

JACOB'S WELL



THE VALUE OF A GOOD TEACHER

Scripture:

John 4:1-15

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, ‘Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John’—²although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—³he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’ ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’

¹¹The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?’ ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’ ¹³Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’ ¹⁵The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’



JACOB'S WELL

At Jacob’s Well, Jesus met with the Samaritan woman and offered her water. This woman symbolizes so many things that Jesus is not: she is not his nationality or religion; she is of a lower social class, and of course, she’s a female. The rules stated that the two should not interact. Jesus reached out to the woman at Jacob’s Well and they talked about her life and her future.

The water is symbolic. This is living water drawn from a fresh and pure spring rooted deep underground. Everyone who came to Jacob’s well knew that there was no risk of e-coli contamination, arsenic tailings, and rotting sewage. This well was dependable. The experience at Jacob’s Well was always refreshing. People filled their wineskins for the next step in their journey. Jesus said I am like this water: I am your

friend, not your enemy. Let no one tell us otherwise. I promise you the future.

THE POOL OF SILOAM

Five chapters later in the book of John, there is a similar story. This time Jesus meets a man who had been blind from birth. Through a miracle that is part faith and a little science, the mud washes the impediment from his eyes in the Pool of Siloam. The man proclaims, "I once was blind, but now I see." That statement is more spiritual than physical.

Check this: The disciples were all about cause. They asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

And Jesus says, who the heck cares how he got this way, let's fix it. I am all about cure. A physical or emotional handicap is only an opportunity for God to demonstrate healing.

So the living water gave the woman a new spirit, and the healing touch of Jesus restored the man's vision. We all have a blind spot that Jesus can heal.

BLIND SIDE

Sandra Bullock won the Oscar this year. Did you see the movie? It was called, "*Blind Side*." We will show this film as part of our summer Oscar Film Series in July.

Blind Side, based on the real life of the Baltimore Raven's lineman Michael Oher, chronicles his rise from homelessness to a football star. The title alludes to the position

Oher plays. The primary job of the biggest blockers is protecting the quarterback's back — the blind side — when he is dropping back to pass.

If the lineman does his job, the quarterback gets to stand in the pocket, throw a pass, and good things usually happen.

What happens when the linemen do not protect the quarterback's blindside? Do you remember watching the Washington Redskins quarterback, Joe Theismann throw his last pass on the last play of his professional career? I still have to cover my eyes when that is replayed. Just as Theismann is about to throw the ball, a defensive lineman crashed into him and hit him with his full weight. He hit Theismann on his blind side, and threw 250 pounds onto the outside of his left knee. Theismann's leg broke with such a loud snap that people could hear it in the grandstands. The television showed that his leg was broken at nearly a right angle. He was hospitalized for months. He never played football again.

If the lineman doesn't do his job, the quarterback can be hit on his blind side, and be seriously injured. This picture of a quarterback being blindsided is so imprinted in the minds of football players and fans, that every organizational leader knows what it means to be "blindsided" too.

Here's a management-training article using that analogy to benefit leaders of all kinds: Let us say that based on our experiences working with senior managers, we do think that most executives can describe the competitive ways their firms can be blind-sided. For one, when they try to install their vision without proper environmental analyses, they are often sacked by reality. For evidence, all one has to do is look at the American automakers

throughout the '80s and '90s. (Or Toyota last month.)

UNABLE TO SEE THE ENTIRE FIELD

In addition, if leaders get so myopically focused on direct competitors that they fail to see potential entrants, they can certainly find themselves scrambling.

History is filled with companies hobbled or destroyed because of an inadequate job of protecting the blind side. And to be sure, being blind-sided in this respect, just as in football, can result in struggle, loss of momentum, and impairment. Moreover, avoiding being blind-sided in this arena is clearly an executive function.

But in our interactions with various organizational players, we are convinced that too many fail to see the entire field. In using the football metaphors, a senior executive told us he definitely understood the idea of scrambling—and many of you can relate.

BECOMING A "BIG UGLY"

Another organizational leader said he needed someone to protect his blind side, and many of you also sympathize with this perspective.

Senior leaders, you are the people in the organization with the time, information, and charge to examine trends and create strategies to make sure you aren't blind-sided. We have made many managers unhappy in our consulting when expressing the belief that if your group is blind-sided, it's in large measure your fault. But you must accept this responsibility if you are willing to assume the mantle of leadership. And to do that job fully, you must augment the vision and glory of playing quarterback by joining the ranks of the "Big Uglies," as

lineman are often referred to (a term of endearment). It may not be as sexy for you, but your organizational stakeholders will become your most ardent cheerleaders. (*Stephanie Pane Haden is an assistant professor of management and John Humphreys is a management professor at Texas A&M University-Commerce.*)

PROTECTING EACH OTHER'S BACK

If this works for blind men in the time of Jesus, and if this is true of management, it is also true in your dearest personal relationships.

We need someone to protect our blind side. Jesus is part of that team. We all have a blind side. There is nothing anyone can say to prevent people from attempting to blindside you. It will happen, and because we are all blind in some way, we will not see that it is coming.

But what if we were not one person stomping out stupidity, but an army of four-hundred people who were committed to protecting each other's blind side, whether attacked by health, finance, disaster or social condition.

Most of us probably don't know what our blind side is, by definition. Maybe we don't need to know. We wouldn't need to know if we knew that the people of our faith were trying to help us protect our blind side, rather than exposing it.

When we hear about another person's misfortune, how do we react? Do we react like the disciples who questioned about the parents' sin or the child's sin that produced

this condition? Do we look for someone to blame?

BLAME OR CURE?

Or do we react like Jesus, and look for something to cure?

We've come through a week of political hyperbole that has heaped blame pretty high. But I hope none of you will be sucked into stepping in one of those piles.

Here's the formula – it's pretty simple:

When you come across someone who is spiritually thirsty...

When you encounter someone some who has become internally blind ...

When you find yourself looking for someone to blame ...

Do what Jesus did for the blind man. Do what Jesus did for the woman at the well.

Have the compassion that the *Blind Side*'s Sandra Bullock character had for the black man who was born to a mother hooked on crack, and whose family gave him a big heart but no legs to stand on. **Help out!**

Look for the opportunity of healing.

The difference between people who are healthy spiritually and those who are not...

The difference between a healthy community and a sick one...

The difference between a healthy congregation and a hurting congregation is in its ability to protect each other's blind side rather than flaunting it.

The disciples chose cause, Jesus chose cure.

The disciples chose blame, Jesus chose forgiveness and healing.

Today is Palm Sunday. Be like Jesus. **Choose life.**



Dr. John H. Cushman
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95405
March 28, 2010