

## **The Woman Whom Jesus Saved - John 4:1-42** **May 24, 2009 - Skip MacMillan**

**Themes:** Prejudices, religious confusion, the immoral and Jesus, forgiveness and the life He gives spreads.

Another unique event in the Gospel of John.

Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman in contrast with each other:

Nicodemus: Jew, teacher of Israel, knowledge of Scripture, well-positioned, struggles with Jesus.

Woman: Samaritan, mixed race, not religiously astute, on the periphery of society, immoral, understands Jesus.

Side note: if you're making this stuff up "back in the day," you don't create figures like this woman. It would only discredit your story because she is a woman, a Samaritan, and immoral.

### **Scene: vv. 1-6**

Attention: Jesus was feeling the shift of attention move from John onto Him.

Competition: I believe He also was frustrated with the attempts to introduce competition to John and Jesus' ministry. Jesus will have nothing to do with competition, pitting one man's ministry against another. Tired of the small-mindedness of the religious, He leaves Judea for Galilee but "he had to go through Samaria," John says.

Mission: but he did not have to!

He chose to go through Samaria; He had an appointment with a woman. His mission was to bring redemption to all nations, all kinds of people, so He had to and wanted to go to Samaria.

**Samaria** – mixed race, Jewish and other. Assyrians overtook the 10 northern tribes in 721 BC. NT times: strong connection to Jacob. Accepted Moses but rejected a Davidic Messiah, had their own synagogues, accepted the Torah (first five books) but not the Prophets, intensely religious; spoke Greek, in the Greek culture yet retained Jewish traditions. Division between Jews and Samaritans: "A widely circulated book of Jewish wisdom announced that God hated 'the foolish People' who lived in Samaria" -Keener, p. 599. There were many debates among the Jewish leaders as to the Samaritans' position. Jesus received Samaria and was received well in Samaria as in Galilee (Keener, p. 589).

**Jacob's Well, connection with the Old Testament, Genesis 24, 29 and Exodus 2** - Keener, p. 586

Well scenes parallels:

Jesus leaves a negative situation / Moses leaves a negative situation  
Jesus goes to the woman's homeland / The servant, Jacob and Moses do the same  
Jesus goes to a well / The Servant, Jacob and Moses go to a well  
Jesus is tired and sits down by a well / Moses was tired and sat down  
Jesus asks for something to drink /The servant asks for something to drink  
Jesus is alone / The servant, Jacob and Moses are all alone

These scenes are where Isaac, Jacob and Moses found their wives.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all three scenes, which are shadows of Christ. Jesus is greater than/ supersedes Isaac, Jacob and Moses combined.

## **Very interesting details:**

### **Tired as He was from the journey, He sat down by the well.**

Emphasizing His mortality, He really was human.

### **“Sixth hour,” and he is alone, John 3:6**

12 pm, noon; very hot, most people are taking a break.

In contrast to Nicodemus' conversation which took place at night; this one is in full daylight. The only other mention of the sixth hour is when Jesus is standing before Israel with Pilate “about the sixth hour” and Pilate says, “Here is your King;” but the crowd said “We have no king but Caesar,” “Crucify Him” (John 19:14-16).

### **Jesus is thirsty and asks for some water.**

Emphasizing His humanity again and the next time we will hear He was thirsty will be on the Cross (John 19:28).

## **Back to the scene, Why is she alone getting water, is this unusual?**

1. She was not welcomed with the other women and had to get her water at an alternate time.
2. There seems to be some immorality involved; currently she is living with a man. Possibly she has been widowed, divorced due to infertility, or something else.
3. Whatever the case, “five husbands had found grounds to divorce her” -Keener, p.595.

**Awkward moment:** a single man, a single woman, a Jew, a Samaritan, a Rabbi, a “loose” woman.

She may have even received his request for water as something other than He intended.

## **Water Conversation, John 3:7-15**

### **Jesus is first to talk: “Will you give me a drink?”**

1. God initiating a conversation, not with Nicodemus but with a woman like this.
2. God asking for something from a human, a first.
3. With one question Jesus overcomes prejudices and manufactured walls of separation.

