

## "Seven Words We Don't Use in Church"

7 Week Sermon & Worship Series

Sundays, July 15 – August 26, 2018

First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia

Preaching: Senior Pastor Rev. Dr. James L. Brewer-Calvert

<b>Date</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Holy Scriptures</b>
July 15	SMILE	I Thessalonians 5: 14-18
July 22	CURSES	Psalms 19; Matthew 15: 1-13
July 29	GOSSIP	Proverbs 12: 18; James 3: 9-12; 1 Corinthians 13
August 5	SCIENCE	Genesis 1 and 2; Job 38
August 12	PRONOUNS	Matthew 7: 7-12
August 19	SHAME	John 4: 5-15, 28-30, 39-42
August 26	SEX	Song of Solomon

### **Sunday, August 19, 2018**

#### **"SHAME"**

##### **Holy Scriptures: John 4: 5-15, 28-30, 39-42**

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John"<sup>2</sup>—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—<sup>3</sup> he left Judea and started back to Galilee. <sup>4</sup>But he had to go through Samaria.

<sup>5</sup>So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."<sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The 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.)

<sup>10</sup>Jesus 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."

<sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

<sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but 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."

<sup>15</sup>The 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."

<sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" <sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to him.

<sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word.

<sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

***Start getting the spirit, spirit in the dark...***

Most everyone has their own Aretha Franklin story.

She influenced generations,

touched our souls,

got us up on our feet to dance and sway and sing,

gave us her can-do spirit,

and made darn sure we demand the respect we deserve

What's your Aretha Franklin story?

The Brewer-Calvert family were cruising down I-85, driving into the city to our home.

It was nighttime outside;

inside our family van our little lights were shining,

singing along with Aretha's Greatest Hits on the CD player.

We belted out *Respect* as the miles rolled by.

We hit replay to sing it again,

wanting, hoping, needing to get the lyrics by Otis Redding just right.

Wait a minute, wait a minute, everyone get quiet now, this time let's listen.

What does she say right after *R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me*

We hit replay again and again, all four of us leaning in, intent to catch the nuance,

only sounds the wheels on the highway and Aretha's open-book soul.

*R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me*

*R-E-S-P-E-C-T, take care, TCB, oh*

That's it! *TCB*

Take Care of Business

Aretha telling the world Take Care of Those Whom You Should R-E-S-P-E-C-T

So many favorites, so many parties, so many touchstones

with Aretha's voice soaring as the descant for the soundtrack of our lives.

*Son of a Preacher Man*

*(There is A Rose in) Spanish Harlem*

*Eleanor Rigby*

*Natural Woman*

*I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)*

recorded down the road in Muscle Shoals, Alabama in one magical take.

And her timeless ballad, *Spirit in the Dark*.

*I-I'm getting the spirit in the dark (Um-hum-hum)*

*I'm getting the spirit in the dark (um-hum-hum)*

*People moving oh and they grooving*

*Just getting the spirit (Um-hum-hum) in the dark*

*Tell me sister how do ya feel?*

*Tell me my brother-brother-brother*

*How do you feel?*

Let's tap into some of Aretha's courage and compassion to peer into the dark.

Let's set awhile to talk about something we don't and really should, to ask, to really ask:

*Tell me sister how do ya feel?*

*Tell me my brother-brother-brother*

*How do you feel?*

Before we attempt to bring anyone's spirit into the light,

to make all happy-happy, joy-joy,

let's take a risk and simply sit with our sister and brother in the dark,

in the spirit, the spirit is in the dark as in the light,

so it's okay, it's safe, it's fine to go there, into the dark,

'cause God is already there,  
sitting with us, loving you and me and us,  
Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit  
in the dark.

My prayer is that this conversation starter  
we are having in this safe place, this sacred space  
brings a few things out in the open that we need to hear,  
a few things that we need to start to talk about,  
a few things that no longer need be  
covered over or trampled on, ignored, or isolated.

Let's have conversations about what shame is and why we ignore it so.

Frankly, shame scares the bejesus out of us.

