal] life.

Jn 17:3

11. This woman would discover the meaning of “*living water*” experientially, when she placed her [12 faith] in Jesus.

Zech 14:8; Ezek 47:9; Rev 22:1

12. “*Living water*” is a picture of all the soul-satisfying blessings of eternal life that have become ours through a personal knowledge of [12 Jesus].

Rom 10:21; Mt 7:7

13. Ultimately, the question for us is, Do [3 I] care enough about others to give them the truth?

Rom 5:5

14. How can you claim to love a person and not give him/her the gospel? Loving your neighbor as yourself is God’s command, and that is the [10 best] possible expression of such love.