

John 4 – Jesus and the Samaritan woman

Rev. Bruce Stanley

Sermon audio and text available at www.waitaraanglican.com.au

February 3rd, 2013

Intro: Have you ever met anyone famous? What did you say/do?

Jesus was famous, and becoming even more well known in Judea. So he left! When your busy, and you have important things to do, sometimes you need to escape! So Jesus left to go to Galilee, but he had to pass through Samaria. And that's significant. Because Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Israel used to be one nation under God's rule, until there was a big split in 686? BC. Northern Israel wanted a different King. And they wanted to worship false gods. So Israel split into the unfaithful Northern Kingdom, capital Samaria, and the faithful southern Kingdom, capital Judea. So these two areas became quite different. People from Judea didn't associate with people of Samaria.

So when Jesus had to go through Samaria, with his disciples, the disciples were probably thinking that they would just pass through. But Jesus stops. He was tired. And he stops at a well and rests while his disciples go off to do something (we don't know what) and while he waited, Jesus struck up a conversation with a Samaritan woman.

There are 3 significant things about this:

1. She was a Samaritan. And Jews, especially important people like Jesus, didn't usually associate with Samaritans because of their history.
2. Second, She was a Samaritan **woman**. Jesus was speaking to this woman on his own. Not something done in those days either. Perhaps it would have been seen as a little inappropriate.
3. Third, he was talking to this Samaritan woman **in the middle of the day**. Why would a woman visit a well in the middle of the day? Because people usually didn't go to the well in the middle of the day to get water, **unless** they were trying to avoid everyone else. And that's what this woman was doing. She wasn't a very "good" woman. Jesus knows this. He knows (from verse 16) that she has had 5 husbands and is living with a man who is not her husband. She wasn't well thought of in her own community. So she was probably at the well in the middle of the day to avoid people.

So here was Jesus, in Samaria, talking to a Samaritan woman who is not well respected in her community. I guess for us it would be like going to Kings Cross and having dinner with a prostitute on our own in the middle of the night. Not something that would be good for your reputation.

And Jesus says to the woman, verse 13:

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

This woman, this disreputable Samaritan woman comes to a well for water, and Jesus offers her the spiritual water of eternal life. He offers her what she really needs.

Here is a woman that people avoid. A woman who has probably had a very difficult life, a life that's lead her to have many different husbands in order to survive as a woman in that culture. And she meets Jesus who offers her eternal life.

And Jesus continues, verse 23:

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.”

These are important words to a Samaritan. Previously, God's people could only worship him on a certain mountain or in the temple of Jerusalem. So if you were a Samaritan who wasn't really allowed into the Jerusalem temple, you could not worship God. Yet Jesus says: The time is coming, AND HAS NOW COME when you, a Samaritan woman, can worship God, not on a mountain, not in a temple, but in Spirit and truth.

With these words, Jesus is bringing down the divide between Judeans and Samaritans that has existed for nearly 700 years. He's saying to her: the time has come. You can worship God NOW, from your HEART. Because that's what God is after. The time has come NOW, with Jesus' arrival.

Remember last week, we heard about Jesus being the temple of God. God's temple is no longer a building, but Jesus himself. And the Spirit of God who lives in us makes US part of the temple of God. This is huge. Samaritans, and in fact **anyone**, can now worship God wherever they are.

The woman replies, verse 25:

“I know the Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything.”

And Jesus says: *“I, the one speaking to you – I am he.”*

Jesus says: “I am the one you've been waiting for. You want everything explained to you from God's Messiah, the Christ, the King – this is it. I am the Messiah. I am the Christ. I am God's King.

What happens next? The disciples arrive. The woman leaves to tell everyone what has happened and what Jesus has said. And the disciples are focused on food. “Jesus, eat something! You must be hungry” And Jesus says, 32:

“I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

The disciples reply: *“Could someone have brought him food?”*

It's funny, because Jesus has just explained to this woman that he offers spiritual **water** that wells up to eternal life. Now he has to explain to the disciples that he has spiritual **food**. And he says to the disciples, verse 35:

"Don't you have a saying. 'It's still 4 months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest."

Jesus is talking spiritually. There is a huge harvest of people coming to know God. The time is NOW, Jesus says. Even in Samaria, there is a harvest of people coming to know God through Jesus.

So what happens with the woman? Verse 39:

"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed because of the woman's testimony."

She goes and tells people about Jesus, about the spiritual water of eternal life he offers, about God seeking people who worship him not in a temple, but in their heart, in Spirit and truth.

And here's what this means for us today:

Jesus will meet with anyone, anywhere, anytime.

The harvest field is ready now. There are people ready to come to know God through Jesus right now. And it's not always the people **you** might expect.

God wants people to worship Him from their heart. But this is a message about others, not ourselves. YOU know that. YOU KNOW that God wants your heart worship. But many don't know that.

The fields are ripe for harvest. And people need to know that knowing Jesus isn't about meeting in a special building, or fulfilling regulations of laws, or passing through certain ceremonies. Being baptized or confirmed doesn't MAKE you a follower of Jesus. Coming to church doesn't MAKE you a follower. Yet it's very easy for us to make it look like that to people. But we don't want people to get that impression of Jesus.

Do your Muslim friends know that they can meet Jesus? That he wants to know them? That they can pick up a Bible and read about him? Do you have Muslim friends to share Jesus with?

Do your Buddhist friends know that Jesus wants them to know him? Do they know that they can pray to God and he will hear them? That they don't need a special building to know Jesus.

Do your atheist friends know that you love them and would like them to know about Jesus and that you don't just want to argue with them and try to prove them wrong? Are we willing to open up conversations about Jesus with anyone, anywhere, anytime? With everyone, everywhere, everytime?! Whether you're sitting at a well or sitting at a train station.

Now, take a look at what this Samaritan woman did. She left Jesus and went and gave her testimony to the people in her town. She went and told people about her meeting with Jesus, and MANY BELIEVED!

Today, as we finish, I want us to think about this: What barriers do we put up in sharing our testimony?

Is it possible that we give people the impression that Jesus is not for them?

Is it possible that we avoid sharing our testimony with people because we think they're not really interested?

Is it possible that we put up barriers for people coming to church to meet with Jesus? Either in the way we welcome or the way we talk afterwards or the way we run our services?

Is it possible that we could simply offer people the word of God in their own language and that they might want to read it?

I had a lady in our church a few weeks ago doing some work. She saw the Chinese gospel of John on our front table. She picked one up and said to me: "Can I have one of these?" Of course, I said "YES!" But I was thinking, "Why haven't I already offered her one?"

We have Bibles in English, Chinese, Arabic and Korean. Why do we have so many left? Surely there are people out there who might like to read them? Anyone. Anywhere. Anytime. Take some with you today to give out when you have an opportunity! Another person working in our church last month was looking at our old pew bibles as I was replacing them with the new ones. They asked me about them. I said: "Do you have one?" They said no. I gave them one. Their first Bible. How simple is that? Now, they can meet Jesus in His Word.

I think maybe sometimes we rule people out. We might think they're not "ready" for a conversation about God. We make judgments based on their beliefs, or their nationality, or their history.

That's what I just love about this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. He will meet with anyone, anywhere, anytime. And he will reveal himself to them. And they can be saved.

The gospel of Jesus is for anyone, anywhere, anytime. What is **your** testimony? Are you ready to share it with anyone, anywhere, anytime? Are you open to the opportunities? Jesus said:

"open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest."

Pray.