We are so afraid, fearful of even discussing the unmentionable.

Let's discuss how to talk with one another about shame.

About that which we feel ashamed, how we shame one another,  
and how we can support each other to release our inner demons.

Let's be brave, courageous, compassionate,

drawing strength for the journey ahead, together,

as we venture forth, brave spirits in the dark,  
going forth with courage and compassion, in community.

Thanks to a Jew named Jesus of Nazareth & an unnamed Samaritan woman,  
God's Word brings us to a safe place of understanding and grace.

Our story takes place at Jacob's Well.

Welcome to holy ground.

Here we imagine the meeting of Jesus and a woman of Samaria.

Students of the Bible know that when a man and a woman meet at a well,  
life gets exciting.

Things happen.

People are changed.

Relationships are never the same.

Isaac's servant met Rebekah at a well.

Jacob met Rachel at a well.

Solomon didn't meet anyone, and that meant he was bound to be in trouble.

In John, Chapter 4, the disciples and Jesus stop at the well,  
which is a mile and a half from town.

There are wells closer to town, but this one is sacred space.

This is Jacob's Well.

Jesus sends the Disciples to go into town for supplies,

to scout out what is going on, maybe to find a place for the night.

Jesus sits and waits in the early evening sun.

It is hot.

He is thirsty.

Someone approaches.

It's a woman with a water jar.

Now, there were three wells along this road to Sychar.

Jacob's well was the farthest out from town.

She had walked right past the first well, the one closest to her home.

A scholar observes that "*She is feeling shame and guilt for having had 5 husbands,  
and for living with one who is not her husband.*"

Maybe, maybe...

Every feel guilty? Or ashamed? Embarrassed? Disgraced?

Does it make you freeze? Or fight? Or want to take flight?

Does it lead you toward people, or away, to distance yourself?  
When shame takes hold of your emotions,  
    becomes your master,  
        making you feel imperfect, fearful you are going about life all wrong,  
            do you want to draw closer to people? Or God?  
            Or do you seek to be alone? Alone in the dark?

This well of fresh water is too close to town.  
She moves on to the next well.

Another Biblical scholar John Claypool said, "*She isn't feeling guilt; she is grieving.*"  
Maybe, maybe...

Ever grieve for a deep loss? Living with loss is so hard, so tough, so painful.  
When our beloved are feeling a sense of loss, of deep grief, we go to them.  
We sit with them. Sometimes we don't say one word.  
Being present is enough. Your presence is sufficient. Your silence speaks volumes.  
The presence of God in a friend has the power  
    to overcome our overwhelming desire to isolate, to separate.

This well is also too close to town.  
She moves on to the next well.

Biblical scholar Amy Jill Levine said, "*She isn't grieving or feeling guilt; she needed water!  
She wasn't an outcast, because later folks listened and accepted her story of meeting Jesus.*  
    *The essence of this story is that the Samaritan woman,  
        unlike Nicodemus, gets it. She listens and understands.*"

At Jacob's Well she meets God in human form.  
God in Christ respects her.  
Jesus sees her; He has compassion for her.  
She listens to Him.

She understands that this spirit is willing to sit with her in the dark, in broad daylight.  
Hildegard of Bingen understood this, as well. She said:  
"*We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us by others.  
An interpreted world is not a hope.  
Part of the terror is to take back our own listening. To use our own voice. To see our own light.*"

Buffy Calvert, my mother, wrote a series of poems called

#### SEVEN WOMEN WHO SHOULDN'T HAVE BUT DID

Here is her poem about the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus:

**SAMARITAN** *John 4:4-30*      By Elizabeth Stuart Calvert<sup>[1]</sup>

So I sashayed up to the well 'bout noon.  
What's it to you? I just  
Flirted a little.  
Batted my eyes, "You, a Jew, want a  
drink from lil ole me?"  
"I got living water. It lasts a lifetime." Naturally I said,  
"Gimme some." Pious type, so I  
asked which hill is holy, and he  
dived off the deep end.  
Said God's a spirit and don't  
care *where* we pray; just *how*.  
In spirit and truth. O.K. I  
got spirit. Too much, maybe.

