

The Woman at the Well

John 4:3-30; 39-42

3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria. 5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water? 12 are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." 15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." 19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 but the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." *The Whitened Harvest*
27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marvelled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" 28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him....
39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." NKJV

This story shows that Jesus can visit the most needy, unlikable people and show no disapproval for a misused life. He can visit us in the most humdrum parts of our life. During our ordinary work a day life and suddenly Jesus is there. He takes of the things around us and uses them to bring us to himself. There we can find a new life full of promise and venture.

John 4:3 "He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. "

Jesus went on a journey that was to change a woman of low repute which in turn changed a whole city.

John 4:4 *“But He needed to go through Samaria.*

The more I study the life of Jesus the more amazed I am at how urgent and personal he in wanted to meet people. Jesus and his disciples are on a journey and he had a need to go through Samaria. It was the only direct road from Jerusalem to Galilee. Israel at that time consisted of three sections in the South was Judea and in the north Galilee and in the middle was Samaria. The direct route took three days however, many devout Jews would refuse to go through Samaria and go North east crossing the river Jordan and taking six days to journey. It is important to realise that Jesus gradually removed the reticence of the disciples to go through Samaria thus bringing all peoples together.

John 4:5 *“So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar,”*

Known in the OT as Hahran. One translation of this word Sychar is ‘drunken’. Is it just a coincidence that later Jesus would talk about thirst and drinking?

Jesus also just takes the ordinary events and traditions of the day and turns them into spiritual significance. The woman at the well must have thought I am here routinely at midday and nothing special is going to happen today like any other day nothing will happen. I will meet with one and speak to just no one at all.

You may have thought “Let’s get this visit to Church but who knows but that God he may have chosen this very day when he will make himself known to you. Just like this woman.

John 4:6. *“Near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.”*

He stopped at a place of great significance. In history it was the place

1. As being that where Abram first stopped on his coming from Haran to Canaan (Gen 11:31).
2. Where God first appeared to that patriarch, and promised to give the land to his seed (Gen 12:5-7).
3. The place where Abram first built an altar to the Lord, and called upon his name, Gen 12:7

John 4:7 *“A woman of Samaria came to draw water.”*

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. Rejected by the Jews because they could not prove their genealogy, the Samaritans established their own temple and religious services on Mt. Gerizim. This only fanned the fires of prejudice. So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans that some of the Pharisees prayed that no Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection! When His enemies wanted to call Jesus an insulting name, they called Him a Samaritan (John 8:48). A little more of that later.

Why was this woman drawing water at mid-day when the heat was at its most fierce? Everyone else was at home sheltering from the heat of the sun. The reason was that she was an outcast from society. The women of the village where she had come from would not allow her to use the village well. She had to walk at least half a mile which in the sun and through desert places was an ordeal, as was the weight of her water needs for the day. She

was a prostitute so the only men she knew were in the city but would not want to be seen with her in the light. As Jesus said that the works of darkness are evil. In fact anyone who had any decency about them would know who she was a keep away. Why was Jesus even trying to associate with her? He could not have known who she was could he.

Remember that some elders tried to embarrass him by bringing a woman caught in adultery and threw her down at his feet and challenged him. The law says she should be stoned but what do you say.

All Jesus did was write in the sand. I heard a suggestion that he wrote the word 'Guilty' then blew on it so that it disappeared (John 8:3-4).

Under Jewish Law a Jewish man, particularly a Rabbi (Teacher), would not talk to a woman publically not even his own wife. Yet here he was about to talk with and teach a woman of Samaria who was of questionable reputation. Jesus always takes risks to meet with us. It does not matter who we are or what we think of ourselves. He is interested in us as an individual and no sin we have committed is too great for him to desire a close relationship with you and me.

John 4:8. *"Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food."*

He was left alone with this woman of Samaria. What a risk he was taking. What if anyone had seen him? His reputation would be in tatters. However, Jesus was not interested in his reputation.

