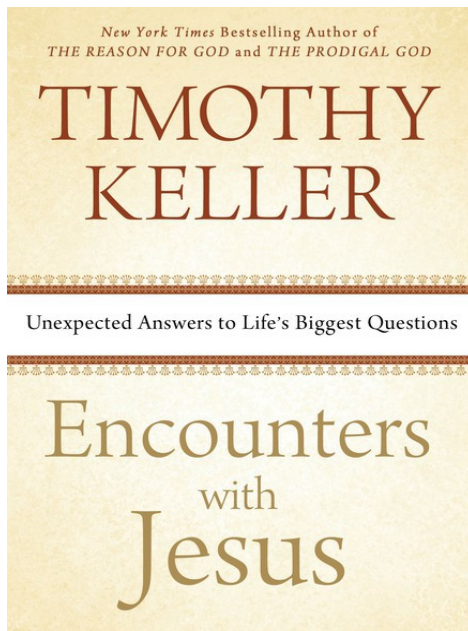


West Valley Presbyterian Church
The Insider and the Outcast
Fill My Cup, Lord
Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann

Today we continue our series using Tim Keller's book "Encounters With Jesus".



As I suggested last time if you purchase the book and read each chapter ahead of time you will get a lot more out of what I am saying on Sunday mornings.

Today we are on chapter 2 – And chapter 2 is called "The Insider and the Outcast"

THE BIG QUESTION KELLER IS ANSWERING FOR US TODAY – IS **WHAT IS WRONG WITH OUR WORLD?**

We all would agree – there is something wrong with our world; just watch the news...right? There we see evil... heartbreak...hunger...betrayal... brokenness...violence....injustice...

What causes all this? Why is there such pain here on this planet?

We have to ask *this question first* because diagnosis always comes *before* a prescription is given.

That is why you have to go to the doctor to be examined first – so the right solution can be found..meds, exercise, fluids, rest – whatever it is...

If the doctor doesn't know the problem is he or she can't give you the right solution

So to the question "**WHAT IS WRONG WITH OUR WORLD?**"

FOR KELLER, AND FOR SCRIPTURE, THE ANSWER IS A VERY SHORT LITTLE WORLD – IT IS THE WORD **SIN**

Now no one likes to talk about that too much these days. The word "sin" is kind of a turn off

I recently heard a cute story about a Sunday School teacher who asked her young class, "What must we do in order to be forgiven?" A young hand enthusiastically began waiving. "I know! I know!" shouted the youngster to his teacher. "Yes, go on," said the teacher. "we have to **Sin!**" the boy exclaimed proudly.

The word sin, or calling someone a sinner, has a lot of cultural baggage

It has been used to marginalize and objectify those who are not Christians
In other words, if you don't believe the way that I believe you don't only disagree with me...you are also a sinner. So its been used to put other people down...

But...we are all sinners...I am as much you are...how can I lord it over you if I am in the same boat?

And that is the point of the two stories that were read to you today
John want us to know right away that there is no distinction between people when it comes to our separation from God. No one escapes the verdict of being a sinner.

We are all separated from God

But because we tend to think of "sinners" as those really bad people out there, John challenges us a bit with these two stories that involve completely different kinds of people

One of these is considered an outcast (the woman at the well)...the other one is considered an insider (that's Nicodemus because he was super religious and highly respected)

When I was growing up, middle school was a traumatic time for me
So many people seem to agree with me when I say that...6th, 7th. 8th grade was the pits

I heard a well reknowned therapist say that nine time out of ten the people who come into her office start off with something that happened to them in Jr High. Those memories are deeply embedded in my psyche...I will never get over them...

