



FOLLOW ME

Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John

Session 3
At the Well:
Our Deepest Thirst

In Session Three, Jesus' public ministry was to encourage those he encountered to follow Him, and John discloses how the public responded to Him. In the Gospel of John 2:23-25, when Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover, men were impressed with the signs and wonders of Jesus, but Jesus did not trust Himself to them as He knew all "men." Dr. Sri claimed that Jesus understood that "man" was not interpreting His miracles as "signs" of Who He is and what His mission is; to manifest His glory so we can accept Him as our Savior. When Jesus related to men, He realized that He was only understood from the natural or human perspective.

John demonstrates the dual level of interaction with Jesus in two different episodes in his Gospel, and we are invited to compare and contrast those conversations. In John 3:1-21, John introduces Nicodemus as a "man" of the Pharisees, a leader of Jews (probably a member of the Sanhedrin) who sought Jesus at "night," which infers spiritual darkness. Jesus, who is the light of the world, came to dispel the darkness, per John's prologue in Chapter 1 (vv. 4-5, 9). Nicodemus was impressed with Jesus as a Godly teacher, because of His signs and wonders. When Jesus tried to elevate him to a supernatural level of comprehension, the arrogance of Nicodemus became evident. Jesus affirmed that the beginning of faith in God is Baptism (being born of water and the Spirit in 3:5), so the Holy Spirit can open our spiritual eyes to see the truth of God. Nicodemus persisted in questioning Jesus how man can become born again (thinking of the natural realm). Jesus confronted Nicodemus with the reality that Nicodemus was "THE teacher" of the Jews; yet he did not even comprehend the beginning point of salvation. Nicodemus lacked humility, and tried to dominate the interaction. Dr. Sri asked how we come to Jesus in prayer. Do we try to tell Him exactly what we need as we set the agenda? Or do we humbly come before Him, telling Him our struggles and asking Him to intervene as He knows is best?

Later in the Gospel of John Nicodemus is converted (he stands up to the Sanhedrin during Jesus' trial, and he helps to bury Jesus); our God is a God of multiple opportunities in bringing us to Him.

The second episode occurs with Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-30). When Jesus left Judea to go down to Galilee, He did not "need" geographically to go through Samaria. He "needed" to seek the Samaritan people who had fallen away from God, as He still loved and pursued them. When Jesus and his disciples arrived in Samaria, he stopped and rested by Jacob's well at noon, (contrasting the meeting with Nicodemus at night). Dr. Sri alluded to the romantic setting of the well in the Old Testament, (Jacob met Rachel and Moses met Zipporah at wells, leading to marriage). Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. She was astounded that He, a Jew, asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. (*The context is that Kings David and Solomon had united the 12 tribes of Israel, but later the ten Samaritan tribes broke away as they were disgruntled by the burden of taxes. These northern tribes than inter-married with pagan nations and worshipped their gods. The Assyrians in overcoming the ten Northern Tribes of Israel, dispersed them to the four winds, and replaced them with five other pagan nations, closer to the time of Jesus. These Samaritans had come to the supernatural realization of one true God, but the Biblical order was for all to worship Yahweh at the Jerusalem Temple. That was not going to happen, so they built a renegade temple at Mount Gerizim.*)

In John 4:10, Jesus spoke His supernatural language to the woman, and claimed if she only knew Who she was talking to, she would have asked Him for His living water. The Holy Spirit could become a fountain within her, leaping up to provide eternal life, satisfying her deepest need for love. The Greek word for living water could be translated as flowing, running or living. Jesus has hooked her interest, and honest dialogue between the two ensued. When she still thought on the natural level about running water, Jesus used "water" to take her to the level of her supernatural thirst for love, as He tells her she had five husbands, and was presently living with another man (The significance of 5 is the five pagan nations that inter-married with the Samaritans, who worshipped Baal, translated as lord or husband). Jesus referenced Hosea 2:14-23, where it was prophesied that God would come back and woo and allure Samaria to again seek Him, who was supposed to have been the bride of Yahweh, but instead was seduced by cult deities. As Samaria began to again seek the One God, the hope was for a prophet. Jesus potently enabled the woman to relinquish that initial desire, and instead the Godly love of Jesus was recognized and set aflame within her. What did she do? Jesus so changed her, that she went and evangelized her own people and effectively helped Jesus lead her village back to Yahweh.



Nicodemus Coming to Christ
Henry Ossawa Tanner



FOLLOW ME

Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John

Session 4
“Believe in Me”:
Trust and Surrender

When we affirm to others that we believe in Jesus, what do we mean? In Session 4, John compares the belief in “Jesus as God,” versus belief in “Jesus as a man” capable of “signs and wonders.”