Truth, too. My "husband"  
says I speak too free. But this Jew  
saw right through me. "You've  
had five husbands. And you're not  
married to the one you got now." My God! He  
knew everything. I ran. I  
shouted, "Come see this guy! Ain't he *some*thin?"

Ain't Jesus *some*thin'?  
God is present in our guilt and grief and gumption  
and whatever ground we suddenly find ourselves upon, whether shaky or solid.  
Jesus and the woman talked of water and living water,  
of the thirst for life and the spirit that quenches the soul.  
To a blessed soul who walked past two wells to a third,  
to draw water from the farthest well from her home,  
Jesus offered Living Water that she would never have to draw again.  
He invited her to connect to God, to connect in spirit and in truth.  
He gave her the gift of the secret of his divinity; she was the first to know.  
He commissions her to be the first evangelist.  
She is trusted to carry forth the Good News that God is Love, that God is Here!

She may have been racked with shame, or with guilt, or trauma, or fear, or grief.  
Jesus Christ gave the soothing, healing balm of R-E-S-P-E-C-T.  
He saw her. He loved her.  
He did not try to fix her or correct her; he accepted her.  
In the middle of the day in the quiet by Jacob's Well,  
He sat with her in whatever dark she kept,  
becoming for her a spirit in the dark.  
She overcame her shame, or whatever she may have wrestled with,  
to dance back into town and tell anyone and everyone,  
*"My God! He knew everything. I ran.  
I shouted, "Come see this guy! Ain't he some*thin?"  
Shame? what shame?

Shame  
Shame as a noun brings to mind disgrace.  
Embarrassment, dishonor, humiliation, indignity, ignominy, infamy.  
The antonym of shame is pride.  
Shame  
Shame as a verb brings to mind to discredit.  
Degrade. Mortify. Humiliate. Make uncomfortable, to bring shame on.  
The antonym of shame is honor.

The spirit sits with us in our darkness,  
not to shame us for having shame,  
but to remind us that we are loved, that we are defined by God,  
a Loving God who gives us the gift of pride,  
who honors you and me,  
who sits with us in the dark lest we be alone.

The spirit is not afraid of the dark.  
God is in the night as well as the day.  
Jesus was born in the dark, in a smelly manger under the stars.  
Jesus was resurrected in the dark, in a dank cave that doubled as a tomb.

"As many years as I have been listening to Easter sermons,  
I have never heard anyone talk about that part," said Barbara Brown Taylor.<sup>[ii]</sup>  
"Resurrection is always announced with Easter lilies,  
the sound of trumpets, bright streaming light.  
But it did not happen that way.  
If it happened in a cave, it happened in complete silence, in absolute darkness,  
with the smell of damp stone and dug earth in the air...  
new life starts in the dark.  
Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb,  
it starts in the dark."  
"Even when light fades and darkness falls  
--as it does every single day, in every single life—  
God does not turn the world over to some other deity...  
Here is the testimony of faith;  
darkness is not dark to God; the night is as bright as the day."

Maybe the church doesn't talk about shame because we are afraid of the dark.  
We fear that which we do not understand.  
So, we call the light good, the dark bad,  
and we don't dare go there, even if the spirit is already there, in the dark.

"Christian teaching thrives on dividing reality into opposed pairs:  
good/evil, church/world, spirit/flesh, sacred/profane, light/dark.  
Even if you are not Christian, it should be easy to tell  
which half of each pair is "higher" and which "lower."  
In every case, the language of opposition works  
by placing half of reality closer to God and the other half farther away."  
[This gives people who don't want to think about the darkness a sense of purpose:]  
[they believe that] *the more they beat back the powers of darkness,  
the closer they get to God.*  
...If there is any truth to the teaching that spiritual reality is divided into halves,  
it is the truth that those pairs exist in balance, not opposition."