A pastor in America was away at a conference many hundreds of miles away from his church. One evening he was seen in a red light district of this area and a church member saw him kissing a scantily dressed girl in a door way. Gradually the gossip went round the church. The minister was not confronted by the person spreading the rumour and he held his peace. Six months later at a Sunday morning service he presented a most attractive woman to the congregation. She was extremely vivacious. All the men were grinning broadly no doubt their imaginations were in overdrive. She was a student in a Bible School the minister announced. He invited her to speak. She told them that she was on drugs and to feed her habit she had resorted to prostitution. Things were getting very bad when along came this guy who offered to pay for one hour but would only talk about how Jesus could transform my life. This is what I needed and with tears running down my cheeks I repented and came to know Jesus. Immediately by drug addiction stopped. The pastor put me in touch with some lovely Christian people in a local church and they really cared for me. Now I have just entered Bible School and I hope to work among drug addicts on the street. Your pastor is paying for me to go to college. The church at that time paid very poor salaries but from that morning the church took on the responsibility for the young woman's course and they raised the pastor's salary! All he said to the congregation when asked why he did it. "I was doing the Jesus thing."

John 4:9 *"Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans".*

Now the woman was protecting her integrity although she was a prostitute. No Jewish man even when visiting a prostitute would go to a Samaritan woman because the Jews have no dealing with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were Jews but in 720 BC they were invaded by the Syria and most of the population were carried away into captivity. A few were left behind and other people were imported into Samaria. In time those Jews who were left behind intermarried, which in the Jewish eyes means they became impure. When all the exiles were allowed to return under the Persian King in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah all help from the

Samaritans was spurned. The exiles of the southern kingdom although taken captive at the same time remained pure and only married within the Jewish faith. In about 450 BC being spurned by the Jews the Samaritans through Manasseh who had married a daughter of the Samaritan Sanballat, they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. The dislike between the Jews and the Samaritans was sealed. In 129 BC John Hyrcanus the Jewish leader and general led an attack against Samaria and destroyed the temple on Mount Gerizim.

The woman at the well was alarmed about a young Jewish man chatting her up. She had at least some reputation to protect.

John 4:10. *"Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"*

See how Jesus was taking into account the history of the place by talking about drinking. It is said that Billy Graham had sent to him six weeks before one of his large campaign copies of every local newspaper for over fifty miles away. He used news stories to identify himself with the people at local level. He was doing the Jesus thing.

Jesus turns the conversation from normal thirst to spiritual thirst. God has placed eternity in our hearts so said the prophet Jeremiah. Everyone wants to know how to satisfy the longing soul. There is something built into us from birth that desires more than we have. Just think if all we have in life as an ambition is a bigger house, a better car, a more prosperous job, more status. What happens if you achieve all these - what then?

I had a vision to control one of the largest hospitals in this country by the age of 40. At 39 and 11 months I was appointed to the largest health authority as their Chief Nursing Officer covering 17 hospitals and later all the community services and made head of the largest nurse and midwifery training school in the country with 1,350 students. What then?

There must be something more in life than that otherwise life is just a mockery.

Jesus talked of living water. It was something that would meet the cravings of this young woman's heart.

John 4:11-14 "The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

The well which is still in existence was 100 foot deep and placed at the fork of the road. He one Jesus was on was leading into Samaria the other forked right to the river Jordan.

Jesus knew that this woman desired something better in life than what she already had. Within her being she was craving for something that would satisfy her without having to resort to outside pleasure. It is like all pleasure that taken to its extreme becomes a curse. Drug taking at the time gives lot of pleasure but eventually it will kill you. Alcohol is a pleasure for a time but can consume us. Smoking can be a pleasure but as we lie dying, short of breath as our lungs fill with fluid or our heart fails what then?

Life is one of John's key concepts. Jesus uses the word 'water' in terms of spiritual life 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 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 as shown in this text.