In John 4:46-54, Jesus revisited Cana, where an official of Herod had walked 15 miles from Capernaum to seek Jesus, beseeching Him to return to Capernaum with him to heal his dying son. As Dr. Sri commented, the royal official’s trust in Jesus had to be great to depart from his son on his deathbed. The official was desperate for Jesus’ help, and he accepted in faith when Jesus told him to return home as his son was going to live. The official’s servants met him on his walk back home, and informed him that his son had shown improvement at the same time Jesus had said his son would live. Jesus did not *exactly* meet the royal official’s request; He works in ways we often do not expect, and the father showed incredible faith in acting first before Jesus helped him.

In John 5:1-15, on the Sabbath, Jesus approached a paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, who was among those awaiting healing in one of the five porticoes (symbolizing the five books of the Torah). This “man” who had been disabled for 38 years responded to Jesus, Who asked, “Do you want to be healed?” The man offered excuses as to why he had been unable to access the healing water over such an extensive period of time. Jesus told him to pick up his mat and walk, and the man did so. Dr. Sri referred to the Israelites that had spent the initial two of the 40 years preparing for the trip to the Promised Land. For the remaining 38 years in the desert, they did not trust God as they bitterly complained and feared the foreign armies. The paralytic was like those first generation Jews (cf. Deut 2:14). As a consequence of their lack of trust in God, the first generation died and the next generation entered the Promised Land.



Healing the Paralytic
Anthony van Dyck

When the paralytic was asked if he wished to be healed, what superficially seems to be a puzzling inquiry, shows Jesus’ insight into the nature of man. All of us have spiritual paralysis of some type; our conscience may be tweaked some, but are we truly ready to relinquish that addiction, anger, or other sin? God is willing to help us, but do we truly want it? St. Augustine prayed “Lord, give me chastity, but not yet”, as he realized he would have to change his moral life. God also may choose to work on areas we are not even aware of. The paralytic mentioned human aspects of the problem of having no way to access the

healing waters, but he could not fully trust Jesus. After he was healed, he did not thank Jesus, and he later was the cause of the turning point in the Gospel of John, as he told the Jews that Jesus was the “man” Who had healed him on the Sabbath. When Jesus was confronted by the Jews about “working” on the Sabbath, He responded with “My Father is working still; and I am working” (Jn 5:17). Even though God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, from another perspective He ALWAYS holds all in existence, thus sustaining creation. In the past the Jews responded to Jesus with a mixture of reactions; this time they clearly reacted in hostility, wanting His death, as He said He was equal to God.

In John 6, Jesus tested His apostles Philip and Andrew, who had been with Him earlier at the wedding feast at Cana. After preaching from a hill top to a large crowd who had not yet entrusted their belief into Jesus, (but were there to see the signs and wonders), Jesus asked the two apostles where they should buy bread for all the multitudes to eat. Both simply responded from the natural perspective, and Andrew remarked to Jesus, that he saw a boy with five loaves and two fish; like that would do a lot of good for a crowd this size. Jesus wants to make up for all our deficiencies, just as He provided an abundance of food for the crowd of 5,000. Saint Paul notes that the Lord said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). If we radically depend upon Jesus in all we lack, great and amazing things will happen because of our trust in God.

This miracle happened during the second of three Passovers recorded in John’s Gospel. It is the prefiguring of the Last Supper, as Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed the bread to the multitudes. Dr. Sri commented how impressed the crowd was with Jesus’ magnificent signs and wonders; but now Jesus teaches what would send his public approval rating plummeting... Jesus preaches the Great Bread of Life Discourse. Jesus makes it very clear that He is not speaking metaphorically, when He astounds all His disciples and the Jews by claiming all who wish to secure eternal life must eat His flesh and drink His blood so that those who feed on Him will have eternal life through Him (Jn 6:56-58). At this the Jews “murmured” at Him, just as the Israelites in the desert murmured against God as they became disgruntled with the manna (Num 11:4-6); and these were the Jews who died before reaching the Promised Land. Dr. Sri said the Greek word for “eat” in verse 54 is not the usual phagete, but trogo, which translates into chew or gnaw. Jesus then asked the twelve if they also were going to leave Him; Peter, who did not understand the mystery of the Eucharist, accepted it because He trusted Jesus. How do we handle the Church teachings we don’t understand; do we ask God for help or do we reject them?