Do not be afraid!  
Light and dark exist in balance, not in opposition.  
When I got cancer in 2015, a friend sent a card in which he quoted Isaiah 41:10.  
"Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."  
The Bible says this to us again and again.  
Do not be afraid of the dark, to go deep,  
to look within, to invite help, a friend, a balm of Gilead, a spirit of grace.  
Invite God and God's people inside, into the dark.

In Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, the wizard Dumbledore said to Harry,  
"Help will always be given at Hogwarts to those who ask for it." — [J.K. Rowling](#)

Shame does not want you to ask for help yet know this: help is here.  
God is nigh in the #MeToo movement.  
God is nigh to bring courage and compassion to victims.  
God is nigh, a spirit in the dark to help break the silence.  
Silence can be an indication of hopelessness.  
Sharing our story is a significant step on our journey of restoration.

Brene Brown came to the realization that,<sup>[iii]</sup>

“Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story.  
[Shame] hates having words wrapped around it—it can’t survive being shared. Shame loves secrecy. The most dangerous thing to do after a shaming experience is hide or bury our story. When we bury our story, the shame metastasizes.

I remember saying out loud:

“I need to talk to someone RIGHT NOW. Be brave, Brené!”

But here’s the tricky part... We can’t call just anyone. It’s not that simple.

I have a lot of good friends, but there are only a handful of people whom I can count on to practice compassion when I’m in the dark shame place.

If we share our shame story with the wrong person, they can easily become one more piece of flying debris in an already dangerous storm.

We want solid connection in a situation like this—something akin to a sturdy tree firmly planted in the ground.

We definitely want to avoid the following:

1. The friend who hears the story and feels shame for you. She gasps and confirms how horrified you should be .... then you have to make her feel better.

2. The friend who responds with sympathy (I feel so sorry for you) rather than empathy (I get it, I feel with you, and I’ve been there).

3. The friend who needs you to be the pillar of worthiness and authenticity. She can’t help because she’s too disappointed in your imperfections. You’ve let her down.

4. The friend who is so uncomfortable with vulnerability that she scolds you: “How did you let this happen? What were you thinking?”

5. The friend who is all about making it better and, out of her own discomfort, refuses to acknowledge that you can actually be crazy and make terrible choices: “You’re exaggerating. It wasn’t that bad. You rock. You’re perfect. Everyone loves you.”

6. The friend who confuses “connection” with the opportunity to one-up you: “That’s nothing. Listen to what happened to me one time!”

When we’re looking for compassion, we need someone who is deeply rooted, able to bend, and, most of all, we need someone who embraces us for our strengths and struggles.

We need to honor our struggle by sharing it with someone who has *earned* the right to hear it.

When we’re looking for compassion, it’s about connecting with the *right person* at the *right time* about the *right issue*.

Brene Brown got the best help from a friend who “...didn’t try to fix me or make me feel better; she just listened and had the courage to share some of her own vulnerabilities with me.”

We will give Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul, the last and lasting word.

“...Almost two decades ago...a gossip columnist attempted to body-shame the star for wearing clothes that showed her cleavage. <sup>[iv]</sup>

In 1993, New York writer Liz Smith wrote:

*‘[Aretha Franklin] must know she’s too bosomy to wear such clothing, but she just doesn’t care what we think, and that attitude is what separates mere stars from true divas.’*

The 18-time Grammy winner ...wrote a letter to the journalist.

*‘How dare you be so presumptuous as to presume you could know my attitudes with respect to anything other than music ...*

*‘Obviously I have enough of what it takes to wear a bustier and I haven’t had any complaints.’*”

All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

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- [i] Elizabeth Stuart Calvert, “**SAMARITAN John 4:4-30**” Wellsprings, Bookstand Publishing, 2012.
  - [ii] Barbara Brown Taylor, Learning to Walk in the Dark, Harper One, 2015.
  - [iii] Brene Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection, Hazelden, 2010.
  - [iv] “The time Aretha Franklin called out a body-shaming columnist for criticizing her ‘bosom’” Tobi Akingbade, METRO UK, 16 Aug 2018.