I was so the outcast in middle school

Last chosen for the teams (you know how they used to do that – dreadful exercise)

I was the no one wanted to sit next to at lunch...I still can't sit alone in a restaurant and eat because it brings back school lunchroom memories... So shy...so withdrawn...I think the kids just though I was weird and I think I was

There is nothing worse than being an outcast – you feel so lonely

The first person we are going to look at is the Samaritan woman at the well
She is the outcast –
She has had five husbands...who knows what other men she has been with – and the man she currently is with is not her husband
She is looked down upon
If you notice she comes at noon to draw her water out of the well
Why is that?
The common time to do draw water was early in the morning before it got too hot. That's when all the women went, laughing and chattering together. But the Samaritan woman was an outcast
She wasn't like the other women – she was a sinner - and if she had tried to join them she would have been shunned
So she waits until it is the hottest time of the day, when she know no one will be outside of their homes, and that's when she goes to draw her water

Its when we are feeling most alone, that so often Jesus comes alongside us
It was in middle school in 8th grade when I was ready to stop living my life that Jesus came alongside me...I had an experience of God's amazing grace that I will never forget at 13 years old...Jesus saved my life...I've shared that story with you many times
Jesus is a great friend to the outcast...

And here, the woman, the outcast coming in the heat of the day to draw water
Gets to the well and who is there?
Jesus...and he says “Will you give me a drink?”

Now **Jewish men weren't supposed to talk to Jewish women in public** back then – it was considered scandalous - so the very fact that Jesus talks to a woman at all is completely shocking
But the fact that he is talking to a Samaritan woman is even more shocking
Jews didn't talk to Samaritans at all – female/male – it didn't matter...

Samaritans were the worst...as far as the Jews were concerned
Bitter enemies!

They were Jews who had intermarried with Canaanites and essentially
formed a new tribe

The Samaritans took parts of the Jewish religion and parts of the Canaanite
religion and created a syncretistic religion

So the Jews considered the Samaritans racially inferior, and heretics...

So when Jesus begins to speak to her he is deliberately reaching across
almost every significant barrier that people can put up between themselves
In this case he, ***Jesus reaches across a racial barrier, a cultural barrier, a
gender barrier, and a moral barrier.***

That's our God

The other thing about this encounter is that although Jesus is very open and
kind to her, he still confronts her. But he does it in a gentle way. He starts
out by saying...

***“If you knew who I was, you would ask me for living water; and if you
drink that water you will never thirst again.”***

The woman doesn't know what he is talking about. She mentions to him
that he doesn't even have a jug with him to fill it for her...how can he get
living water?

The woman is still interested though, because if Jesus can give her water that
is going to make it so that she never gets thirsty, she won't have to come to
the well in the hot noon sun any longer. So she responds eventually,

***“Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming
here to draw water.”***

Water was extremely valuable in Jesus' day. Most of us don't know what
real thirst is like. It is agony...

I was thirsty the other day and we were in the car with no water! I could
barely stand it for ten minutes getting to a gas station where I could buy
some bottled water...

Back then agonizing thirst was common; water was scarce and the days
long and hot

And Jesus is saying to her, “I’ve got something for you that is as basic and necessary to you spiritually as water is to you physically. Something without which you are absolutely lost.”

And he uses water because this also indicates that what he has to offer is not just lifesaving – but it satisfies deeply from the inside.

“My water, if you get it, will become in you a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” He’s talking about deep satisfaction on the inside – irrespective of what happens to us on the outside...

The woman doesn’t realize yet that Jesus is speaking spiritually
She is very concrete...but

Jesus has her attention...as I said

If Jesus had a kind of water that would eliminate her thirst forever she was sure she wanted it...she hated coming to the well as the outcast at high noon in the heat of the day...so she asks and says...Give it to me...

And then Jesus lets her know, that he knows her story well...and he confronts her again

“Go call your husband”

“I have no husband” she responds

And Jesus says, ***“You are right. You have had five husbands, and the one you are now with is not your husband.”***

What is Jesus doing here? Trying to humiliate her? Why move from seeking living water to her history with men?

In actuality though he isn’t changing the subject. He is nudging her saying,

“If you want to understand the nature of this living water I offer, you need to first understand how you’ve been seeking it in your own life. You’ve been trying to get it through men, and it’s not working, is it? Your need for men is eating you alive, and it will never stop.” (Keller pg 31)

All of us worship something.

