**SERIES 03 (PREACHED IN 1904) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**04. JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore said to him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. So where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his children and his livestock?" Jesus answered her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I don't get thirsty, neither come all the way here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You said well, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband. This you have said truly." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour comes, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will you worship the Father. You worship that which you don't know. We worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to be his worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah comes, he who is called Christ. When he has come, he will declare to us all things." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who speaks to you." At this, his disciples came. They marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What are you looking for?" or, "Why do you speak with her?" So the woman left her water pot, went away into the city, and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything that I did. Can this be the Christ?" They went out of the city, and were coming to him. In the meanwhile, the disciples urged him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." "*

*John 4:7-32*

THE STORY of Jesus and the woman of Samaria is remarkable for its detailed incompleteness and its incidental fullness. The Master's method with this woman surprises us in that it leaves so many things unsaid that we should have thought of supreme importance. I have endeavored to put myself back into the position of the Lord, and supposed that I was dealing with such a case as this, and I am sure I should have taken other lines, and I am quite sure that I should have been wrong.

It is perfectly evident that the Lord knew this woman by that Divine intuition which characterized Him. In the second chapter of John it is told us that He did not commit Himself, or trust Himself to many that believed on Him in Jerusalem, for "he needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." We will not stay to discuss how He knew, but it is evident that He did, as He revealed the fact presently in conversation.

Remembering that our Lord knew this story, full of sin and sadness as it was, notice His method with her. He did not begin where the majority of us would have begun, by talking to this woman about sin, but by leading her mind into consideration of the deepest fact in her life, that of thirst, began simply and naturally by asking her to give Him water to drink, and when she expressed her astonishment at the request, immediately moving on, referring to the underlying thirst of her life, to the spiritual thirst, present in every life in some form or degree. Not a word yet about her sin. And then when she reveals her materialized view of things, and shows that it is quite impossible for her to appreciate what He means by living water; when after He has told her of a certain living water, she looks dazed, and says, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with"; and thinking of that well, the materialization of her life flashes into relief; then, and not till then, does He speak to her of sin, and confront her with it. Then another surprise. She does not confess her sin, but immediately attempts to draw Him into a theological controversy. She says: "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped," and so on. Now the startling thing is this, that He does not insist upon talking of sin, and say, I cannot talk with you until we have settled about sin, but He answers her question. This is a picture of the method of Jesus, and we read the story with growing astonishment, as we see He did exactly the things which we probably would not have done. There is no more said about sin, and the whole narrative ends. We seem to know so little. And yet it is evident He touched the deepest, and satisfied it, and from that soul in whom I think the living waters sprung, the whole city received the refreshing stream, and men said: "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves." Here, then, is a certain incompleteness, or, at least, a startling revelation of the method of Christ.

This story is brimming over with the very richest and profoundest revelations. Take them in their separateness, and notice three ideas in this story, more wonderfully stated perhaps than elsewhere in any of the gospels. First, this promise of Jesus of a well-spring of water in the individual life. In other places He makes similar promises but here the great word stands, "the water that I shall give ... shall become in him a wellspring of water." In the Greek the poetic thought of it is, "bubbling up, laughing up into the life of the ages." The water that I shall give, says Jesus, shall be a well of water in the individual, the very fount and source, bubbling up, laughing up, singing up into the life of the ages.

Then that other great word taken out of its context comes in this story, the declaration of the universal possibility of worship, the most wonderful word about worship that the Bible contains. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." That sentence swept away the temple, swept away ritual, swept away the priest. By that sentence Jesus did not make unholy the Holy of Holies, but He made all the round earth into the Holy of Holies. By that sentence Jesus did not un-priest the priest, but He made all souls that would come to God in spirit and truth, into a great kingdom of priests. We are robbed of nothing by these words, but everything has been given to the world.

And then one other thing stands out here most exquisitely in its beauty. When the disciples came back to Him they had been to buy bread, and they came back to Him bringing what they had brought. And they were greatly astonished to see Him talking to a woman of Samaria, and they besought Him to take of their food and wondered whether He was in the humor to reprove them for having forgotten to take food. And then there came from His lips that wonderful word, "I have meat to eat that ye know not." What I think was in the mind of the Lord was, You have been away to buy this bread, but don't imagine I have been here getting fretful because I am hungry, "I have meat to eat that you know not," I have been fed in your absence. What is this meat He had to eat? "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." That is a general statement; you may apply it all through the life of Jesus. What was the food Jesus had been feeding on? He had been leading a lost woman back to truth, and purity, and that was the meat He had to eat. And then He turned the figure, and He said, You tell Me there are four months to harvest, I tell you the harvest is white, and wherever you will put the sickle in, there some reaping can be done.

