

“The Sixth Husband”

John 4:15-26

16 Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” 17 The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

19 The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

25 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”
(John 4:15-26, ESV)

A few years ago I spoke at a camp with over 700 kids and, frankly, I was intimidated. The first night I was lively and animated and tried my best to be persuasive. Afterward, the man who brought me there said, “Tommy, it was great tonight and I think you connected, but I brought you here because I wanted someone who would just ‘let loose’ and challenge these kids with the person of Jesus.” For the rest of the week that’s what I did and, by the end, many kids had come to put their trust in Him.

We began, a few weeks ago, to look again at the gospel of John. And, although all the gospels challenge us with the person of Jesus, John is the one who “lets loose.” There is no ethical teaching like the Sermon on the Mount or parables; there are just wild personal claims.

All of his claims revolve around the statement: I AM.

I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world.

I am the door.

I am the good shepherd.

I am the resurrection and the life.

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I am the vine.

Perhaps his greatest claim, in this book, is simply I AM [period]. In other words, He claimed to be God. When Moses met God in the burning bush, he said, “Tell me your name.” God replied, “I AM.”

In John 8, Jesus is dialoging with some Jewish leaders and they say, “Surely you are not greater than our father Abraham?” Jesus replied, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.”

Their reply, “You are not yet fifty and you have seen Abraham?”

Jesus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

And they picked up stones to stone him—they knew exactly what he was claiming.

In *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, he makes the case that if you really consider the person of Jesus, you have only three options. He is a lunatic, a liar, or Lord.

You see, he claimed to be God and to have the authority to forgive sins and give new life to people. If he wasn’t God and made these claims then you might look at him and say he is crazy. On the other hand, if you think that he wasn’t God, but he was simply a “good moral teacher,” then you are also in a bind because if he taught good ethics, but isn’t God, he is a liar—which means that he isn’t so good after all. The third option is “belief”—trusting that all he says is true, which makes him Lord.

Today, as we look at “the woman at the well” again, we’ll see that she is challenged with all three questions:

1. Is Jesus a lunatic?
2. Is Jesus a liar?
3. Is Jesus the Lord?

I. Is Jesus a lunatic? (15-18)

A. Background:

1. Jesus sits at the well of Jacob, when a Samaritan woman approaches—he asks for a drink. Instead of water, she gives him “lip” [she’s not “the good Samaritan”].
2. Jesus makes the claim, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says...you would have asked him...and he would’ve given you ‘living water.’”
3. The woman responds, “Are you greater than our father Jacob...?” Jesus makes the claim, “Whoever drinks this water...but whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst...a well springing up to eternal life.”

B. He’s nuts!

1. Woman: “Okay pal, give me some of this ‘living water’ so that I will not have to be thirsty or come all the way here to draw.”
2. If he is crazy, he is “crazy as a fox.” He says, “Go call your husband...”
 - a) A “King Lear moment”—the “fool” has seemed to hit upon the truth and she gives it to him...sort of.
 - b) The woman says, “I have no husband.”
 - i. The problem with trying to hide the real truth is that you can’t hide from Someone Who can see everything.

Festival in Basel, Switzerland called Fasnacht. Much like Mardi Gras except since Basel is Protestant, the partying is during Lent instead of before it. Everyone wears a mask.

Salvation Army also comes each year and places huge posters around the city that say, “Gott sieht hinter deine Maske.” God sees behind the mask.

- ii. The woman is about to realize this.

C. The Truth.

1. Jesus, “You are correct...”
 - a) He points out not only her sin, but also probably her brokenness.
 - i. She has had five husbands because either...

They’ve all died.
She has committed adultery and all of them divorced her.
They have all committed adultery against her [broken].
 - ii. Either way, she is living with a man who is not her husband...which, to say the least, wasn’t “kosher.”