“No social barrier is too extreme for the gospel message to cross. The Samaritan woman was an outcast to Jewish society on at least two counts: mixed ethnic lineage and an unacceptable marital situation. Jesus demonstrated by His actions, however, that each person has worth. Social or racial standing never places a person beyond the touch of grace. Contemporary attempts to discriminate, to stereotype, and to paternalize those ethnically different from us find their source in prejudice and a false sense of superiority which in turn stem from our sinful nature” -NIV Disciple's Study Bible.

4. He sees through the facades, seeing her as a lost daughter of Eve.

### **Physical to Spiritual:**

Jesus starts off speaking of physical water and then takes the conversation into the spiritual. Just as He did with Nicodemus and having to be “born again”.

First He asks for some water because he is thirsty and wants to get the conversation going.

She shoots back with the trained response of separation, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”

Rude, teasing or refusing on religious grounds, we don't know.

Jesus immediately turns it back to Himself,

***“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”***

1. Transitioning from the physical to spiritual.
2. **Gift of God** = “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).  
Jesus offers the first hint of hope to her, a gift from God.
3. **Living water is the Holy Spirit given by Jesus Himself.**  
“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (John 7:37-39).

**Prophesied about in:**

Zech. 14:8 - Future, “On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem.”

Zech. 13:1 - Purify, “On that day a fountain will be opened . . . to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”

Ezekiel 47:9 - “so where the river flows everything will live.”

**Future, Rev. 22:1-2 (7:17; 21:6; 22:17)**

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Jesus uses the well, history of Jacob and Rebekah, and water to communicate eternal life to her, moving the conversation from natural water to the living water of the Spirit.

She is struggling to follow:

“you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep” (v. 11).

“Where can you get this living water?” (v. 11).

“Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his flocks and herds?” Mocking.

Jacob of all people does not have a glowing resume, he was the father of the 12 tribes but was a mess most of his life.

Jesus answers her question of “are you greater” with,

***“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (v. 14).***

I give water (Spirit) that satisfies a person forever, complete.

Furthermore, it (Spirit) will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Still confused she says: ***“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water”*** (v. 15).

## **DEFCON Four**

Before I give you the water, we need to deal with something.

***“He told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back.’ <sup>17</sup>‘I have no husband,’ she replied.***

***Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband.’ ”***

Is this cruel?

### **What is Jesus doing here?**

- He is clarifying His intent and the direction of the conversation: not natural (sensual) but spiritual, I am not like all the other men in your life.
- He is confronting the heaviest weight, the most oppressive issue, the 150 lbs. ball and chain she has been carrying around most of her life.
- He is exposing her life to the light.  
He is confronting the sin in her life, her greatest point of vulnerability, her insecurity, shining His light into the darkest part of her life.  
He is forcing the issue, all her cards on the table: the truth is her life is in shambles, it's a wreck; her religion let her down, men have let her down, friends have let her down.
- He is speaking this privately, no one else is around, between her and God, not to embarrass.
- She may be receiving this entire conversation as flirtatious--will you get me something to drink--and understanding “go get your husband” as the final test of her availability.

***Jesus, “The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”***

### **Why?**

He is revealing who He is, the Messiah. He knows all she has ever done, omniscient. He is getting to the real and honest level of her shameful existence. All must be revealed so all can be healed. He is about to set her free from all of it.

Think of the rush of emotions that flooded her heart and mind; memories, hopes of a young girl to find the right man, followed by deep disappointment. With each man came greater distance from her parents, friends and herself, dreams lost and the pain of rejection again and again after each separation and divorce.

She has a decision to make in this moment:

1. She can run away from the light, fear being exposed, get defensive and shoot back an accusation and ultimately hate the light.
2. She can move into the light, take responsibility for her sin, confess it and cling onto Christ.

