

"Jesus Went There"

Text: John 4:5-30,39-42

Grace, mercy and peace be yours in knowing that the perfect life and innocent death of Jesus Christ has paid the full penalty for your sins, and that you even now – at this very moment – stand holy, faultless, blameless in his sight. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, in his Sermon on the Mount Jesus introduced many of the truths he wanted to teach by saying, "**You have heard it said...**" He would then quote a popular religious or quasi-religious phrase of the day, and then proceed to shred the misconception connected with that phrase. He would then conclude by clarifying his divine truth: "**You have heard it said, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth,' but I say to you...**" and so on.

So also we take our cue from our Savior this morning by saying, "*You have heard it said, 'words can hurt,' but God says to you, 'Sometimes words have to hurt. Sometimes saying something that might hurt someone's feelings is exactly the right thing to do, exactly what is necessary.'*" That's also why Jesus said, "**I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.**"

Don't expect the world to get this. Our national mindset seems to be slouching toward the silly notion that all pain and discomfort of every kind can and should be eliminated from life. Human beings should never have to do anything they don't want to do; nothing that they find arduous or unpleasant. If I find work too difficult, others should supply both what I need *and* what I want. It takes too much work to bathe and dress myself, so I'll just go to Wal-Mart unwashed and in my pajamas. I find it uncomfortable to exercise, so I'll just wait until they come up with a pill that will allow me to eat whatever I want, as much as I want, remain sedentary, and still be physically fit and healthy.

It was therefore inevitable that this goofy, ridiculous, totally detached from reality mindset would eventually seep also into mankind's religious convictions. Modern religion, to many, now means never having to say no to any natural impulse or desire. Nor should anyone else ever tell me that what I am doing is wrong. That sort of thing is hurtful, and therefore represents the worst sin imaginable in the new "Religion of No Discomfort."

This is the growing trend we are going to examine in light of our text for this morning. That text is the Word of God found recorded in the Gospel of John, Chapter 4:

^{ESV} **John 4:5-30, 39-42** *So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ ¶ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (For his*

disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." 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." ²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him. ³⁹ ¶ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

These are God's Words. In humble reverence we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

Permit a few more examples of **"You have heard it said... but I say to you..."** You've undoubtedly heard the expression (which today passes itself off as almost divine wisdom): *"Two things you should never talk about are religion or politics."* I'm surprised at how many actually think that that expression is Biblical, or at the very least that it carries God's divine seal of approval. I'm pretty sure the author is Satan himself – at least he's the one that commissioned and promotes it. We know that God neither wrote nor supports the notion, since throughout the Bible he tells us that he wants our Christian faith to be at the center of everything that we do and say. He wants us to talk about it when we get up, when we work, when we play, and again before we go to bed. Our faith is supposed to permeate every aspect of our lives. In fact his summary of the focal point of our very existence (the Great Commission in Matthew 28) was to share our Christian faith with the world. Pretty tough to do that if we can't talk about it.

Consider one other example of societal faux wisdom: *"Don't go there!"* Ever heard the expression? Probably more times than you care to remember. Hollywood loves it, and whatever they love they use, and whatever they use, society adopts. It's used when someone refuses to talk about something that is uncomfortable, embarrassing, or in some way hurtful. The underlying thought is not whether or not the thing they don't want to talk about is right or wrong. The point is simply that the person doesn't want to talk about it. They would rather pretend the problem doesn't exist, which they find much less stressful.

