

Lent 3 2017 John 4-42

Children's Sermon

This year during Lent we are going to hear 4 gospel stories in a row from the book of John that pushes the boundaries of our understanding who God loves and of who Christ came to save.

Last week we met Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to see Jesus at night. Pharisees were a strict Jewish sect; careful observers and authorities of the law and known for their piety. So Jesus encounter with **Nicodemus was** with an **ultimate insider.**

Today we will hear the story of the Jesus, encounter with the ultimate "outsider:" a woman at a well in Samaria. She is a woman, who had had 5 husbands and a she was Samaritan.

Samaritans had a **religion closely related to Judaism.**

The major issue of disagreement was worship. Samaritans claimed that their faith was the true faith because they were not part of the Babylonian Exile. Judaism changed out of necessity, when they were in exile. Samaritans had built their own temple on Mount Gerizim, while the Jews, returned from exile, rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

As to the 5 husbands, well, they may have all died that's one possibility. Or perhaps they left her. Women couldn't do the leaving or divorcing. We don't know the full circumstances but we do know that clearly this woman knows the

brokenness of sin, either her own or someone else's and has had a hard life.

Oh and also it was really **not acceptable for Jesus to talk to a woman alone**, especially one he has just met. That is one of the reasons the disciples are not happy with this encounter.

Now this is probably way more than you wanted to know. **However I want you to understand how odd** and radical it was for Jesus to tell the parable of the good Samaritan and even more stunning that he traveled through Samaria and stopped to talk to this woman.

So now I am going to read our very long gospel lesson. I am going to skip the other lessons today so that you can sit and listen to whole thing. If you want to, you can follow along and mark on your bulletin things that jump out at you as new or interesting. You might ask yourselves

- **In what way can you identify with the woman at the well?**
- **How does God continue to break boundaries in order to reach us?**

Today, no matter how well you know the story of the woman at the well, let God speak to you this morning.

READ:

But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 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.)*

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.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 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.” 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.”

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”

The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you^[b] say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here,

when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he,^[c] the one who is speaking to you.”

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?”

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah,^[d] can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving^[e] wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’

I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. 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.”

Wow! That is quite a text. Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman is the **longest recorded conversation** he had with anyone else in the Bible, longer than any with the Pharisees, the disciples, or his family. (Barbara Brown Taylor) What a gift to give such an outsider!

With an **attitude of openness and acceptance** Jesus recognizes her circumstance. He knows all about her and he stays with her, listening. Jesus recognizes her dried up thirsty life and instead of rebuking her or abandoning her, he engages her in conversation.

Jesus sees beneath the surface. He sees the hollow places of this woman waiting to be filled (Sundays and Seasons 99) And he fills those hollow spaces of grief, isolation, alienation and whatever else she might be feeling with God’s love.

He fills the woman at the well with the life giving waters of salvation and love and forgiveness and for the first time in her life, she is known and cared for.

Jesus showed this woman the same openness that he had when he invited a rather motley crew to be his disciples. And it is the same openness that invites each and every one of us to the Living Waters of baptism and a life of faith.

Barbara Brown Taylor writes that the *“Messiah is the one in whose presence you know who you really are.”*

I love that!

“The messiah is the one in whose presence you know who you really are.”

So! It is only in the presence of our savior that we dare face who we really are: sinners

And it is only in the presence of our savior that we also discover the good news that we are **forgiven sinners.** **That’s honesty.**

And there is incredible freedom in that kind of honesty.

Male or female, each of us is the woman at the well.

As Christians, we meet God as outcasts, outsiders, sinners. Jesus seeks us out and opens himself up to us **in the expectation that we will recognize our need for the living water** and our need for Jesus’ promises of love, forgiveness and salvation.

In so doing, Jesus reveals who he is.

By telling the woman, who she was, Jesus shows her and us who he is.

Our God is a god who sent his son to cross all boundaries and barriers and to break all rules of convention, in order to bring life giving water to the parched lives of a world that is thirsty for salvation.

This is the good news that brings us to the well of life giving waters, over and over again, whether we are preparing for Baptism, studying our confirmation lessons or refreshing our faith in our Lenten discipline.

This is the good news of the woman at the well.

This is the good news of the gospel.