

Are we like the woman at the well? The Bad Samaritan & Jesus

This morning please open with me to the woman at the well. In John 4 Jesus has a fascinating talk with a most unlikely candidate for His ministry. No one could have stood in greater¹ contrast to Nicodemus than this woman. He was a Jew, she was a Samaritan, a race that the Jews looked down on as having no claim on their God. He was a well respected man, she apparently was a woman outcast in her own community. Nicodemus was surrounded by those he taught; she came by herself to draw water from the community well. In biblical lands drawing water and chatting at the well was the social highpoint of a woman's day. In this woman's own village she was ostracized and marked off as immoral; an unmarried woman living openly with the fifth in a series of men.

All of us have heard Christ's story of the Good Samaritan. This morning listen to Him introduce us to the BAD² SAMARITAN. In Christ's day Orthodox Jews avoided Samaria because there was a long-standing, deep-seated hatred between them and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile, that grew out of the Assyrian captivity of the ten northern tribes in 727 B.C. So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans that some of the Pharisees prayed that no Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection!

Our Lord was no respecter of persons. Earlier, He counseled a moral Jewish man (John 3), and now He would witness to an immoral Samaritan woman! He arrived at Jacob's well at 6 o'clock in the evening, the usual time for women to come for water. In that day, it was not considered proper for any man, especially a rabbi, to speak in public to a strange woman (John 4:27). Jesus did not use a "sales talk" that He adapted to meet every situation. To Nicodemus, He spoke about new birth; but to this woman, He spoke about living water. Jesus pointed out to her that she was ignorant of three important facts: Who He was, what He had to offer, and how she could receive it. Here was eternal God speaking to her, offering her eternal life!

The Greek text suggests that he plopped himself down the way a tired man does at the end of a tough day. Jesus was always expending himself for others. Jesus not only died for her—he sweat for her! This truth must be held in balance. Christians need to sleep and take proper care of themselves. Some are on the verge of collapse because they have not been doing that. They need to take a vacation—to get away and relax. But it is also true that none of us will ever accomplish anything in the spiritual battle if we are not willing to labor to the point of exhaustion.³

¹ Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

² Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

³ Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Acts—The Church Afire*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1996.

We have watched the incredible style of John in this Gospel.

We have seen those 7 Great I Ams, wondered at those 7 Mighty Sign Miracles, traced those 7 Great Teaching Discourses, but now in John 4 listen as Jesus speaks!

There are exactly 7 Times Christ speaks to the woman at the Well. Each time Jesus speaks it is a powerful revelation of Himself to this woman.

Now please stand and listen as I read John 4.1-10.

1. 4.1-7: JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF to her as He comes to us. John 4.7
2. 4.8-12: JESUS OFFERS HER HOPE as He does to us. John 4.10 He offers an INEXHAUSTIBLE SUPPLY. His words recall Is. 55: 1. **thirsts...come...drink.** These 3 words summarize the gospel invitation.
3. 4.13-15: JESUS SHOWS THE WOMAN HER NEED. John 4.13-14 she was so helpless
4. as He shows to us our frailty. He offers an INEXTINGUISHABLE LIFE.
5. 4.16: JESUS REMINDS HER OF HER SINFUL PAST. John 4.16 as He does us.
6. 4.17-20: JESUS REVEALS HIS ALL SEEING EYES. John 4.17-18 He reveals His INESCAPABLE SIGHT.
7. 4.21-24: JESUS EXPLAINS HIS AVAILABILITY. John 4.21-24 as He does to us.
8. 4.25-26: JESUS SHOWS HER HE IS SALVATION. John 4.26 as He does to us.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL PORTRAYS THE SPIRITUAL THIRST OF THE SOUL THAT ALL HUMANS SHARE, BUT SO FEW COME TO THE WATER SOURCE! But the Jews had another way of using the word *water*. They often spoke of the *thirst* of the soul for God; and they often spoke of quenching that thirst with *living water*. Jesus was not using terms that were bound to be misunderstood; he was using terms that anyone with spiritual insight should have understood.

- It is from the very throne of God that the river of life is to flow (Revelation 22:1).
- "To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life" (Revelation 21:6).
- The Lamb is to lead them to springs of living waters (Revelation 7:17).
- The promise was that the chosen people would draw water with joy from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3).
- The summons was that every one who was thirsty should come to the waters and freely drink (Isaiah 55:1).
- In the new world there would be a cleansing fountain opened (Zechariah 13:1). The waters would go forth from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:8). "They shall not hunger or thirst" (Isaiah 49:10).

