

The Tyranny of Right-ness

Historical footnotes:

931 BC. Solomon dies and ten of the tribes of Israel secede due to high taxation.

722 BC. The Assyrians attack the northern tribes and destroy their leadership, settling in the land. The ten tribes intermarry with the invaders who settle in the area.

110 BC. Judah occupies Samaria and physically destroys the temple on Mount Gerazim.

10 BC. The Samaritans desecrate the temple in Jerusalem by scattering human bones throughout it during Passover.

We who are of the Christian persuasion have a bad habit of always wanting to be right. I mean, we are, aren't we? Aren't we? Don't we know the capital T truth about God, social justice, salvation by grace, and a host of other things that we can be very confident of because, well, we're RIGHT?

The trouble with being right is that it's addictive. It takes over our lives and makes us say and do things we would, in our best natures, never condone. Being right becomes more important to us than, well, anything else. If asked the question "Would you rather be right or happy", I'm afraid a lot of us would rather be right. This is not the Way.

John tells the story of Jesus and the disciples walking through Samaria and Jesus ends up at Jacob's Well, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. It would have been nice if she had just gotten him his water, but this woman was suffering from the tyranny of "right-ness" herself. "You can't drink water I draw up,

I'm a Samaritan". "You don't even have a bucket (duh). How do you expect to get water out of the well?" "Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob?"

Jesus refuses to engage. At any point in time, he could have argued her points with her and won. After all, it was the Samaritans who joined with the heathens surrounding them, the Samaritans who built a substitute temple, the Samaritans who desecrated our temple just a hundred years ago! Jesus had a right to be right, didn't He? But Jesus was above the tyranny of right-ness. Jesus was on a mission of reconciliation.

Even when she challenges Him about the very temple her people desecrated, Jesus refuses to fall into the "right trap", instead saying that he's looking forward to a time when everyone "worships in truth", not in a temple.

Jesus is getting to a point here, and He knows that while He could "prove himself right" that won't achieve the goal of reconciliation. It rarely does.

Finally, she challenges him to give her the "living water" He referred to, and he pulls the ace card out of his sleeve. "Go get your husband", He says. He knows she is living with a boyfriend, He knows she's been married five times, but notice what he doesn't say? The quiet part here is deafening.

She tells him she can tell he's a prophet, which could mean anything from a holy man to a magician in her culture, and Jesus could finally take the moral high road and give her what for over her "immoral" lifestyle. But.

Jesus refuses to submit to the tyranny of being right. He refuses to use his morality to judge or belittle God's beloved child. For Jesus, in that moment, at-one-ment is the only thing that matters.

Then she asks the big question – Samaritans were also looking for the Messiah.

He answers in the affirmative. He is the one she seeks.

Jesus sought, and found, humans desperately seeking oneness with the divine. Jesus was unwilling to submit to the tyranny of being right, but submitted instead to God's perfect love.

Friends, if we are to celebrate the light that is within each and every one of God's creations we cannot submit to the tyranny that "being right" becomes. The question is: "Would you rather be right, or be loved?"

Or the corollary, "Would you rather be right, or love?"