

“Cosmic Proportions”  
 Pastor Sam Richards  
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 Texts: John 4:31-42

We are going to need to be better friends in the days ahead I think. So I want to explore with you a tiny episode in the ministry of Jesus which was a really big deal in the humble existence of a Samaritan woman with whom Jesus held a divine appointment at Jacob’s well, in Sychar. She represents the usefulness of a repentant sinner. Whereas last we considered the cosmic catastrophe of one man’s purportedly private sin. Remember John Sassaman’s duplicity (his lining his own pocket with ill-gotten gains through fraudulent land claims and deeds. The Praying Indian, or Christian Indian, was ordered executed by King Philip in 1675 as a thieving traitor. The men who executed this sentence were subsequently tried and put to death as murderers, This outrageous judicial overreach (the nullification of Indian justice by English justice) was a slap in the face, dishonoring and it infuriated King Philip and two terrible years of warfare resulted (disastrous for both sides to the conflict), the evangelism of Indians was halted (which achieved Satan’s spiritual objective aside from murder, mayhem and bloodshed) and a fifty year’s period of relatively peaceful coexistence between Indians and English settlers was ended. The English Christians were discredited by John’s sinning and Indians suspected all settlers as a result. And the heartfelt effort to bring the gospel light to those in pagan darkness and the thralldom of Satan—through the offices of sincere ministers, and particularly John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, temporarily fell apart. Of course, the internment of Christian Indians on Deer Island for the duration of the conflict shattered the trust that had been built up previously.

The usefulness of a repentant sinner is my theme and it requires that we take a fifteen hundred year imaginative leap to the account of the woman at Jacob’s well. This incident is so instructive. Perhaps you will recall the mission of the twelve, followed by the mission of the seventy—all being authorized (commissioned and appointed) to announce the nearness of the Kingdom of God, the presence of the promised Messiah with healing and miracles attesting to the messiahship of Jesus, as prophesied by Scripture. I explained how this outreach was about credentials\ing Jesus as messiah, rather than the twelve as apostles—the expansion of the number from twelve to seventy demolishes that hypothesis! So, why bring that up? Well, chiefly, I bring it up to suggest that what this woman does after Jesus convicts her of sin, and then forgives her sin (she is the repentant one I am speaking of), what she does is analogous to what the seventy were sent to do. They are promoting the coming of Jesus to their city! She said, **Come, see a man, which told me all the things ever I did, is this not the Christ?**<sup>1</sup> **Many Samaritans believed on him for the saying of the woman (v.39) And many**

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<sup>1</sup> She was impressed by the extent of his knowledge as well as by the power of his word; she had become a **spring of living water welling up into eternal life.** (John 6: 29 and 14)

**more believed because of his own word.** (v.41 He tarried with them two days. Her repentance led to revival, a catastrophe for Satan, a decided win.

Her sin was no disqualification! Our text here is v. 34: **My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.** The verse might be better rendered **that I may do (do and finish) the will of Him . . . that I may finish the work of Him** because this supports the end of things that Jesus apparently always kept in view. Jesus speaks of this work as **actual food**, as that which actually sustained Him: **I have meat to eat ye know not of meaning the supply of his truest needs, and the satisfaction of His truest desires.** As it is written in Job23:4: **I have not departed from the command of his lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.** What is more, we know what was on the menu regarding this food; namely, “Of the condescension, pity, patience, wisdom He had been laying out upon one soul—a very humble woman (who was in some respects (morally) repulsive (given the immoral nature of her sinning) too! But he had gained her, and through her was going to gain more. And lay perhaps the foundation of a great work in the country of Samaria (which in fact I believe he did attain and Philip, the deacon, served at the church there in the early persecutions of the church); and this filled his whole soul and raised Him about the sense of natural hunger. (Perhaps.) Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary—biblehub.com. They became friends!

As Ellicott explains it: “The command of duty, the cheering power of hope, the stimulus of success, are forces that supply to weak and weary nerves and muscles, the vigor of new life.” Because these can cause, “the soldier to forget his wounds, the martyr to smile at the lion or the flame, the worn-out traveler to plod onward at the thought of home”—“They have food that those without know not of.” SO Jesus was a revelation of Father God—His purpose blends with this matter of transparency (**he who has seen me has seen the Father**) is never absent despite being overshadowed by what He does even though (**I only do what I see the Father doing!**) what he is doing seems to eclipse divine exposure. By that I mean, it is always apt to translate Jesus’ doings as the Father’s business; Jesus’ ministry discloses the nature, intent and purposes of God. **Know ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?** (Luke 2:49) This last truth underscores how essential and wonderful it is to have the Scriptures—divine fingerprints are all over it evidentially. [John 4:32-42] See John Gill’s commentary on verse 34<sup>2</sup> below.

