

# Ministers Message

## Mission Department Newsletter

### From the Mission Department

Greetings from the LLC Summer Services in Kelso, Washington. Thanks to Our Heavenly Father who richly blessed our services and meetings. Thanks also to the host Longview congregation and all the volunteers who made our stay a pleasant one.

The topic for this summer's Ministers & Board Members meeting was entitled "Be sober, be vigilant." The presentation kept by Rockford Pastor Allen Pirness was based on 1 Pet. 5:8. It addressed some of the ways in which our adversary, the devil, attacks us in this time as well as how God guides and protects His congregation in the midst of dangers. One of the dangers the presentation addressed is fundamentalism and, in particular, its view of the Bible.

Allen's presentation will be the subject of LLC Ministers Webinar #3. The webinar will be held August 29th at 8:00 pm CDT. Be sure to mark your calendars. Carey Simonson will prepare an overview of the presentation and moderate the discussion period. We will send out the presentation prior to the webinar.

News of personnel changes at LLC were also shared at the annual meeting. LLC Board members George Koivukangas and Pete Kuopus retired from the Board. The positions opened by their retirement were moved from the East Central Mission Area to the Northwest Mission Area to reflect member population in the recently reconfigured mission areas. Steve Laiho (Williston) and Nate Maki (Alaska) were elected to replace them. In addition, longtime LLC employees, Jon Bloomquist and Keith Waaraniemi, will be retiring this year, Jon at the end of July and Keith at the end of November. This has also provided an opportunity to reconsider the organization of work in the Mission Department. To that end, Daniel Kumpula has been hired as Pastoral and Mission Program manager. We thank those who have served and wish them God's blessings in the next phase of their lives. We also pray that God will bless those called to new positions of responsibility in the Lord's vineyard.

We wish you a pleasant last month of summer and look forward to seeing you at the webinar on August 29th.

## Noteworthy

### Upcoming Events

LLC 2024 Ministers Webinar #3  
August 29, 2024  
8:00 pm CDT

SLC Bible Course  
Books of Ezra & Nehemiah  
Stony Lake Camp  
October 4-6, 2024

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp  
West Coast  
September 20-22, 2024

LLC 2024 Ministers Webinar #4  
November 7, 2024  
8:00 pm CST



## Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

Leo Väyrynen

*John 4:1-29*

People have many kinds of distress. Although all distress isn't because of sin, a bad conscience is the cause of our discomfort more often than we may think. People have much repressed guilt. It may destabilize the balance of the mind and can manifest itself as physical illness. Unforgiven sin destroys human relationships and leads to separation from God. Although a person would try to hide his guilt, it marks his behavior in such a way that a skilled spiritual counselor detects it and is able to uncover it.

The meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar is an example of how casual conversation can deepen into a spiritual discussion. The conversation began with thirst and quenching it and changes seemingly at random from one matter to another. Finally, the discussion begins to plumb the hidden corners and painful feelings of the human mind. The world's most skillful spiritual counselor leads the discussion. It ends with the freeing experience of grace, which changes the woman's entire life.

Jesus and His disciples took a shortcut through Samaria on their way to Galilee, even though the relations between the Samaritans and the Jews were tense. The Jews despised the Samaritans because they were of mixed race and only accepted the Books of Moses from the Holy Writings. The fact that the Samaritans went to worship God at Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem also angered the Jews.

When the travelers came to the well, which has received its name from the patriarch Jacob, the disciples went to the city of Sychar which was nearby to buy food. Jesus sat in the shade of a fig tree at the well to wait for them. The well was deep. Its water was clear, flowing from a spring. Such water is often appreciatively called living water to differentiate it from rainwater collected in cisterns, that is, containers dug into the ground, which must be relied upon during the dry seasons.

