

20190901 John 4:4-6 The Woman at the Well



THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS - © 2019 Faber McMullen The Woman at the Well

The woman at the well is one of the most beautiful stories we are told about Jesus' life. It is a message of hope, acceptance, esteem, redemption, and GRACE. That grace is available to each of us for the taking. It is a free gift that we cannot earn and we do not deserve. Scripture tells us that it is by grace that we are saved by faith. It is a gift of God. It is not of works. And because of that none of us can say that we have earned it or deserve it.

In this story, Jesus becomes involved in the most awkward of encounters with a person desperately in need of redemption. Jesus pushes the woman, his disciples, and us into places where we are out of our comfort zones so that we can have an incredible encounter with God. God is a gentleman, but He draws us to Himself in whatever way we need to come to Him. Sometimes the work of the kingdom can put us into awkward places, but they are good places. They are good for us and good for others, because in those situations we are exposed to God's character, personality, and strength.

Let's start reading the text in John chapter four, and then we'll examine things as we go along, and ask ourselves some questions.

4 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

The passage begins with the Pharisees trying to stir up trouble. **Have any of you ever seen someone on facebook post a meme just to stir up trouble?** It's like they love to put something out there just to create a fight. The Pharisees hated Jesus and they wanted to bait Him into a competition with John as to who had the most disciples. We all remember the kid in school who would say, "hey Joe says he can beat you up. What're you going to do about it?" Jesus doesn't fall for any of this. He just goes about His father's business. Maybe we need to learn to stay out of every challenge that the world lays down. A lot of times we don't need to engage in every argument that we witness. So let's continue with the passage.



4 Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

⁶ *Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.*

First let me tell you that for historical reasons that we don't need to go into in detail here, the Samaritans hated the Jews and the Jews hated the Samaritans. It went back to a time in history when the Jews in this area had intermarried with Assyrians. They were considered half-breeds who had not stayed pure before the Lord. Jews would make the trip from Jerusalem to Galilee by avoiding Samaria. But the text tells us that Jesus "had to go through Samaria"? **Why did Jesus "have to go through Samaria"?** He did not have to go through Samaria at all. Jesus wasn't under such a strict time-table that He had to save the time of going straight through Samaria. He went through Samaria because His mission was to the whole world. I think we are each called to "go through Samaria". **Does God ever call you to places or people that human divisions tell you to avoid?** I think so. Jesus was called through Samaria to have to interact with people that the Jews felt were disgusting and despicable. He often calls us to do exactly the same thing. He pushes us out of our comfort zone to love others with His love. This is a call to each of us to be careful about putting barriers up between us and whomever the Lord wants us to love.

⁷ *When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"*
⁸ *(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

We find the Samaritan woman coming to draw water at a strange time of the day. We see in the prior verse that it was noon. Women didn't draw water at noon! She was not there when the other women were drawing water. **Why was the woman coming to draw water when no one else was there?** Perhaps it was because she didn't want to be bothered by anyone else. Maybe she felt shame for her lifestyle and didn't want to be confronted by anyone. Have you ever been in a mood to be alone and talk to no one. She obviously was in that kind of mood and when she saw Jesus, she probably thought to herself "oh good, it's a Jew and he is a man, so I won't have to talk to him." She didn't talk to him, but Jesus spoke to her. He asked her, "Will you give me a drink." She probably was shocked when He spoke to her. She was shocked because Jewish men were forbidden to speak to women they did not know in public, and they were forbidden to speak to Samaritans. It is interesting that Jesus opened the conversation with his own need.

Also, we will see later that Jesus didn't want to eat anything when His disciples came back with food. **If He wasn't going to eat, why did He send them into town to buy food?** Perhaps Jesus sent them into town where they would have to interact with these Samaritans that they hated.

⁹ *The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)*

She immediately put Jesus in a box. He was a man and He was a Jew. AND, He was asking for her to give him a drink. You know we get into big trouble when we try to put God in a box. Often we'll do that when we think that God must be this way or that way, or when we suppose He must do this thing or that thing. I think we also need to be careful about putting other people in a box. Her response to Jesus was just to put Him on the defensive.