One more note in the general survey, before taking it for particular examination. This apparent contradiction - and by contradiction I mean the seeming incompleteness of Christ's method, and yet this glorious revelation, of the most wonderful truths - is in itself a revelation of the method of the Master. First He attracts the attention of this woman, and arouses her interest. That is the first business, "Give me to drink." Then what does He do? There is evidence of the utter absence of anything like stereotyped method. The method of Christ is to be without method. I think that can be proved in almost every case in the Gospels, but here there is to me a startling evidence of it. The danger with the Christian worker is that he goes to a school of personal methods, and gets into hard and fast lines. I am not saying methods are wrong, but let them be illustrative of principles, rather than the laying down of rules. I have seen on sale recently a little piece of paper with verses on it to be pasted in your Bible for use in personal work. This is utterly and absolutely pernicious. As surely as you have that kind of thing you will never have spiritual intelligence in dealing with cases. Jesus Christ did not get one set of questions He was going to put, and one set of ideals to enforce. He let the mind of that woman work itself out, meeting it at every new movement in such a way as to force it back to Himself. Notice the whole movement of the story.

The first thing is the attraction, "Give me to drink." That in itself has aroused the interest of the woman. She knows Him for a Jew, and He is sitting upon this well that Jacob had given to the Samaritans, according to their tradition, tired and weary, and He asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, "Give me to drink" And she naturally answers Him. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" There is a double puzzle to her. First, that He should speak to a woman is contrary to all the custom of the East, and His disciples were astonished, "they marveled that he was speaking with a woman." But the positive purity of Jesus was such that He could do things others could not do. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" He has aroused her interest, and He has fastened it with perfect naturalness upon Himself, and first she says, "How is it that thou, being a Jew!" That is all at the beginning; the physical fact attracts her, "a Jew." And then He begins to talk to her, and says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is." if you really knew Me. You think you do know Me. You say I am a Jew. If you knew Me, you would ask drink of Me. And then she says, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." He is forcing her back to Himself. Gradually she is coming to a consideration of Himself. Then He flashes upon her the truth about herself, "Go, call thy husband," it is perfectly natural, and in the presence of the simplicity of Jesus, this woman tells all the truth. I cannot help thinking that the woman was terribly surprised a moment after she had said it. It was all said before she knew it. It is always so easy to say anything to Christ. It is a confession nobody else will ever hear, "I have no husband." "Thou hast well said I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband," and the woman stands in the presence of a light that has searched her through and through, and flashed itself back upon all the hidden years of her life.

Now notice the next thing. Immediately she says, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." You notice the advance. He was a Jew a moment ago. He is a prophet now. And then the conversation moves on, and the woman is still listening to Him, pouring out before Him her difficulties, talking to Him about her theological problems, and presently He utters that sublime word about worship, and the woman leaves her waterpots, and goes away, and she says in the city, "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" You see the advance in her thought of Christ; and this is what Christ has been doing all the time with her, drawing her toward an understanding of what He really is, and bringing her to Himself. That is the method of Christ. "How is it that thou, being a Jew ... I perceive that thou art a prophet..." "Is not this the Christ?" We may be well content to leave all the details. I am now profoundly thankful that I am not told that she believed, and was born again, that she went through a certain experience, that she answered questions that were the proper questions. There is nothing formulated and stereotyped. But the woman is aroused, astonished, startled, led on, until she makes the great spiritual confession that He is the Christ. We do not know as to detail what happened after, but it is enough to show me Christ's methodical refusal of method. All the fullness of this wonderful passage it is not ours to follow today. We are interested only in His dealing with this woman, and with evil as it expressed itself in her case as sin.

This woman of Samaria was first of all a woman with religious possibilities, with a sub-stratum in her nature purely religious. She was not irreligious. For instance, she occupied a position, meaning little in the actuality of living; and yet when confronted with Jesus she said, "Our father Jacob." She was a Samaritan. I need not dwell upon the difference between the Jew and the Samaritan. If the Jew despised the Samaritan, the Samaritan despised the Jew. The Samaritan nevertheless had a distinct religious position, and believed he occupied a relation to the great covenant of God. "Our father Jacob." That indicates the religious stratum in her nature.

And again the place of worship. You say that Jerusalem is the place, our fathers say this mountain is the place. That is the position. Where ought it to be?