It is the middle of the day, the hottest time of the day. The people are taking a siesta in the shade or inside. Jesus, thirsty, is sitting at the well which has a winch but no container to draw water with. The liquid of life flows into the

## JESUS CONVERSES

Jesus met many people during His life. Several of them wanted to converse with Him. Jesus' teaching gave birth to questions in some listeners. They wanted to hear more since His teachings deviated from the teachings of the scribes of that time. Several people approached Jesus because of their difficulties and problems. Jesus also used to talk on His own initiative with people He encountered in various situations.

Several discussions which Jesus had with various people are recorded in the Bible. This year we will publish a series of writings in this paper by Leo Väyrynen on some of these discussions. Although around two thousand years have passed since these discussions, their topics and issues are still timely. We notice this in this series of writings.

well at a depth of about 30 meters. When Jesus looks up, He sees a lone woman walking coming towards the well of Sychar. Why isn't this woman taking a siesta? Why is she avoiding other people?

When Jesus asks the woman for a drink, she is amazed. The woman knows that it is not appropriate for a Jewish man, for the sake of his reputation, to talk with even a Jewish woman he meets on the road, let alone a Samaritan. The rabbis have warned against greeting even one's own wife on the street. Jesus isn't concerned about conventions; His motives are pure. He has come to save everyone, men and women, Jews and Samaritans. This is shown by Jesus' reply to the woman: If you knew the gift of God and who asks for a drink, you would ask him for living water.

What does Jesus mean by living water? He means that water which satisfies the thirst for eternity. Jesus is driven by the desire to give the woman the water of grace which cleanses from sin. The woman doesn't understand Jesus' words. She says: You don't have anything to draw with. Do you think you are greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well?

That which Jesus now says is the climax of the conversation: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall

# Jesus Converses

be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” One who drinks from Jacob’s well will thirst again, but that water which Jesus gives quenches the thirst of death and satisfies the longing for eternity. And this isn’t all. A spring breaks out in the heart which has received the water of life; he himself becomes a spring. Having received God’s grace, he can proclaim forgiveness onto others.

Still the woman does not understand or does not want to understand what Jesus means. She asks Jesus for that miraculous water so that she would not have come to Jacob’s well anymore. Only then when Jesus touches a sore spot in the woman’s life and reveals that He knows about her turmoil in relationships with men, the woman notices that she is discussing matters of faith with a prophet. She still tries to evade the issue by leading the discussion away from herself to a question about the correct place to worship. Jesus recognizes the woman’s longing for God as the reason for her question and explains that the time is coming when the place of worship will not matter, then true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The woman replies to this that when the Messiah comes, He will reveal all things. Jesus says, I am the Messiah.

This declaration puts the woman in motion. She forgets her water pot at the well and runs into the city to tell about the man, who must be the Christ since He knew her sins, although no one had told Him about them. Soon the inhabitants of Sychar welcomed the Savior of the world with joy and many believed upon Him.

What Jesus did touches us when without judging the woman He helped her recognize the basic unhappiness of life, unbelief and its fruits, and receive them forgiven. The same miracle can happen even now. Even yet a person struggling under a burdened conscience can experience the surprise of a lifetime in the midst of everyday life when God’s kingdom and the spring of living water approach him through a child of God. At first the discussion is perhaps about the weather. When God is able to guide the discussion into matters of faith, the person may try to evade the matter by speaking of some doctrinal issues or a church-related problem. All the same, at the bottom of this there could be a thirst for eternal life that the enemy of souls wants to cover until the very end. A subtle presence and patient waiting is needed until God readies the heart to accept the gospel.

## Epistle Postil

### The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Mauno Soronen

#### TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD

The Sunday’s theme is truth and falsehood. How do we know what is truth and what is falsehood? What is true and what is a lie? Truth is that in which we can trust, and a lie is that which deceives.

God is truth and the knowledge of God leads one unto all truth. We can trust upon God and His Word. That is what the first people also did, but through listening to the serpent, they fell. They believed the lie of the enemy of souls. No one is free from the legacy of the fall. Lies continue to deceive and separate one from God.

