

03-08-15 – Giving It Up: Giving Up Superiority

John 4:5-42

We are bringing a Lenten series to you for the next few weeks called: Giving It Up. Pastor Jerry started us off on Ash Wednesday with a message called: Giving It Up: Control. The idea is that, while it is cool to give up something superficial for Lent, it would be so much more meaningful to understand some of the things that are ingrained into our fabric that maybe God would like us to give up completely. So, we are going to beat you up a little over the next few weeks. Well, we won't beat you up, but hopefully the Holy Spirit will get ahold of some things in your life and put His finger on it to prompt you to repent and change for the better – God's better for you – His will in your life – and a new approach to life. That's our goal in this series. Today we will be addressing the topic of Superiority. Let's see how that works ☺

Everybody loves to find fault; it gives a feeling of superiority.

That is our starting point. Let's look at our Text for today found in John's Gospel – 4:5-42 The Message.

John 4:5-42 – The Message...

He came into Sychar, a Samaritan village that bordered the field Jacob had given his son Joseph.

6 Jacob's well was still there. Jesus, worn out by the trip, sat down at the well. It was noon.

7 A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?"

8 (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.)

9 The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking me for a drink, and I would give you fresh, living water."

11 The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'?"

12 Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?"

13 Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again.

14 Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst - not ever. The water I give will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life."

15 The woman said, "Sir, give me this water so I won't ever get thirsty, won't ever have to come back to this well again!"

16 He said, "Go call your husband and then come back."

17 "I have no husband," she said.

18 You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't even your husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough."

19 "Oh, so you're a prophet!"

20 Well, tell me this: Our ancestors worshiped God at this mountain, but you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place for worship, right?"

21 *"Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you Samaritans will worship the Father neither here at this mountain nor there in Jerusalem.*

22 *You worship guessing in the dark; we Jews worship in the clear light of day. God's way of salvation is made available through the Jews.*

23 *But the time is coming - it has, in fact, come - when what you're called will not matter and where you go to worship will not matter.*

24 *God is sheer being itself - Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration."*

25 *The woman said, "I don't know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story."*

26 *"I am he," said Jesus. "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."*

27 *Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked. They couldn't believe he was talking with that kind of a woman. No one said what they were all thinking, but their faces showed it.*

28 *The woman took the hint and left. In her confusion she left her water pot. Back in the village she told the people,*

29 *"Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?"*

30 *And they went out to see for themselves.*

31 *In the meantime, the disciples pressed him, "Rabbi, eat. Aren't you going to eat?"*

32 *He told them, "I have food to eat you know nothing about."*

33 *The disciples were puzzled. "Who could have brought him food?"*

34 *Jesus said, "The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started.*

35 *As you look around right now, wouldn't you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I'm telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what's right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It's harvest time!*

36 *"The Harvester isn't waiting. He's taking his pay, gathering in this grain that's ripe for eternal life. Now the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant.*

37 *That's the truth of the saying, 'This one sows that one harvests.'*

38 *I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."*

39 *Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: "He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!"*

40 *They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days.*

41 *A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say.*

42 *They said to the woman, "We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!"*

As we look at this text, we see a woman, a Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus, a Jew, asks her for a drink. That's when the fun begins and the attitude is revealed. We see the woman instantly start to act superior, first with a question of why a Jew would ask a Samaritan for anything, showing the Jews had an attitude of superiority against the Samaritans. But then she flips to a Samaritan superiority toward Jesus and asks Him if he is greater than their ancestor, Jacob. The Samaritans felt they were the true worshippers of God. After all they stayed on the original mountain to worship, and they even had and used the original well Jacob dug and left for them – an artifact. They had the location and the goods. They must be superior to the Jews after all.

Jesus could have easily taken her down at the knees at this point, but instead He begins to ask her questions about her life. The woman is quickly humbled in His presence, and she begins to see who He really is. Jesus plain out tells her He is the Messiah, which floors her. She brings testimony about Jesus to her town, and many come to see and hear Him. Many Samaritans were saved as a result. Jesus explains a great truth... It doesn't matter who you are, who your ancestors are, where you worship or your style of worship. All that matter is your heart toward God. Are we honest, truthful, - thrifty, brave, clean and reverent (BSA)? Is our love for God and others genuine and pure?

"A simple experiment both validated the old truism that a dog is a man's best friend and enlightened me of my opinions regarding the superiority of spousal friendship.

I locked my beloved Golden Retriever, Buddy, in the trunk with my dear wife for one hour. After the hour, my dog was giddy with enthusiasm to see me and showered me with slobbery kisses. But my wife seemed more agitated than excited. She was muttering something about me and the doghouse. You'd think after a whole hour separated from each other, she'd want to spend extra time together, but that was not the case whatsoever. So I guess I'll have to see if the old pooch is up for some extra company out at his place tonight." (Sermon Central Illustrations – Superiority)

Rom. 14:1-3 The Message

Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with - even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.

2 For instance, a person who has been around for a while might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume all Christians should be vegetarians and eat accordingly.

3 But since both are guests at Christ's table, wouldn't it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing what the other ate or didn't eat? God, after all, invited them both to the table. ...

4 Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God's welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.

"Jesus broke all kinds of social conventions by speaking to a woman in public, a Samaritan no less, whose own life was such a mess that it could have really messed up Jesus' reputation as a holy man. But Jesus brought his message of grace and freedom to the woman, knowing that in her humility, she would actually hear and respond, while the religious people were too busy and self-important to hear. God doesn't care about any of the artificial lines we draw to make ourselves feel superior to others. If we let go of our status symbols and judgmental attitudes, we too can hear Jesus' call more clearly and respond more faithfully." (Give It Up – Lenten Series).