And yet one other thing: she had a great and true conviction concerning the coming Messiah, "I know that when Messiah cometh ... he will declare unto us all things." That is the woman as she was. If we could only see her that morning as she takes her way, carrying her waterpots. We see a woman outside the Jewish covenant, poor (for the wealthy no longer go to draw water at the wells), taking her way to draw water. Right down in her heart a woman with true religious instinct, with certain clearly defined religious convictions, "Our father Jacob." "Worship is necessary, where is the place of worship?" "There is a coming one who shall tell us all things, solve our problems, and answer our questions." These things had very little effect on her life, but there they were in the realm of her intellect. How many people there are, perfectly sincere, in whom these hidden things very seldom flash into light, though always there, "Our father Jacob," the place of worship, a coming Messiah!

She was a woman of sin, a woman undoubtedly of strong nature, passionate; and the history of the years is a history of sorrow and of shame. Look at her now as she is at this moment, careless and flippant, dismissing all the great questions as they are brought up, arguing along the lines of problems suggested, a woman in whom there was some great underlying capacity, who has been attempting to be satisfied in false ways until all the fair and radiant beauty of her womanly life has passed away. You see her treading the daily round of dullness, carrying water, when this Teacher lets fall upon her a great flash of light, a great announcement, and she materializes it, and tries to discuss a theological problem. It is a picture of a woman whose life is yielded to the clamant call of her own nature, who has become careless, hardened, and ready to act a part. Such is the woman as we see her in her approach to Christ.

Notice the method of the Master. First He surprises her, and surprises the disciples by talking to her; and then comes the first great word that He says to her. He has asked for drink, and then when she has expressed her surprise, He says: "If thou knewest the gift of and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Then comes her materialized answer. But first of all take that great word of Christ. Let us try and look at this, not in its great application to the ages, but in connection with one woman, and shut our view up to Christ and this woman. "If thou knewest the gift of and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." What does this mean? It means, first, that Jesus Christ recognized that down in the depth of that woman's nature was a thirst, a desire. It is true that the thirst in her nature which underlay her very sin was right in itself, only she had been attempting to quench her thirst, the clamant cry of her nature, in ways that were wrong. "If thou knewest ... who it is that saith to thee, " if you knew Who it is that speaks to you. He Who understands your deepest desire and thirst, He would give you the water that would satisfy that thirst in your life. All sin in the human life is the prostitution of a proper gift to improper uses. There is no evil thing that blights humanity that does not come out of the possibility of good. We make use of the word lust in a very narrow sense today, but I am going to use it in its broadest sense, Lust is desire, very literally, a panting want. It may have all sorts of manifestations. It may be lust after gold, or pleasure, or excitement, one thing or another. But there it is. At the back of all lines along which men and women ruin themselves, there is a desire. Why is it people give themselves up to pleasure not pure? Because of a cry in their lives for these things. No man is doing wrong save as in the nature there is a great cry, a great sense of want, a great passion, a great thirst, to use the word Jesus used. Thirst is want. All such thirst is in itself pure and right. How, then, does ruin come? How so much sorrow? How is it that it wrecks the whole life? What was the story when Jesus met her? The thirst was not wrong, but she was taking the wrong means to quench her thirst, because she had misinterpreted it. The first thing Jesus revealed was that she did not understand, and never had her own nature, and she did not understand how He had awakened, startled her, and brought to her the thing she has been crying out for, when she thought she wanted something else.

To get back to our own nature. We should find that it is not great things we have been asking in our own folly, but something else, an underlying thirst, and when following the line of our own false interpretation and our own need, attempting to satisfy the craving of our own nature, according to the misinterpretation of our own nature, then the ruin, the sorrow has come.

O that one might put this clearly. Lust in its narrowest sense is the false method of answering the clamant cry of life. Take Paul's great word to the Ephesians. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit." What is the meaning of the proximity in that verse of two such things as drunkenness with wine, and the filling of the Spirit? This is not merely contrast, but it is contrast based upon one underlying capacity. That which a man attempts to satisfy with wine can only be satisfied with the Spirit of God. You take every human life. There is in every human life the capacity for enthusiasm. Supposing we put it in the realm of the emotion where it lives. It is the desire for a vision, the desire for enthusiastic, full, throbbing, thrilling life. Everyone has it. What makes that man or woman take to drink? Being drunk with wine is an attempt to satisfy a natural, pure thirst in a wrong way. That very fact demonstrates the peculiar fitness of that man or woman for a marvelous infilling of the Spirit of God. Take that natural thirst, and have it truly interpreted. It is a thirst for enthusiasm. Let the Spirit of God dwell in the life, and then the enthusiasm is there. Here is the common capacity for enthusiasm. Everyone of us has it. Supposing I, desiring that this shall be fulfilled want to see the vision, to hear the music, to dream the dreams, to feel all life radiant and rapturous and brimming over. I do not know Christ, or anything about this Spirit-filled life. I turn to wine, and when I take wine, it happens the light is on the sky, the dream is with me. Though I am broken I am never broken when I am in wine. I am going to get on, I am going to succeed, everything is bright, and the fires are burning and coursing through my veins. That is what a man is after when he drinks. But let Paul finish, "wherein is riot" Presently that false fire burns itself out, and leaves all the fibres weakened and loosed, and I am in hell instead of heaven. That is the false method.