- When Jesus spoke about bringing to men the water which quenches thirst for ever, he was doing no less than stating that he he was the Anointed One of God who was to bring in the new age.

John 4 introduces us to the string of “nevers” in this Gospel:

1. John 4.14 Never Thirst
2. John 6.35 Never Hunger/Thirst
3. John 8.12 Never walk in darkness
4. John 8.51 Never see death
5. John 8.52 Never taste death
6. John 10.28 Never Perish
7. John 11.26 Never Die

1. **4.1-7: JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF to her as He comes to us. John 4.7 Jesus shows the **WOMAN AT THE WELL THE WIDE ARMS OF THE GOSPEL.****

Jesus not only spoke to the woman, he used the woman’s drinking utensil, thereby becoming ceremonially defiled—a scandalous act. Jesus leapt far beyond the conventional barriers of his day! And in doing so, he modeled one of the supreme glories of the Church. Jesus not only reaches people like me, he does not just reach people like you, he does not reach just rich people, he does not only reach poor people, but all of us, and he brings us together.⁴

2. **4.8-12: JESUS OFFERS HER HOPE as He does to us. John 4.10 He offers an **INEXHAUSTIBLE SUPPLY.****

- His words recall Is. 55:1. **thirsts...come...drink.** These 3 words summarize the gospel invitation.
- Three things would have provoked her thinking: (1) **Who** is He? (2) What is **the gift of God**? (3) What is **living water**? *Gift (John 4: 10)*. Jesus quickly established⁵ the fact, as He had with Nicodemus, that God’s dealings with humanity are on the basis of grace. What we do is not the foundation of our relationship with God. Rather we must depend on what God is willing to do for us. Jesus pointed out that her sins made self-reliance foolish. How striking then to discover that the Son of God was willing to “give” what she could not earn.
- **This is a constant theme of Christ's. In John 7.37-38 He says “If anyone is thirsty, let him keep coming to me and drinking! Whoever trusts in me, as the Old Testament says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being!”** The ultimate fulfillment is at Revelation 22:17.
- **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL FINDS WHAT WE ALL NEED TO FIND, THAT JESUS IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF ALL WE NEED TO REALLY LIVE.** *Life* is a key theme in John’s Gospel; it is used thirty-six times. What are the essentials for human life? There are at least four: light (if the sun went out, everything would die), air, water, and food. Jesus is all of these! He is the Light of life and the Light of the world (John 8:12). He is the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2). By His Holy Spirit, He gives us the “breath of life”

⁴ Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Colossians and Philemon—The Supremacy of Christ*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

⁵ Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher’s Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

(John 3:8; 20:22), as well as the Water of life (John 4:10, 13–14; 7:37–39). Finally, Jesus is the Living Bread of Life that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff). He not only has life and gives life, but He *is* life (John 14:6). ⁶

3. 4.13-15: JESUS SHOWS THE WOMAN HER NEED. John 4.13-14 she was so helpless as He shows to us our frailty. He offers an INEXTINGUISHABLE LIFE.

- We have noted before that *life* is one of John's key concepts. He uses the word at least thirty-six times. Campbell Morgan has pointed out that mankind needs air, water, and food in order to have life. (We might also add that he needs light.) All of these are provided in Jesus Christ. He provides the "breath" (Spirit) of God (John 3:8; 20:22). He is the Bread of Life (John 6:48) and the Light of Life (John 1:4–5), and He gives us the water of life. How true it is that the things of this world never completely satisfy. In hell today, people are crying, "I thirst!"
- The woman's immediate response was to ask for this gift, but she did not know what she was saying. The gift Jesus⁷ promised was life; eternal life, welling up and supplying every need by its freshening springs. **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL IS SHOWN WHAT SALVATION IS REALLY ALL ABOUT!** Christ *is* our life. When the Holy Spirit takes up residency in us, He brings with Him an inexhaustible source of life. ⁸
- **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL DEMONSTRATES THE GROWING NATURE OF GOD'S WORK IN OUR LIVES.** Our first experience in the Lord is that of drinking the water of life by faith, and He puts within us an artesian well of living water (John 4:10–14). But that artesian well should become a "river of living water" (John 7:37–39) that grows deeper and deeper. The image of the river flowing from the sanctuary (Ezek. 47) getting deeper as it flows, probably is what Paul had in mind. Sad to say, many of us are making no progress—our lives are shallow trickles instead of mighty rivers. ⁹
- **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL REMINDS US THAT SALVATION MUST BE TAKEN COMPLETELY TO HAVE ITS SUPERNATURAL WORK BE DONE.** The great gift, the gift of salvation, is the "living water" that leads to "eternal life" (v. 14). Those who drank it-not sipped it or just tasted it, but drank it-would be saved. Eternal life comes from eating, not simply tasting, God's gift of salvation in Christ. One of the presalvation ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of giving the unsaved a taste of the blessings of salvation. This is part of His ministry of drawing men to Christ. But tasting is not eating. The Holy Spirit will give us a taste, but He will not make us eat.¹⁰