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<sup>2</sup> **my meat is to do the will of him that sent me.** The Ethiopic version reads, "of my Father that sent me", and who is undoubtedly intended. Now as food is pleasant, and delightful, and refreshing to the body of man, so doing the will of God was as delightful and refreshing to the soul of Christ: he took as much pleasure in it, as an hungry man does in eating and drinking. *One part of the will of God was to assume human nature*; this he had done, and with delight and pleasure: another part of it was to fulfill the law; and this was in his heart, and was his delight, and he was now doing it: and another branch of it was to suffer and die, in the room and stead of his people; and as disagreeable as this was in itself to the human nature, *yet he cheerfully agreed to it*; and was sometimes, as it were, impatient till it was accomplished; and he voluntarily became obedient to it: no man could, with greater eagerness, fall to eating, when hungry, than Christ went about his Father's will and work, even that which was most ungrateful to him, as man.

We are advancing the Kingdom of God, extending Christ's rule

“While ye sing the heavenly war/Raise your Deliverer's name on high.” WE ARE AT WAR!! First there is the idea of waging war against Satan through singing. Our worship and our praise are war efforts! And that is the big picture. What that means is huge. It means that much more is at stake in your doings than your doings. Hence we say, there is no such thing as private sin and there is no such thing as sinning which doesn't cause wider harm, or damage. Everything we say or do is under divine scrutiny and subject to divine judgment and review.

Furthermore, when you sin you are supplying the enemy with ammunition—Satan will bring it in the form of accusations against you. Your sin can bring about hostility, enmity, and ruined reputations. He will seek to game you, blame you and to shame you, and plunge you into regret, remorse and guilt you with your transgression, failings and sins. *That is simply how it works. Satan seizes anything he can use to cripple, hamper, or incapacitate you because while your conscience is clear, your sins are forgiven you are a formidable adversary, a victorious, capable warrior*. And when you are suited up, as in Ephesians 6:10-18, you are fearsome, daunting, a force to be reckoned with—as well as on the offensive. Jesus took Sychar! You are reducing Satan's domain, taking territory, freeing captives from ignorance, darkness, evil and sin. Hear Isaac Watts:

"Tis by thy blood, immortal Lamb,  
Thine armies tread the tempter down;

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**And to finish his work;** *one part of which was to preach the Gospel, and for, which he was anointed and sent; and which he did with great assiduity and constancy: and another part of it was the conversion of sinners by it, whom he was sent to call, and with whom he delighted to be; and was the work he was now about, and took pleasure in, the text expresses: and beside these miracles were works his Father gave him to finish; such as healing diseases, and dispossessing of devils, and which he went about doing continually, with great delight: but the chief, work of all is, that of redemption and salvation of his chosen ones: this was a work his Father called him to, and sent him into this world to perform, which he gave unto him, and Christ accepted of, and agreed to do; and though it was a very toilsome and laborious one, there being a righteous law to be fulfilled, justice to be satisfied, the sins of all his people to bear, as well as the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, and numerous enemies to grapple with, and an accursed death to undergo; yet with pleasure he performed this: for the joy of his Father's will, accomplishing his counsels and covenant, and his own engagements, and procuring the salvation of his people, he endured the cross patiently, and despised the shame of it. The whole of the work of God was done by him, just as the Lord commanded it; exactly, according to the pattern given him, with all faithfulness and integrity; with the most consummate wisdom and prudence; with all application, diligence, and constancy, and so as to finish it, and that without the help of any other; and in such a manner that nothing can be added to it to make it more perfect, or that it can be undone again by men or devils: and that the doing and finishing of this were his meat, or as delightful and refreshing to him as meat is to the body, *appears from his ready and cheerful engaging in it in eternity; from his early and industrious entrance on it in time; from his constancy in it, when he had begun, insomuch that nothing could deter him from it; nor did he sink and fail under it, nor left it till he had finished it.**

[I do not believe that this exposition of verse 34 can be improved upon so I am sharing it in full.

"tis by thy word and powerful name  
They gain the battle and renown.

"Rejoice ye heavens; let every star  
Shine with new glories round the sky;  
Saints, while ye sing the heavenly war,  
Raise your Deliverer's name on high."

Isaac Watts<sup>3</sup>

However, if you aren't suited up, and if you are spiritually compromised by sin patterns, you will serving under a handicap, under vulnerability. Being vigilant about not sinning, being aware, alert and on your guard because you know there is a war transpiring, because you know that we are advancing the Kingdom of God, taking ground, taking captives and holding what and who the Lord has vanquished—we proceed house to house, family by family driving out the darkness, dispersing the demonic horde! And flee they must at the name of Jesus for his power and authority have been delegated to you as a believer. Your faith is sufficient and that means you are capable. And among us, as in any church, there are those who are experienced able to lead, willing follow. And last, but not least, we are friends.

In 1 Samuel 20:4 Jonathan said to David, **“Whatever you need done, I will do for you.”** *Christians assist each other!* This loving pledge of friendship is what there needs to be more of in the church! Men need mutual support from their brothers both to make and to keep their commitments—especially when the pressure is on. This is true. Men need dependable, truthful and real friends.