John 4:15 “

The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

Jesus had raised her desire for eternal satisfaction so he could be kind but truthful with her. Long ago God had promised this water to people. Isaiah said, 'They shall not hunger or thirst' (49:10) "With you is the fountain of life" cried the psalmist (36:9), It is from the very throne of God that this water flows from. (Rev 22:1). David says "he leads me beside still waters."

John 4:16-17. "Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

This man draws the truth out of us. She could have easily said OK I will fetch him. She somehow knew that by telling lies Jesus would somehow know. She admitted that the man she was living with was not her husband. That left Jesus to say you have had five "husbands" meaning men and the one you have now is not your husband. But Jesus interrupts her. This tactic was often used by him. He cut short Nicodemus, who was praising him and said abruptly, "you must be born from above".

When the Pharisees asked him a question he said answer me this and I will tell you. Look at the way Jesus turns the conversation from giving her a desire to be free to her present circumstances. He did not say "you're a prostitute" but rather aid go and get your husband. To know God we first have to face up to what we are in the sight of God. We are all sinners and need the grace of God to come into our lives. You have a desire to receive the water of life well deal with your past and present and he will give it to you. Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,'

John 4:18-19 *"for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."* **19** *The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."*

Jesus knew what was in the thoughts and minds of the people he met. Paul called this the gift of knowledge. (See 1 Cor 12 for a fuller list). When the Holy Spirit is indwelling a person then the gifts of the Spirit are free to operate as an aid to witness. She recognises the prophetic gifting in Jesus and begins to realise that she is meeting with an extraordinary man.

John 4:20 *Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."*

The Samaritan woman changes the conversation. Too hot for comfort perhaps? She brings the subject of the Jews worshiping in Jerusalem while her people worship at Mount Gerizim. There could well have been resentment in her voice as she tries to bring Jesus back to the conflict between Jews and the Samaritans.

John 4:21 *"Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father."*

The response of Jesus was so unexpected. He states plainly that the old order of proclaiming that God in one place is shortly to be swept away. God cannot be confined in one place. Not only is the old order to be dispensed with but the true worship of God will be of a completely different order.

John 4:22-24 *"You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Jesus is now very forthright with the Samaritan woman. Their way of worship was wrong. Although they accepted the first five books of the OT they rejected the prophets and the worship of God in the Temple. While in captivity they had worshipped other gods and intermarried with the invaders. It is important for preachers to be honest with their hearers. God does not reject sin and wayward behaviour. The phrase "God love the sinner and hates the sin" has no Biblical basis. It is a person's sin that will lose them eternal life. Then Jesus discloses the way forward. It truly is amazing how many times in the Gospel of John Jesus reveals the most detailed and deep teaching to individuals rather than the crowds. Future worship will be based upon worship in spirit. There will be the transformation of an individual from worshipping in a special place to a personal worship to God in the spirit. God is a Spirit and worship of human beings likewise has to be spirit.

John 4:25-26 *"The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ)."When He comes, He will tell us all things."***John 4:26** *"Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."*

Jesus reveals to her who he is. Once at his own tomb Mary was sobbing wondering where her Lord's dead body was. Jesus came to her and she thinking he was the gardener asked where the body of Jesus was. He only replied with one word, Mary! She recognised him immediately. If Jesus was to speak to you this afternoon would you know him by his voice? Jesus wipes away all the religious garbage by saying that worship in the future will not be confined to temples or churches but true worship will be in the spirit with truth.

Then the religious people come- the disciples. Horrified at what they saw they said,

John 4:27 *"And at this point His disciples came, and they marvelled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"*

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Isn't true that religious people are the most intolerant people around. They told him off. The woman saw her chance to quietly leave

John 4: 28-29, 40-42 *The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."*

Note: He did not perform any miracles or healings there. Why, because there was not need as the spiritual hunger of the population did not need to see God at work because they believed.