It isn’t always God

In fact our default setting is to worship things, people, power, success and on and on

And we often forget how thirsty we are because we believe that we will somehow fulfill our dreams...and once we get there all will be well

We live under the erroneous assumption that something outside of us, when it happens, when we get there, will fill us up inside of us

David Foster Wallace was an American writer who got to the top of his profession. He was an award-winning bestselling postmodern novelist known around the world for his boundary pushing storytelling...he said this in a speech...

“Everybody worships. The only choice we get is *what to worship*...If you worship money and things...then you will never feel you have enough... worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure, and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before your loved ones finally plant you...worship power and you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect...you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out...”

Wallace understood that everyone worships – everyone trusts in something for their salvation, everyone bases their lives on something that requires faith.

What do you worship? What do you spend most of your time thinking about, giving your money to, striving after?

A few years later, after giving this speech, Wallace committed suicide. All that he worshipped ate him alive.

Boris Becker – the great tennis champion, years ago said **“I was rich...I had won Wimbledon twice, once as the youngest player...But I had no inner peace.”**

Sophia Lorene in a famous interview in which she said she had everything also said, **“in my life there is an emptiness that is impossible to fill.”**

Well, I wish I had their problem, you might say. Their wealth, fame and glory would be okay with me for sure!

But look at it! They have the same problem we do – the difference is that they *got* all those things that we aspire for too, but in the end it didn't quench their thirst in the slightest.

If Jesus is not what you worship, the thing you worship will fail you.

In the end, Jesus reveals to the woman that he is the Messiah
All of a sudden the woman runs around the whole village and brings a bunch of people out to “see the man who told her all that she had ever done”
After being with Jesus, She isn't afraid of people anymore
She isn't an outcast – or at least doesn't see herself that way
She has been caught up by the person of Jesus and is so excited about him she brings the whole village out to see the Messiah.

Let's move now to the story of Nicodemus that comes right before the woman at the well – in contrast to the woman at the well

Who was an outcast

Nicodemus was an insider in the religious community...

He is a very important religious man

Very involved in religious things, highly trained, knows the scripture, keeps the law

OK...notice

As opposed to the Samaritan woman at the well whom Jesus deals with very gently

It isn't so with Nicodemus. Jesus is much more direct with him

Nicodemus comes to Jesus full of praise

“Ah Rabbi, I've heard many wonderful things about you. People say you have a lot of wisdom that God has given you.”

Jesus doesn't beat around the bush

He looks at Nicodemus and says straight up “**You must be born again.**”

Born again is a loaded term nowadays, isn't it?

Someone said to me recently “What is a born again Christian anyway? The ones I've known, they just think they are better than everybody else.”

Many people have the quiet opinion that those born againers are different than regular people who just live life – probably a bit more emotional, broken, unstable – and they need some dramatic emotional experience to

keep them on the straight and narrow. Weaker than the majority..needing a big cathartic moment

Being born again is for those kinds of people..shhh ...Whatever...if it helps those kinds of people....okay...the weaker fall for that sort of thing - fine

But the Biblical account won't let us think this way at all. Nicodemus is a prominent leader, a member of the Sanhedrin, the assembly of Hebrew high court judges. He is devout, upstanding, and a well respected Pharisee.

When he calls Jesus Rabbi – even though Jesus has had no formal training it shows that he is humble.

And the fact that he would seek Jesus at night, when nobody would see him going to Jesus, shows that he is more open minded than most.

Jesus is a master at this one too.

Instead of pressing him on his lack of satisfaction as he did with the woman (I can give you living water)

He presses him Nicodemus on his smug “self satisfaction”

With all of his accomplishments in the religious world...

When he says to Nicodemus you must be born again he is essentially saying - Nic

Did you have to do anything to be born?

Did you work hard at it?

Did you try real hard to earn the privilege of life?