Often, growing up is problematic: there are deep wounds requiring deep healing and while God attends to such wounds, sexual, emotional and relational abuse—overtly sometimes and indirectly at other times (mending abandonment, coldness and neglect through brotherly love, and warm caring soul attention).

Fatherlessness can come about through forgetfulness as well as through divorce, separation and untimely death. And men are acutely shamed by loss of employment, or the inability to provide for one's family leading to disillusionment, discouragement and depression.

A friend in those times and circumstances can make all the difference between recovery and defeat.

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<sup>3</sup> Wesley's diary makes clear that he continued to collect psalms and hymns to supplement the worship of his Anglican community and small groups in Georgia after the publication of CPH (1737). He published the result of this work shortly after his return to England. The charge for printing the volume was entered in William Bowyer's ledgers on May 24, 1738. Once again Wesley published the volume anonymously. Only two copies are known to remain extant: one in the library at Lambeth Palace and the other at Wesley College, Bristol (the latter was generously made accessible for this production). [John Wesley, editor.] *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. London: [Bowyer for Hutton,] 1738.

And, added to this, we have issues of aging, loss of virility which can lead to mid-life crises wherein changing one's life, exchanging one's spouse and driving fast cars operate like drug-altering one's reality even if only in a fantasy world. Distraction becomes another form of pain management where what is needed is comfort in pain, a season of real, spiritual healing someone to hold you through it all with a listening, loving and caring attentiveness. Even a hug has some potential to heal us—being an expression of love. Being touched puts us back in focus, back in touch—it is a powerful intervention, or therapy.

There is no disqualification—repentant sinners are enormously useful!

I think that brings us to our second text: **My food (meat) is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work<sup>4</sup>.** (John 4:34) The verse might be better rendered as **that I may do (do and finish?) the will that I may finish the work** pointing to the end that Jesus kept ever in view. Jesus spoke in v. 32 of this work as actual food: **I have meat to eat ye know not of as the “supply of his truest needs, and the satisfaction of his truest desires.** Let us remember Job 23:4: **“I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”** We even have what was on the menu regarding this food: “Of the condescension, pity, patience, wisdom He had been laying out upon one soul—a very humble woman, and in some respects repulsive too! But He had gained her, and through her was going to gain more, and lay perhaps the foundations of a great work in the country of Samaria; and this filled His whole soul and raised Him above the sense of natural hunger. (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary—[biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com))

This well-side dialogue occurs in the intermission so to speak of Jesus' mission to the Samaritan city of Sychar—properly speaking this is a Gentile mission, or a foreign mission, and outreach to the despicable, Samaritans. Jesus has enlisted the help of a woman, a flawed, abused and sexually compromised woman. The Lord decides who is useful, and how they are useful! She is impressed with the extent of his knowledge (all the thoughts, words, and actions of all the children of men—a good definition of divine omniscience!). Yes, and marvelously, her acknowledgment of sin (**you have had five husbands and the man you are with is not your husband**) leads to her salvation! Therefore, she goes into the city as a harvester in the harvest work of her king. “As the law of God was sweeter to David than the honey or the honey comb, so the publishing of the gospel was to Jesus Christ, the calling sinners to repentance, and publishing the glad tidings of the Messiah; that was his work, which he tells his Father he had finished, **John 17:4.**” Matthew Poole

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<sup>4</sup> John 6:38-40 **38**“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. **39**“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. **40**“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”



This woman, selected, chosen and commissioned by God, actually performs an apostolic mission<sup>5</sup>! That explains John 4:4 **And he needs must go through Samaria**—we see not merely an intersection (rather an interview at a well) but a strategic engagement in the Father's plan. I can assure you that all this was not in the woman's plan for her day! But in eternity, all this was on the calendar. And here is a major take-away: in order for this woman to serve God, her sin had to be forgiven. Without forgiveness of sin her life was too tangled, too unmanageable, out of the squalor/discord/confusion which is our condition—our universal condition. But she went forth as a freed, healed woman! And we see what she did with her freedom! So, ***the extent*** of his knowledge and ***the power of his word*** both played their roles in the transformation of this sinner into an evangelical witness! That is so exhilarating!

**Amen**

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<sup>5</sup> THE MODE IN WHICH OUR LORD DEALT WITH THE WOMAN finds a parallel in the synoptic gospels ([Luke 7:37](#), etc.; comp. [Matthew 26:6](#), etc.). The other scattered notices of the Lord's intercourse with women form a fruitful subject for study ([John 11](#); [John 20:14](#), etc.; [Matthew 9:20](#) and parallels, [Matthew 15:22](#), etc., and parallels, [Matthew 27:55](#) and parallels, [Matthew 28:9](#), etc.; [Luke 8:2](#), etc., [Luke 10:38](#), etc., [Luke 11:27](#), etc., [Luke 13:11](#), etc.). Wescott