The problem, of course, is that there is nothing whatsoever in God's Word that leads us to believe that Jesus bought into the notion of *"Don't go there."* In fact just the opposite is true - and it's not that he was ignorant of the concept. He just recognized it for the nonsense that it was and is. In fact that's the basic substance of the devil's temptation in the wilderness that Jesus rejected as he began his public ministry. It was Satan saying, *"Self-denial? Don't go there. Turn the rocks into bread. Doing things God's way instead of your own way? Don't go there. Do whatever you want and make God conform to your actions. Suffering and dying to save the world? Don't go there. Worship me and I'll give it all to you without all that pain and misery."*

But Jesus always did "go there," didn't he – even when it caused him abject misery the likes of which we could never fully comprehend? The first "don't go there" was Satan's maniacal opposition to Christmas. The devil knew full well that mankind had one chance at salvation. Jesus had to come to earth to pay our sin debt. Mankind had to be *rescued*. Not enabled, not guided, not empowered. Rescued. For that to happen, Jesus had to leave the perfection of heaven, place himself under the demands of the law by being born a human being, live a perfect life, and then offer that life to pay what mankind could not. Satan's counsel: "Don't go there." Jesus went.

The next "don't go there"? That one came from Satan *from the mouths of Jesus' own disciples*. They begged him not to go to Jerusalem. Pleaded with him not to offer his life in payment for their sins. Implored him not to walk the path to the cross and thus open heaven's door for mankind. And why not? Because that way was much too difficult, far too painful, way too unpleasant. Jesus went.

No one needs to remind you what would have happened if he hadn't. No one needs to remind you therefore of what would have happened had Jesus bought into modern man's idea that all things unpleasant are to be avoided at all costs. On the other hand, no one needs to remind you of the *result* of the fact that Jesus *did* go there.

Or do they? Do we? Do we need to be reminded? Do we need to remind each other? Absolutely. Every day.

This morning we remind ourselves and each other by examining one more "Don't go there." It involves Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman described in our text for this morning. Many lessons are taught there. This morning we look at one in particular: the woman that Jesus met was living in sin. She had had five husbands and was, when Jesus met her, living in sin with a man who was not her husband.

Can you imagine what our society today would have said to Jesus the moment he began to contemplate bringing up such a disagreeable subject? They would have shouted, in deafening unison, *"Don't go there!"* They would have pleaded, threatened, picketed, looted, Facebooked – anything and everything to shame him into not going there. They would have screamed at him, *"Judge not! Judge not! Judge not!"* Jesus went there anyway, which ought to be highly instructive. He dove in, all in, head first. He began with a simple, **"Go call your husband."** And he followed up by simply dragging her shameful sin into the light of day: **"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."**

How could Jesus have made such a mistake? How could he have stumbled so clumsily into what was obviously a most disagreeable and uncomfortable confrontation? How could he have committed so great a social faux pas? Didn't he know how the game was played? Didn't he know that he was supposed to just pretend that such things weren't happening, or at least that if they were he was supposed to act and speak as if all was well? Jesus obviously knew all that the world expected of him in that situation. The fact that he went there anyway teaches us a vital lesson. He loved this woman – loved her so much that he wanted her with him in heaven for all eternity (the same love, by the way, with which he loves you and me). Because of that love, he wouldn't allow her to slide

quietly into the night of eternal torment. He knew full well that saving faith cannot coexist in a heart that has given itself over to sin. Her sin was as a great, infectious boil that had to be lanced if she was to survive. Unpleasant in the extreme, but absolutely necessary.

The woman's reaction is typical. She did what most of us sinners do when first confronted with our sins: she tried to change the subject, rationalize, or, better yet, attack her accuser. The woman, no doubt ashamed, seems to try a combination of all three: **"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."** What in the world does this have to do with the woman's five husbands and live-in boyfriend? Nothing at all. That's the point. The woman here rolls a rationalization, an accusation, and a change of the subject all into one big evasion. In effect she is telling Jesus that she would like to repent and change her ways, but she can't because the religious leaders (including Jesus himself) have her so confused about whether she needs to go to Jerusalem or to Samaria to repent. In her twisted, sin-enslaved mind she is actually blaming Jesus for her ongoing sin. Since he is a prophet, he is a spiritual leader and therefore a part of the problem that's keeping her from changing her ways. It's just not her fault.

