

# "Sin Requires Pain"

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 as a result 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 by declaring: **"but I say to you..."** You and I need to learn this lesson from our Savior. We need to learn to be courageous enough to say, **"But God says to you..."**

Examples abound. This morning we focus on one in particular. **"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, or make them uncomfortable, is exactly the right thing to do, exactly what is necessary.'"** That's also undoubtedly at least part of the reason Jesus also said, **"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."**

The hard cold fact is that there can be no such thing as a pain-free existence in a fallen, sinful world. Sin requires pain, which is the theme we will explore this morning on the basis of our text – the Word of God found recorded in the Gospel of John, the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter:

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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> ¶ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> 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.) <sup>10</sup> 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." <sup>11</sup> 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? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> ¶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." <sup>27</sup> 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?" <sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him. <sup>39</sup> ¶ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> 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.

Clearly Jesus is unique, in part, because he spoke with the authority of God. That's why he was able to say, **"You have heard it said... but I say to you..."** We want to follow Jesus' example, but we need to replace the **"but I say to you..."** with **"but God says to you..."** Obviously the devil wants all that are his to remain in their cocoon of silence. He is undoubtedly the author of the diabolical social truism that "religion" is one of the two things polite people should never inject into any conversation. 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. It's the perfect example of **"you have heard it said...but God says..."** 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.

Yet that represents only the first barrier that needs to be breached. It is, in other words, very possible to "talk about religion" without really saying much of anything at all. Nothing ever changes if it is never addressed. Jesus obviously recognized the problem, which is why he consistently confronted sin and error, even when unpleasant and painful. He not only spoke the truth, when necessary he spoke the sharp, barbed, lacerating truth. Our society has lost sight of the love that is inherent in the truth. The world imagines that "love" can never involve pain or discomfort of any kind, which is demonstrably untrue. We see, for example, what sort of children are produced by parents who only and always agree to their child's every demand, and who refuse to discipline for even the most obvious and egregious disobedience and rebellion.

Our text for this morning gives a perfect example of how Jesus employed pain and discomfort in pure love. His encounter with the Samaritan woman offers many lessons, but 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 bring up such a disagreeable subject? They would have shouted, in deafening unison, *"Don't go there!"* They would have pleaded, threatened, picketed, looted, Facebooked, Tweeted – anything and everything to shame Jesus into not broaching a subject that would make the woman uncomfortable, that could in any way be construed as negative or critical. *"Judge not! Judge not! Judge not!"* The fact that the perfect Son of God said what he said ought to be highly instructive. He dove in, all in, head first. He began with a simple, **"Go call your husband."** And he followed by simply dragging her shameful sin into the light of day: **"You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> 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, if they were, that 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 confronted the woman with her sin teaches us a vital lesson. He loved this woman – loved her so much that he wanted her with him in heaven

for all eternity. He loved her every bit as much as 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 sin requires pain – painful confrontation. The stone cold heart of unbelief has to be assaulted with the hammer of the law. Sin needs to be identified and condemned, which will never be pleasant for the sinner.

The woman's reaction was 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. She tried to change the subject, rationalize away her sinful conduct, and finally tried to convince Jesus that he was really to blame: **"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 seems to be 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 recognized not only that the woman has been crushed under the weight of her sin, but also that his time with her was limited. As a result he took a rather rare direct approach with her and gave 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."**

Clearly his goal was not to torment this precious soul, which Jesus obviously valued highly. His goal was to rescue her from an eternity of torment and to make her instead into an heir of heaven. Note again how his ultimate, loving goal could not be accomplished without the painful process of both identifying sin and condemning it. It was the woman's sin that necessitated the painful confrontation.

That's the way it is with sin. Sin must be confronted, and that confrontation will almost always result in pain, shame, and animosity – at least for a time. While that is true, there are at least two things that we can do – neither of which is to simply avoid the unpleasant situation. The first is to approach the individual who is caught up in sin in both humility and love. The second is to make it clear that you are bringing not personal opinion but the Word of God. We are never to place ourselves between another human being and their God. We do not stand over them, pointing the accursing finger. We stand beside them, pointing to the sin and simply, humbly, reminding them what their God says about that sin.