No. You did nothing.

You didn't earn or contribute anything to being born

It is a free gift – this gift of life.

In the same way salvation is by grace – he is trying to explain this to Nicodemus, this well learned educated man who has tried so hard to do all the right things, all of his life...to please God

Jesus is telling him

There are no moral efforts that can earn or merit salvation...

Its all grace

You must be born again.

Now some people might say, “I understand why Jesus treats the woman at the well the way he does. She really needed help – she was a sinner.”

“But why Nicodemus – the Insider, the leader, the one who knew scripture – why would he treat Nicodemus as a sinner too?”

Keller puts it this way,

“Here is the surprising answer. Sin is looking to something else besides God for your salvation. It is putting yourself in the place of God, becoming your own savior and lord, as it were.”

You can put something else besides God for your salvation in the way we talked about it before...break all the moral codes to find pleasure and happiness like the woman at the well
But you can also be your own savior and lord in a religious way too.
That is to act as if your good life, and moral achievement will essentially require God to bless you and save you.

Religious people always talk about trusting God
But if you think your goodness is contributing to your salvation then you are actually being your own savior.
You are trusting in yourself.

**So Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman are in the same exact place.
Sinners in need of grace
And so are we**

Now some people also might say
I'm not like either one of those Biblical characters
I am a moral person, who is not really religious
There may be a God, I don't know for sure
But either way I'm a good person and that's all that should matter
But that's not all that should matter

To all of you mothers out there today, you have kids. You told and taught them well, from the time they were young to always tell the truth, always work hard, always care for the poor. And what if the kids graduate and go away and they never speak to you again.

They might send you a card, but the kids never phone or visit.
What if they were asked about their relationship with their Mom, with you, and they said, “No, I don't have anything to do with my Mom *personally*.”

But, I always tell the truth, work hard, and care for the poor. I've lived a good life, that's all that matters isn't it?"

Hardly.

It is not enough to live a good moral life without having a relationship with the one who taught you those morals.

With the one who gave you all that you have – more than living just a moral life, kids owe their Moms their love and affection.

And if there is a God, we owe him literally everything

Far more than just living a moral decent life

God deserves to be at the center of our life – our passion, our focus, our joy, our total unswerving commitment belongs to him...he is our only true savior

If you build your life on your career, or your spouse, or your money, or your morality and it fails, there is no hope for you.

Every other savior but Jesus is not really a savior

If you gain Jesus, he will satisfy you

If you fail him he will forgive you

Your career and your moral performance cannot die for your sins

In a minute we are going to sing the OLD HYMN fill my cup Lord

I want you to remember that there are two places in the New Testament

Where Jesus says "I am thirsty"

One was to the woman at the well, when he asked her for a drink

His thirst allowed her to find salvation

The other time he said these words was at the end of his life

As he hung on a cross...he whispered through parched lips "I thirst"

The Divine Son of God, maker of heaven and earth, descended to us in human form and made himself vulnerable, weak, and thirsty so that we could be filled.

As he uttered those words "I thirst" from the cross I think it was more than just physical thirst he was feeling

I think he said this because he was cut off from the glorious relationship with his Father that he knew so well – he was cut off from that as he took our sins on himself – He was cut off from his Father who was the source of living water – that's why he was thirsty

Jesus experienced that cosmic thirst on the cross that we all have for God
He experienced this for us, willingly, gladly, so that we could be filled, born
again

As we sing Fill My Cup Lord, may this great sacrifice of Jesus – becoming
thirsty so we could be filled with living water- help you to recognize how
much you are loved and valued

How deeply God desires a relationship with you

And may you be moved to turn from anything that enslaves you today, and
worship him alone...

Let us Pray

We are sinners Lord. Whether we identify more with the woman at the well,
or with the self righteous Nicodemus, we are all sinners in need of you.

Come and save us from worshiping all the wrong things. Forgive us and
may we seek you alone...our only hope, our only joy, our one salvation.

AMEN