Jesus proceeds to tear down all of the woman's defenses; to redirect all of her diversions. Finally, having had all of the many layers of deception and denial stripped away, the Master knows when the law has done its work, for the woman turns to the heart of the matter: **"I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."** Sometimes Jesus chose to speak in parables. Sometimes in riddles, such as: **"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."** Here Jesus recognizes not only that the woman has been crushed under the weight of her sin, but also that his time with her is short. As a result he takes a rather rare direct approach with her and gives the woman one of the clearest and most direct statements we find in the Bible up to this point in Jesus' life as to his true identity: **"I who speak to you am He."**

Because Jesus went there, and only because he went there, the end of our text is truly a "happily ever after" ending. The seed, the law and gospel planted by Jesus, came to life in the Samaritan woman. The woman then became a missionary among her own people and through the testimony of this one woman the first of what could well have been many generations was brought to faith and rescued. Truly this is one of the greatest studies found in the Bible on how to reach those who are dying; yet if you break it down into its basic components, what do you find? Simple law and gospel – the very same tools we have been given to carry out this same work today – and the courage to actually use those tools.

For the love of souls, you and I need to go there. Sinful, rebellious mankind needs not just the gospel but also the law. In fact we need to reach out to

those caught up in sin precisely because the gospel has no meaning or relevance until the law has done its work.

God grant each of us the strength and courage to go where his Word directs. No one is ever saved by pretending that sin isn't sin, that it doesn't matter, or that it is compatible with true Christian faith. The very fact that Jesus went where he did – to earth itself and then to the cross to pay our sin debt – all proves that sin cannot be ignored. God bless us with such wisdom, understanding, love, and resolve – especially as we commemorate our Savior's passion during this season of Lent. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Genesis 12:1-9** Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." ⁴ ¶ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

^{ESV} **Romans 4:1-8, 13-17** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." ¹³ ¶ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ ¶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring--not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"--in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist."

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Eileen McEnroe, Head Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor Today's Organist: Eileen McEnroe

The Second Sunday in Lent – March 12, 2017

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 7 (Red Hymnal)

"As We Begin Another Week"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Genesis 12:1-9) It is hard to imagine the difficulties and dangers that Abraham faced when, as an old man, he was told by God to pack up and move his family to a foreign land. He lived in brutal, violent times where no civil authorities could be trusted to help. He placed his confidence in his God, who alone can be trusted no matter the circumstances.

Psalm 51 (Supplement page 31) (Brown Hymnal)

The Second Lesson: (Romans 4:1-8, 13-17) Our second reading actually builds on our first lesson. While Abraham was certainly an obedient and exemplary servant of God, it was not through his works or actions that he was saved. As is the case with all mankind, Abraham was saved by grace through faith in God's promise of a Savior. So also here the Apostle Paul makes clear that it is wrong to imagine that Abraham (or anyone today) is saved by their own works.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 721 (Brown Hymnal)

"Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow"

The Sermon – Text: John 4:5-30, 39-42 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Jesus Went There"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

Offering followed by the Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 307 (Red Hymnal)

"Draw Nigh and Take the Body of the Lord"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 48 (Red Hymnal)

"How Blest Are They Who Hear God's Word"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please first meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word.

Attendance - Sunday (39) Average (45) Wednesday (27)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/ Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and Coffee time
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Tuesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
Wednesday	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Lenten Service
Saturday	-7:30 p.m.	– Tour Choir Concert
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee time

CLC News – Samantha Barthels, daughter of Pastor Ted and Denise Barthels, was called home this past week. Pastor David Reim is considering the call to St Luke's of Lemmon. Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer is considering the call to Immanuel of Winter Haven. Messiah of Eau Claire has called Amy Mielke to teach grades 3-4 in its school. Kristen Friedrichs has returned the call to teach social studies at Immanuel Lutheran School, Mankato MN. The congregation has called Sherman Carstensen, Markesan WI, to serve as Counselor at its Schools.

Tour Choir Concert – This Saturday at 7:30 pm.

Confirmation – Parents and students please note the move to 6pm on Tuesday. The following week, class is scheduled for 5:30pm on Wednesday.