The text from the Epistle of John warns of the lies of the enemy of souls, and his messengers. The teaching of the enemy of souls always leads one astray. Those who stray into his group try to mislead those who are obedient to God also. The same epistle comforts the Christians with the fact that Christ has overcome that enemy.

The texts from Hebrews warn the congregation of disobedience and unbelief but encourage Christians to endeavor in faith. The salvation which Christ brings is sure and true. One day the wilderness journey will end. The Sabbath celebration of God’s people, the rest of the righteous, will be attained by all who in spite of the difficulties on the journey are able to remain in faith until the end.

# Epistle Postil

## YEAR 3

Hebrews 12:14–17

### THE COURSE OF FAITH

The sender of the Letter to the Hebrews was concerned over the congregation's ability to endure. The most threatening danger was falling away from faith for in the midst of persecution members of the congregation had become tired in the endeavor of faith. The writer referred to the unseen "cloud of witnesses" who have reached the destination. It encourages one to continue. The nature of the letter is the word of encouragement, the word of instruction (Heb. 13:22).

### GRACE TAKES CARE

The source of strength for the endeavor is God's grace. It cleanses the heart and gives inner peace. A tired and lonely mind in the endeavor of faith easily becomes embittered. Bitterness hinders the endeavor that has begun. If it becomes the inhabitant of one's inner being, it grows and sprouts and produces bitter fruit. Bitterness can defile many.

Everyone has a personal responsibility in the care of their conscience, but the congregation also has a responsibility for each member. We must take care that not even one loses God's grace or that bitterness begins to grow in the congregation. The congregation must be cared for with God's grace, for only through grace does the congregation and its individual members have the possibility to reach the promised inheritance.

### A WARNING EXAMPLE

After the wish for grace and peace, the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews does not immediately end his letter, but he yet again warns of the power of sin and of its dangers. There is no room to play with sin. Playing with sin may lead to a situation from which there is no longer a return.

A warning example is the story of Esau. He sold his birthright and inheritance. He did not consider the gifts which God gave him worthy of retention because he looked at life only from a temporal viewpoint. The birthright only had value if it was owned and grasped by faith. Esau lost this gift. He sold his birthright for momentary temporal enjoyment – one meal. He pursued only the momentary and forgot eternity. Esau's example is a powerful and cautionary picture of how serious a matter the brief enjoyment of sin is.



ARTWORK: RAIMO ÖSTERBERG

Moses chose differently. He preferred to suffer with God's people rather than acquire the fleeting enjoyment of sin. He considered the sufferings of Christ as greater riches than all of the treasures of Egypt, for he fixed his gaze on the reward. Young Moses believed in God and attached his heart to Him. Moses thus chose by faith and overcame temptations (Heb. 11:24–27).

### THE GRACE OF REPENTANCE

Esau was overcome by sin. Even though he regretted it and wanted to regain the blessing that belonged to him as an inheritance, he did not get an opportunity to repent. Repentance is God's grace, not man's work. It is a serious matter if man rejects God, but it is an even more serious matter when God rejects man. If God does not give a place of repentance, the person is bound in his sins. This was Esau's portion. He did not receive grace, even though he sought it with tears.

The gate that leads to life is narrow, but open. Esau's example doesn't mean that one who has fallen into sin is no longer able to return. According to the Augsburg Confession, "those who sin after Baptism receive forgiveness of sin whenever they come to repentance." The Augsburg Confession also condemns the Novatians, "who denied absolution to such as had sinned after Baptism."

Repentance is a change of mind. The recipients of the letter had received such grace. The writer rejoiced over it. He left them and he leaves us, after all of his encouraging words, in the great confidence that God takes good care of His children. We can remain in the protection of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has bestowed His peace upon us and equips us with His good gifts so that we can fulfill His will and attain the rest of the saints.

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