

Futility in the Presence of Christ

By
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“ . . . from whence then hast thou that living water?” (John 4:11)

[Editor’s note: This is typical of the sermon notes that Rev. Robinson often used in the pulpit. Some thoughts are written out in complete sentences. Others are phrases from which he spoke extemporaneously.]

Sychar, a city of Samaria. Thirty-one miles north of Jerusalem. Five miles within the southeast border of Samaria.

Bounded by Mt. Ebal on the north and Mt. Gerizim on the south.

Jesus in one of his most memorable journeys to Galilee passed through Samaria on this occasion.

Contrary to his regular travel route.

John indicates in verse four that Jesus needed to go through Samaria as if this was not his usual custom. This statement reveals a purpose and a plan. No Jews went through Samaria.

Strong feeling existed between the two nationalities.

Samaria boasted a colorful history.

It had been the capital city of Israel, the northern kingdom of ten tribes.

Ahab’s ivory palace was there.

Jezebel, that powerful pagan queen and wife of Ahab, set up a stronghold of idolatry in Samaria.

At a waterhole near Samaria, the soldiers had washed the blood-stained chariot of Ahab after he died in a ferocious battle.

Elisha had his headquarters there.

Jesus and the woman of Sychar.

All the world is a stage, but occasionally we have an all-star cast before us.

That is the case here.

Jesus and a woman of ill repute.

Jesus: Give me to drink.

Woman: How is it you being a Jew ask me?

Jesus: If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that sayeth to thee, give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Woman: Thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep. How will you get this water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well. He drank of it. His children drank of it. His cattle drank of it. They are all dead.

When Jesus offered the living bread to the Jews, they said Moses gave our fathers bread from Heaven. You are but a son of Joseph. Can you do better? Jesus replied, "Your fathers did eat and are dead. Eat this and you will never die. I am that bread that came down from Heaven."

Futility

This woman had become used to barriers in her life. She had lived a life of futility and disappointment. Five times she had tried to make a home. Five times she had failed. The barriers had been too many. The disappointments had come too often.

A series of experiences develop a certain philosophy of life.

She had lost any hope of bucking the current and salvaging anything from her wasted life. It can't be done. There is no hope.

When we look at the situation of the world, of the nation, of the state, of our own lives, we are tempted to say, “The well is deep and we have nothing with which to draw.”

My niece, a doctor, is considering entering the field of psychiatry, a growing field. Our frustrated generation is turning to counselors, psychoanalysts, mental therapy. These have a place and offer some help, but the only real help comes from Christ.

[Editor’s note: Here he makes reference to three other people in the Bible. No notes are given so we are not sure how he tied these people and their experiences into the story of the woman at the well. We can assume that he was continuing the theme of futility and disappointment in life and how Jesus changed their lives to ones of hope and faith.]

1. The woman who had been sick 18 years and had spent all.
2. The man in the tombs (society had failed him).
3. Jairus.

Your experiences in life make you bitter or sweet.

As you grow old you may become set in your ways.

What you are is a result of what you believe. What you are, your outlook on life, is a result of how you respond to a long series of life’s experiences.

1. What makes a man grow cynical? Somebody disappointed him.
2. Some young people go wrong and give up because somebody they trusted let them down.
3. Futility disappears when Jesus comes. Christ broke the tradition of a thousand years at the well with the woman. He can change your life now!