

JOHN 4 : 39-42
COMFORT FOR THE HEART, FROM THE HEART

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

What is today's Mission Festival all about? 1) Is it about learning geography—the locations on the world map where our little church body is working? To a degree. 2) Is about understanding other cultures and languages? Somewhat. 3) Is it about money needed to help people less blessed than we are? To an extent. ----- None of these are the real point of Mission Festival. Mission Festival is about comfort. "Comfort!" The Apostle Paul spoke that same way when he wrote to the congregation in Corinth: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Mission work is comfort-work—comfort for hearts.

Comfort is what we see in our text for today. Jesus and his disciples were traveling on foot through the region of Samaria. Although Jews and Samaritans were relatives, the Jews considered the Samaritans "off limits." The bloodlines met in their common ancestor Jacob, but the Samaritan bloodline was mixed with other nations. In addition, the Samaritans did worship the Lord of the Old Testament and knew the promise of the Messiah, the great One to come; but Samaritan worship was mixed with other practices and principles from idol worship of heathen nations. Jesus did not approve such errors in their worship and faith, but He was concerned about their standing before the Father in heaven.

As He and His disciples walked through Samaria (John 4), Jesus stopped to "rest"—He was true God and true man. He stopped at the ancient well dug by Jacob, near Sychar. His disciples went into town to get food. Jesus stayed. He had an "appointment" with a certain woman coming to the well by herself to draw water. He was concerned about her spiritual welfare and her fellow townsmen.

The woman arrived. From the conversation, we learn that she had a rather "checkered" past and was currently in an ungodly "marriage" situation. Jesus—true God and true man—knew all about it. The woman had been married five (five!) times before and was currently with a sixth. Both she and Jesus recognized he really was not her husband. Either the two were just living together, or this "marriage" was such a joke and mockery of God's will for marriage—for life!—that it was not really a marriage at all.

The woman needed help. Do you think it was an accident that Jesus met her that day at that hour to visit? He was concerned for her. Perhaps she was feeling particularly down that day; perhaps she was disgusted with herself, the way her life was going, and her relationship with this sixth man. Also she had come alone. I have read that drawing water was a social time; women would go to draw water together. Perhaps she was an outcast—which you can understand. Or perhaps she had her fill of people that day, and was "sick of" people and life. Perhaps she wanted to be alone. Jesus kindly asked her for a drink. He began a conversation with her—regardless that she was a Samaritan and a woman.

Jesus masterfully turned the conversation from water-matters to spiritual matters. The woman was not ignorant of Jehovah of the Old Testament. She wanted to be "right" with Him; she had questions about the right "place" of worship. Jesus assured her that it was not simply a matter of a right place—Samaria or Jerusalem—nor simply a matter of correct outward forms of worship. Jesus emphasized that being at one with God was a spiritual matter of faith and trust—a relationship of the heart. Also, being right with God was a matter of Truth—"I" am a sinner and unacceptable to God, but God brings mercy, compassion, and forgiveness." She even knew that the coming Messiah / Christ would straighten out the spiritual-divide between God and sinful man. Jesus told her, in her longing for peace, "I am He." (!) How her heart must have jumped and clasped onto that comfort and hope! "**He's here!** He talks with me from His heart of love and concern. He doesn't rub my face even deeper into my sin. He offers new hope and new life, fresh water! The sins of my past are washed away!" Jesus was comforting the woman—Jesus was doing mission work. He uplifted the heart of a self-admitted sinner with forgiveness and love.

How do we know she really feel such comfort and relief? She immediately turned around, as the disciples were approaching, and went back to town, leaving her water jar behind! The matter of physical water wasn't on her mind any more. The spiritual water, of refreshment and relief that Jesus had brought her took first place. She went back to town to tell the others! *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did."* The woman had proof that Jesus was not just a man, a prophet. He knew her and He knew all her sins; yet He kindly gave her new life and the refreshing water of forgiveness. With great comfort in her heart, she had to share that comfort with the other people—Mission Work! They believed her and believed in this Jesus as the Savior of the world!

Such an unlikely missionary she was. And such an extraordinary missionary she was! Words came from her heart to comfort the hearts her townspeople. As Paul wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Paul too had been on the other side of the fence—a self-righteous Pharisee, a persecutor of those clinging to the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth for forgiveness. Upon being brought to faith and comforted with the Truth, he became an eager and effective missionary to Jew and Gentile (non-Jew) alike. Who makes a better ambassador for a product than someone who himself has received help and comfort from it? It's hard to tell on TV ads, which "sellers" have actually been helped by the product they are advertising. Are they well-know stars just endorsing the product in order to get paid for the endorsement? Are they merely hired actors in the first place? Or are they speaking from the heart? To speak from the heart is the best! First-person personal contact is the best "mission" contact there is: "Christ is my Savior." First-person personal comfort is the best comfort there is. "Jesus is precious comfort for me in life and in death, and for you."

Are you interested in mission work this morning?—overseas or at home? Why? 1) Is it because it's the right thing to do? 2) Because Jesus said to do it, "Preach the Gospel to all the world"? 3) Because it's the once-a-year money drive, like everyone else's telethon or fall drive? If so, missions and concern for people who do not yet know Jesus as Savior, is likely a "ho-hum" matter for you. The cause for the ho-hum is that you ignore the comfort for yourself! If you are self-satisfied with who and what you are or have made yourself to be, then Jesus isn't much comfort, is He? But how much do you really have to be proud of? Breaking promises? bending the truth? Cold and bold lies? playing mind games with marriage and sexual matters? longing for greener grass on the other side of the fence? whining about the lot you have in life? That is a poor record! Now there's big trouble on the horizon. You need peace and comfort from Jesus against your record of sin, shortcomings, and failures. Take a deep breath; it's a good day! Jesus the Savior gives you with cool, refreshing water. Instead of sending you to the line of cast-aways, He ushers you into the family of His Father. "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"(Romans 6:23). The woman shared her precious comfort in Jesus with her townsmen. Your today are not being directed to geography, foreign cultures, or money; but to comfort in Jesus' love and forgiveness, and to sharing that same comfort with others directly yourself, and through St. Luke's, and through the CLC.

Our text says, these Samaritans themselves came out to hear Jesus. They heard His word themselves. They urged Him to stay longer. He stayed two more days. *And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."* That is the ultimate goal of mission work—to lead people to hear Jesus themselves. Hearing the message from someone else is indeed a great thing, but reading and hearing it for self from God's Word is the best. That is why the CLC is so involved in assisting and establishing Bible Institutes and Seminaries in our foreign mission fields. Indeed to have more U.S. pastors overseas would be good, but to have more homeland-people in their own fields filled with comfort in Christ, sharing that with others, is best.

The Holy Spirit who works through the Word in the heart, bringing comfort. Jesus said to His disciples, *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26). When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26).* The prophet Isaiah, "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2). And as Paul says, *That we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:4).*

Be filled with comfort in Jesus and eagerly share such comfort with others!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---