Why do we think we can judge one another? The church should be the place of most tolerance not the least. Each of us have an area that we fall short of God's perfect blessing to us and others. We are so quick to condemn and judge, but we can't see clearly our own faults before God. So the church says don't eat certain things, don't drink, don't smoke, don't, don't, don't. Don't dress that way; don't wear make-up or jewelry.

Come here and join us in Christian fellowship where we drink tons of coffee and talk about others that are not in conformance with our beliefs. Did you see what that one was wearing? Did you smell the smoke on that one? All this judgmental attitude is wrong in God's eyes. What is He looking for?

Isn't He looking for a life that is sold out to Him and looking for Him to reveal the light of Christ to someone, no matter where they are now? We may need to step back to see if we have a superiority attitude and a judgmental spirit. It may not be easy to acknowledge and repent of, but repentance is what we need. That's part of what the Lenten season is all about. It's a time to reflect on our spiritual lives and make the adjustments we hear and feel God pointing out to us. But, we need to hear Him.

12 So tend to your knitting. You've got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

13 Forget about deciding what's right for each other. Here's what you need to be concerned about: that you don't get in the way of someone else, making life more difficult than it already is.

14 I'm convinced - Jesus convinced me! - That everything as it is in itself is holy. We, of course, by the way we treat it or talk about it, can contaminate it.

I had a friend, the percussionist in our worship band, "Earthen Vessels," who was also a smoker. He loved the Lord and was never judgmental or superior to anyone. Christians would say to him, "Brother can I pray for you, so you can be rid of that burden of smoking?" He would say, "This is not my burden; it's yours. This is between God and me." OK – he was a bit of a rebel.

I am not condoning anything here – I'm just trying to show how we as Christians have issues with superiority more than we may realize. I wouldn't have superiority issues if people weren't such jerks. Hello – There is no excuses before God. Jesus never showed superiority – only compassion – and maybe stern love. He didn't condone wrong or compromise, but he didn't beat people over the head either.

The Baptists are superior to the Lutherans, and the Lutherans are superior to the Roman Catholics. The Nazarenes are superior to the Pentecostals, and so on. You get it. Actually, none of us are or should be superior to anyone else or any other group. We are all saved by grace, and none of us have arrived at perfect holiness in God's sight. We are all works in the process of sanctification. Let's get off our high horse spiritually, and get back down on the same level ground as everyone else.

This is something God would like to deal with in your life and my life permanently, not just during the 6 weeks of Lent. That is the purpose of this sermon series. Let's recognize some more ingrained issues we all have and repent of them now, so we can have a permanently altered spiritual life.

Philip Yancey interviewed a young alcoholic who had formerly been an active church member, but had allowed Alcoholics Anonymous to replace the church. When questioned why, the young man responded, "Mainly I'm trying to survive, and AA helps me in that struggle far better than any church." Yancey explored further, "Name one quality missing in the local church that AA somehow provides."

The alcoholic stared at his coffee, watching it go cold. Finally he looked up and whispered one word: "Dependency."

He explained, " I don't sense them consciously leaning on God or on each other... Maybe God is calling us alcoholics to teach the saints what it means to be dependent on Him and on His community on earth."

POOR I-SIGHT:

We suffer from poor I-sight. Not eyesight, a matter of distorted vision that lenses can correct, but I-sight. Poor I-sight blurs your view, not of the world, but of yourself.

Some see self too highly. Maybe it's the PhD or pedigree. A tattoo can do it; so can a new truck or the Nobel Peace Prize. Whatever the cause, the result is the same. "I have so many gifts. I can do anything."

Brazenly self-assured and utterly self-sufficient, the I-focused have long strutted beyond the city limits of self-confidence and entered the state of cockiness. You wonder who puts the "air" in arrogance and the "vain" in vainglory. Those who say, "I can do anything."

You've said those words. For a short time, at least. A lifetime, perhaps. We all plead guilty to some level of superiority.

And don't we also know the other extreme: "I can't do anything"?

Forget the thin air of pomposity; these folks breathe the thick, swampy air of self-defeat. Roaches have higher self-esteem. Earthworms stand taller. "I'm a bum. I am scum. The world would be better off without me."

Divorce stirs such crud. So do diseases and job dismissals. Where the first group is arrogant, this group is diffident. Blame them for every mishap; they won't object. They'll just agree and say, "I can't do anything."

Two extremes of poor I-sight. Self-loving and self-loathing. We swing from one side to the other. Promotions and demotions bump us back and forth. One day too high on self, the next too hard on self. Neither is correct. Self-elevation and self-deprecation are equally inaccurate. Where is the truth?

Smack-dab in the middle. Dead center between "I can do anything" and "I can't do anything" lies ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).***

Neither omnipotent nor impotent, neither God's MVP nor God's mistake. Not self-secure or insecure, but God-secure -- a self-worth based in our identity as children of God. The proper view of self is in the middle.

[Lucado, M. (2012). Life to the full: 3-in-1 featuring. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.]

Phil. 2:3-5 – *Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead.*

4 Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

5 Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

How did Jesus think of Himself? What did He do? He poured Himself out. He set Himself aside.

“He emptied Himself. Even though He could have held onto His high position of equality with God, which meant superiority over all of humankind, He didn't do it. Instead, he gave it all up. He could have ruled over all, but instead, he became a servant of all.

Our Lord poured Himself out in obedience and suffering and death. Paul poured himself out in sacrifice and service. Timothy poured himself out in compassionate help. Epaphroditus poured himself out in Christian ministry. The Philippians poured themselves out in praise and giving.

And we are to pour ourselves out. Too. How?

The same way Jesus did – setting aside the privileges of His own life and living a life that was dedicated to humbly serving others.” <Eugene Peterson>