2. The problem with Jesus is that while you might write Him off as a lunatic because of the claims He makes about Himself, you've still got to deal with the claims He makes about you.
 - a) If you believe, or at least feel in your gut that the claims He makes about you are true—then you feel guilty because you are, you feel broken because you are, and then His claims aren't so crazy after all. If you feel a need for forgiveness, then you have the option of trusting the One who says, "I am the bread of life that satisfies your soul hunger, the light of the world, the good shepherd..."
3. **The other option is to avoid the truth. The woman tries this, and she uses the oldest method in the book—religion. In other words, instead of using religion to find the truth about herself, she uses it to avoid the truth about herself.**

Notice how she changes the subject.

II. Is Jesus a Liar? (19-24)

- A. She gives Him the benefit of the doubt, but instead of dealing with the truth of herself, she changes the subject and asks Him the most probing question of the day.
 1. The woman says, "Our fathers say...this is the place where people ought to worship; you [a Jew] say Jerusalem is the place. [Implicit: Where do you say?]"
- B. Jesus responds.
 1. You are asking the wrong question. *The issue isn't where, but how?*
 - a) Samaritans worship what you do not know, Jews worship what we know...salvation is from the Jews.
 - i. Remember, the Samaritans only embraced the teachings of the first five books of the Bible. Even there, there is the hope of the great priest who would bring a final once-for-all sacrifice and a great prophet who would bring people back to God.
 - ii. The Jews embraced the whole teaching of the Old Testament, seeing in it the history and promise of a future redemption.
 - b) The hour is coming [they all looked forward] AND NOW IS...when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.
 - i. In other words, both the Samaritans and the Jews [and Presbyterians and Baptists, etc.] are caught up in externals, when in fact, the issue is internal.
 - ii. Spirit—our heart, mind, and soul.
 - iii. Truth—according to what the real issue is.
 - c) Anything else is simply going through the motions, but it can't change you or reconcile you to God.
 - i. Most worship in most religions is designed to gain the favor of God [by doing the right things, being at the right place, etc.].
 - ii. Christians worship, not to gain the favor of God, but because they have it.
 - We sing of His saving deeds in history in order to remind ourselves of what He has done.
 - We praise Him, not to curry favor, but because He has actually done something for us in the person of His Son.

You see, the woman tried to avoid dealing with Jesus by deferring to religion. However, if He is a prophet as she has said, which means by definition He is not a liar, she no longer has that leg to stand on. He's not a lunatic or a liar. That brings us to the next question...

III. Is Jesus Lord? (25-26)

- A. She doesn't try to change the subject again; that didn't work before.
 - 1. Instead, she tries to defer to a later point.
 - a) Woman: "I know that Messiah is coming...he will declare all things."
 - 2. In other words, she tries to end the discussion by saying, "When Messiah comes, then He will tell us all things...and then I'll deal with Him."
 - a) She probably thinks that He will defer as well. Or at the worst, begin talking about Messiah. He does, but what He says must be the most shocking words she ever heard [or anyone could ever here].
- B. Jesus: "I who speak to you am He."
 - 1. He has dispatched with the "lunatic" argument and the "liar" argument and now, standing before her claims to be Lord.
 - a) Two levels:
 - i. I am Messiah...I am He.
 - ii. Ego eimi—I Am.
- C. Our response?
 - 1. A few years ago, in Orlando, attending a supporting church, a sweet old lady came up to me and said, "You look just like a man I was praying for this morning."
 - a) Me: "Really, who is he, where does he live?"
 - b) She: He is a church planter in Seattle, WA.
 - c) Me: I who speak to you am he!
 - 2. She had two options:
 - a) Call me a lunatic and laugh or call me a liar and slap me.
 - b) Embrace me. She did. She lunged at me and hugged me and kissed me and said, "I always hoped I'd get to meet you and now I have."
 - 3. These are the options laid before us as we deal with Jesus.
 - a) We laugh at him or slap him in the face or...
 - b) We embrace him. I pray you'll choose the latter.