4. 4.16: JESUS REMINDS HER OF HER SINFUL PAST. John 4.16 as He does us.

- **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL IS SUCH A PICTURE OF CHRIST'S AS HE PRESENTS THE GOSPEL TO SINNERS.** For the oft-divorced woman at Jacob's well and the woman caught in the act of adultery. Jesus' rebukes

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

⁷ Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

⁸ Stanley, Charles, *The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1997, c1995.

⁹ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

¹⁰ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

were gentle, and His offers of help were kind and encouraging (John 4: 7-26; 8: 3-11).

- o And even before the hated and larcenous Zaccheus repented and came to saving faith, Jesus was not ashamed to eat with him (Luke 19: 1-10).
- o But for the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees-whose outward lives were ceremonially impeccable, but who refused to recognize their spiritual need and who continually corrupted the people's minds with their legalistic perversion of true Judaism-Jesus had only condemnation. The scribes and Pharisees were the primary teachers and interpreters of Scripture. Yet Jesus called them hypocrites, deceivers, extortioners, misguided proselytizers, blind guides, fools, inwardly corrupt and foul, partners with those who killed the prophets and murderers themselves, serpents and vipers, and future persecutors of His church (Matt. 23: 13-36).
- o Paul, too, was longsuffering with those who were caught in sin, as his letters to the immature, factious, and immoral believers at Corinth attest But also like the Lord, the apostle's most scathing denunciations were reserved for those who pervert God's truth and lead others into falsehood. 11

5. 4.17-20: JESUS REVEALS HIS ALL SEEING EYES. John 4.17-18 He reveals His INESCAPABLE SIGHT.

- o There must first be conviction and repentance, and then there can be saving faith.
- o She was apart from truth, apart from life, and apart from righteousness, began to dawn on her heart and mind.12

6. 4.21-24: JESUS EXPLAINS HIS AVAILABILITY. John 4.21-24 as He does to us.

- o **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL IS A LESSON IN THE WONDER OF CHRIST'S PROMISED CHURCH THAT MELTS ALL RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES INTO ONE FAMILY IN CHRIST. John 10.16 I have other sheep which are not from this pen**, namely, Gentiles, whom Yeshua says he will combine with the Jews into **one flock** under himself, the **one shepherd**.
- o The ingathering of Gentiles has begun but has not been completed. Portions of the Bible have been translated into more than 1,800 languages, but there are some 5,000 languages spoken (depending on what is defined as a language).
- o There are believers in the Messiah and in God's Word among hundreds of peoples, but hundreds of other peoples are virtually unreached. The "other sheep" will continue to be added "until the Gentile world enters in its fullness" (Ro 11:25).13

7. 4.25-26: JESUS SHOWS HER HE IS SALVATION. John 4.26 as He does to us.

- o Our¹⁴ Lord's response to her statement was, literally: "I that speak to thee, I am!" He dared to utter the holy name of God! At this point, the woman put her faith in Jesus Christ and was converted. Immediately she wanted to share her faith with others, so she went into the village and told the men

11 MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

12 MacArthur, John, Jr., *The Ultimate Priority*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1998.

13 *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications) 1996.

14 Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

she had met the Christ. When you consider how little spiritual truth this woman knew, her zeal and witness put us to shame. But God used her simple testimony, and many of the people came out to the well to meet Jesus.

○ **THE WOMAN AT THE WELL IS THE 1ST ONE TO MEET THE MESSIAH.**

The first person to whom Jesus revealed Himself as Messiah was an adulterous woman who had a number of husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. Not only that, but she was a Samaritan, a member of a race greatly despised by Jews. Yet Jesus drew her to Himself in loving compassion, and she was used to bring many of her fellow Samaritans to faith in the Messiah (see John 4: 7-42).¹⁵