She moves into the light because she is experiencing something different from this man, a “kindness and (a) non-erotic interest in her, revealing a kind of love and relationship” that was very different from anything she had experienced in the past with men -Keener, p. 608.

***‘Sir’, (swallowing deeply) the woman said, ‘I can see that you are a prophet.’***

- You can see right through me, you must be a prophet.
- I have sought the attention, approval and love of a man for a long time I’ve been wrong every time; I’m tired, worn out.
- I’m not going to run or deny anything you have said, it is all true.

- Jesus doesn't budge, He isn't going anywhere. I am here!  
I know everything about you and here I stand, in the black sludge of your condemnation I have come to you, offering acceptance, forgiveness, hope, power and love.
- **You don't get your life together and then come to Jesus, He comes to you as you are!**

**I'm confused about all this religious stuff: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem" (v. 20).**

### **Jesus explains**

1. It's not about location, which mountain, what city; it's not about gender or race.
2. Worshipping God is about spirit and truth; God is spirit.
3. The Father seeks people who will worship in spirit and in truth.
4. These are the people who know, follow and worship God.
5. You are one of them!

### **Something eternal happens here in these verses.**

**The woman said, "*I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."***

**Then Jesus declared, "*I who speak to you am he."***

She believes in the Son of Man, she is born again, born from above, born of the Spirit of God.

### **Sowing and Reaping**

#### **1. "Leaving her water jar"**

The jars represent her past, oppressive past, they were a constant reminder of her failures – she had to go alone to the well; reminding her of the poor choices, her reckless past and the following consequences. But now, she leaves them. Jesus has set her free!

#### **2. Regeneration in Action**

1<sup>st</sup> "the woman went back to the town and said "I am fully known and I am fully loved."

2<sup>nd</sup> She invites everyone to come see Jesus.

3<sup>rd</sup> She shares what Jesus has done in her life, her testimony! "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did."

4<sup>th</sup> She presents a question, "Could this be the Christ?"

No training, books, seminars, degrees, not even told to go, but a real experience with the living God compelled her to go! She had received God's gift, she is tasting the living water and it is welling up inside her, she wants to share it with others!

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone" (Titus 3:4-8).

- She couldn't hold it in; she was experiencing something she never thought possible.
- She was experiencing the kindness of God her Savior, His mercy, the rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
- She was fully exposed and fully loved by God.
- And now, as an heir, she is full of courage to speak of Christ and His work.

### 3. The Effect of One Woman

1. The people believed because of her testimony:

"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I ever did.' "

2. Then they believed because they personally and individually experienced Jesus Christ

"And because of his words many more became believers. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.' "

#### Points:

##### 1. Jesus chose this woman.

Jesus had to go to Samaria, He sought her out.

Overcoming prejudices and immoralities.

He picks the 55+ year old biker chick, Samaritan, been around, seen her better days, five husbands through divorce, her fault or theirs, or widowed (suspicious), infertility, feeling a failure for whatever the reason may be. She is an outcast, a swirl of bad choices, hopes dashed, abandoned, lost and hurting deep within.

Of all the people Jesus could have chosen to start a church in Samaria, He picked her.

Would you have picked her?

Jesus thinks and lives differently than you and me.

He picked this woman and shares more with her about His identity than anyone else to this point.

Jesus reaches all kinds, loves all kinds, chooses all kinds, Nicodemus and this woman!

He came for people just like you!

##### Jesus chose this woman, 1 Corinthians 1:28-31

##### 2. Jesus redeemed this "seen her better days" kind of woman.

He filled her heart with the love of God.

He filled her heart and mind with the joy of the LORD.

He gave her the power over temptation and sin.

He gave her her true identity in Christ, thus giving her confidence to tell her story.

See the Samaritan woman as the church and Jesus has come for His bride.

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

"The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her" (Genesis 24:16).

This is the power of God in your life, living water, the Holy Spirit.

This is what God brings into a person's life.

Each woman in well scenes in Genesis and Exodus becomes a matriarch for Israel.

"She will become foundational to a new community of faith and obedience (4:39)" -Keener, p. 586).