Because Jesus confronted the woman in our text with her sin, and only because he did so, 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 desperately in need of rescue. 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. All we lack is the courage to actually use those tools.

Sin requires pain, yet the pain of confrontation is not what actually *solves* anyone's sin problem. It's just a necessary first step. Contrition and repentance are of no real value apart from Jesus Christ. Not even true, genuine contrition solves the sinner's problem. Feeling bad about something you have done wrong does not pay for that wrong, that sin. True repentance therefore always has a second part – not just a turning away from sin but a turning in faith *to* Jesus Christ. Sin requires pain, but the real pain of sin was borne by Jesus. Jesus alone. Our shame and guilt only demonstrate our desperate need for a Savior. This is, in fact, the beating heart of this and every other Lenten season. Lent is the special contemplation not just of our personal sins, but the abject misery those sins caused Jesus.

For the love of souls, you and I need to "speak the truth in love" – even when that truth of the law stings. 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. What a joy and privilege, once the law has done its work, to be able to announce the forgiveness that is found only through faith in Jesus Christ; to be able to say, as the Prophet Nathan said to David: "***The Lord has put away your sin. You will not die.***" To say with the Prophet Isaiah: "***The Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all.***"

God grant each of us strength and courage. 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 came first to earth and then walked to the cross to pay our sin debt proves that sin cannot be ignored. God did not ignore it. He sent his Son, who then paid our debt in full. Amen.

ESV **Exodus 17:1-7** All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" <sup>3</sup> But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" <sup>4</sup> So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." <sup>5</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup> Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

ESV **Romans 5:1-8** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> ¶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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# ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

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Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist  
Michael Roehl, Pastor

**The Third Sunday in Lent – March 12, 2023**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 158 (Red Hymnal)

"Glory Be to Jesus"

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

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

**The Old Testament Lesson:** (Exodus 17:1-7) Our physical needs often short circuit our understanding of our spiritual needs. This was demonstrated clearly in the events of our first lesson this morning, where the Israelites were willing to sacrifice their ethics and morality because of their thirst. Don't make the mistake of imagining that these words were written so that we could sit in judgment of those long dead. This lesson has been preserved for, and is to be applied to the lives of, the living. The very same temptation afflicts each one of us here today.

## The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 51 (Page 31) (Brown Hymnal)

**The New Testament Lesson:** (Romans 5:1-8) "Peace with God" is one of the many gifts that Christians tend to take for granted – as is the access to God that is now ours by virtue of this peace. Jesus did that for us by removing that which had separated us from our God – our sins. What Jesus had to do to reconcile us to God was anything but easy. So too we should anticipate a life on earth that is filled with struggle and, at times, great hardship and sorrow. Yet even through that hardship our God blesses us.

## The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – (Projected on screens)

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 159 (Red Hymnal)

"Go to Dark Gethsemane"

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

**"Sin Requires Pain"**

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Prayers

## The Pre-Communion Hymn – 315 (Stanzas 1-2) (Red Hymnal)

"I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table"

## 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 – 52 (Red Hymnal)

"Almighty Father Bless the 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 Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone 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 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, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

## Attendance – Sunday (42) Average (40) Wednesday (25)

### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	<b>-11:15 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>-5:45 p.m.</b>	– Confirmation Class
	<b>-7:00 p.m.</b>	– Midweek Lenten Service
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

## CLC News – Messiah of Eau Claire has called Pastor Luke Bernthal.

Grace of Valentine has voted to call a third fulltime teacher for their school. They have submitted a call for a Teaching Program graduate from ILC.

**Council Notes** – The membership of Lori Jonas, Erica, Taylor, and Chase Kaberline was terminated at their request. Due to strong offerings in February, the General Fund deficit was reduced to -\$856. Mark Johnson and Mick Johnson will serve as this year's Financial Inspection Committee. The church records have been moved from Microsoft OneDrive to the Church's Google Drive. The Accountable Reimbursement Plan was amended. Holy Communion will be celebrated on April 6<sup>th</sup> (Maundy Thursday) instead of April 9<sup>th</sup> (Easter Sunday). The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 23<sup>rd</sup>.