Supposing instead of turning to wine I turn to the Spirit, and I give this life of mine up to the Spirit of God, it will produce the same effect, only absolutely different. The Spirit of God will give me vision. Oh, how it will put back the horizon! I shall stand and look down this valley, present, near, but I shall never stand and look at that valley without seeing a little beyond it. Wine would give me a new view of it for an hour, and then make me curse it for its deadly dullness; but the Spirit of God hangs around it the drapery of eternal things. You want excitement, your passion for enthusiasm is a God-given faculty. Turn to pleasure, turn to ambition, turn to any of the things of this life, turn, as this woman did, in any of these directions, and presently the whole thing will burn itself out to dull ashes. Oh, if you knew, that is the plaintive word of Christ that seems to come welling out of His very heart! If you knew Who it is ... thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water that would flow, and laugh, and bubble and sing. He did not begin to talk about sin He talked about the underlying capacity, the prostitution of which had wrought itself out into sin. And then when she, dear heart, was material, as she stood and talked only of the material water, Jesus showed her the result of not being able to interpret the natural thirst. "Call thy husband," and you know all that story. "I have none." Was that a slight piece of deceit? Did she think to pass the searching of those eyes, and that infinite wisdom? "I have none." She dismisses it. "Thou hast truly said." Oh, tender Christ! He will encourage the truth even though it were spoken perhaps in hypocrisy. Would we not have been inclined to say, How dare you tell us that? Oh, gentle Christ! He will never "break the bruised reed, until he send forth judgment to victory." "Thou hast well said." Let Me tell you some more truth, said Jesus. I take it as Christ told it, and she confessed it. There it is, the story of a life attempting to find satisfaction, and never being satisfied.

And then, what then? She, moved to say that He was a prophet, went on to a discussion of other questions of position, and worship, and theology. Oh, this is so human! How often in personal dealing we are talking to a person about sin, and that person has tried to draw us into theological controversies.

Now what did Jesus say? "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Great and marvelous is the announcement, covering the whole realm of worship. But look at the woman and see what it means. You are trying to discuss the place of worship. That does not matter. It is the nature of worship that matters, and God is asking for worship in spirit and truth, and you have been living in flesh and a lie. First of all the revelation of the underlying capacity, then the charging of her with the sin and failure of the years. Then the giving of the essential requirement of worship in spirit and truth. And what else? Well, we don't know. There it is. We see her hurrying back to the city, leaving her waterpots, saying to the men of the city, "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" We see the people of that city coming out, and listening, and constraining Jesus to stay with them: "and he abode there two days." We hear their last declaration, that they believed, "not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves," but because of the word of the woman. And the woman is seen no more, and we leave the story where it is left.

These are the brief deductions we would make from the study. Ruin of human life is always the issue of false attempts to satisfy its legitimate claims. In the natural life of every soul there are capacities and potentialities and possibilities, none of them wrong. Nothing that is natural to your human life is wrong. The great question is, How am I going to satisfy this thirst for possession, for pleasure? Oh, but you say, surely the thirst for pleasure is wrong! By no means. God has implanted it. God is the God of pleasure. Did you ever notice the great word, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God"? It may be translated with perfect accuracy, "the gospel of the glory of the happy God." And the cry for pleasure in you is one of the surest evidences of your kinship to Deity. How are you going to satisfy it? We hew for ourselves broken cisterns that hold no water, and as we stoop to drink, the waters flee and mock us. If this great picture means anything it means this. Let us take care how we attempt to answer the call of our own nature. We may do it so as to bring ruin, or we may do it so as to bring deepest and intensest satisfaction to ourselves and others. Mark well this, that the well-spring of water is not solely for the quenching of thirst. It is to bubble up, and spring, and sing, and laugh, and flow over; and the great figure Christ finishes, in the seventh chapter of this same Gospel. Still thinking of the water in the midst, He talks of living water which shall flow out of the inner life of every believer on Him. Christ alone can bestow that which shall satisfy every craving of our first nature, and second birth is but the fulfilling by abandonment to Christ of all the possibilities of our first nature. Never let us imagine that we can take our lives and find satisfaction anywhere but in abandonment to Him Who comes into it to "Breathe through the pulses of desire, His coolness and His balm," to put into the midst of what else were arid, burning desert the great well-spring that shall make it blossom as the rose, and laugh in the flowing of the fullness of God.