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "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."¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus now turns the conversation directly on to her. Jesus is speaking to the deepest spiritual needs this woman has ever experienced? What does she do? She turns the conversation away from the deep things of God and turns it to buckets, ropes, etc. **Do we ever do that with the Lord?** I think we do. God whispers things into our hearts and we want to talk about ropes and buckets. We want to avoid the changes He might whisper into our lives.

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ 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."

Jesus turns the conversation back to the spiritual. He is talking to her about living water that can cure her thirst forever. **Did you know that He promises to put that same living water deep within each of us?** Notice that Jesus says streams of living water will flow out of those who are in Jesus. That is the Holy Spirit that will come. Jesus is once again saying if we truly understand who He is, and if we come to Him, He will give us living water. Jesus is God's answer to our greatest needs. He promises that if we come to Him, He will give us rest."

Coming to Jesus is so much more than just believing in Him. It means to come to Him with all that we are and we lean on Him and abide in Him. Coming to Him is to submit to Him. That takes us to a point where we never are "dying of thirst" again. We can come back to Him again and again, relying on Him and leaning on Him and not on our own understanding. It does not mean that we will not have searing challenges that will come at us daily. These challenges make our souls thirsty, but He abides there and promises to give us refreshing water to drink. We have someone to bring these challenges too. And He promises to refresh us again and again.

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

It is hard to tell exactly whether the woman is being sarcastic, sincere or what. She might be trying to keep the conversation superficial, but it could be a sincere cry for a change; for something to end the tiresome thirst she feels in her soul. But Jesus is getting ready to really go deep, and He is going to expose her sin to her.

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband.¹⁸ 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."

Do you think this was rude of Jesus? Why do you think Jesus would go into such uncomfortable territory in this conversation? Jesus has gone straight into the heart of this

woman. She is a woman who is broken. Under Jewish law a man could divorce his wife for any reason or no reason at all. Also under Jewish law only the man could initiate divorce. This woman had been rejected by five men who had decrees of divorce written against her. She was unwanted. She was rejected. In today's psycho terminology, we would say that she was either horrifically abused, or she was highly dysfunctional (or both). And now, she was so thirsty for companionship she was living with a man who wasn't even her husband. Why was she living with a man who was not her husband? I think maybe because the laws of her society didn't allow her any more chances at a husband and a good marriage. From what I understand, Jewish law permitted three chances. Maybe Samaritan law allowed five; I do not know. But for whatever reason, she found herself once again living in a dysfunctional relationship which was less than she hoped for and longed for. Her life was filled with shame. She was ashamed of her past, and she was ashamed of her present. Understandably, she immediately turned the attention from herself back onto a theological argument.

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

It's kind of interesting that she doesn't get into an argument with Jesus about her moral condition. She readily admits it by saying "I can see that you are a prophet". She does however begin to deflect the question by moving to a theological issue that has been a contention for centuries between the Jews and the Samaritans. Do we ever see this kind of thing today? Absolutely. It's amazing how if you start talking about sin and the need for a savior people will begin talking about the wrongs of the crusades or they'll focus on some other historical wrong that they think should be laid at the feet of Christians. They will want to argue with you about feeding the poor, the abortion issue, or something else. I see this a lot of times on Facebook where people will want to point out how much Joel Osteen makes off of his book sales to get the attention off of themselves, or make them feel better about themselves. I would surmise that usually they aren't even Christians. They just want to get the spotlight off of themselves. Jesus doesn't want to make her uncomfortable. He again just meets her where she is and let's her know that all this debate about the proper place to worship God is coming to an end. He is letting her know that something new and different is coming.

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain (Gerazim) nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

Jesus takes the conversation off of the appearance of worship and gets into the substance. He's not talking about Jews, Samaritans, or Gentiles; all that will matter is 'true worshippers'. And He defines what a true worshiper means. He's saying that there is a plan for salvation of Jew and Samaritan and Gentile, and it doesn't involve places but the personhood of a Messiah, a Christ, a Redeemer. Places, spiritual trappings etc will no longer matter, but what matters is worshipping in Spirit. Worshipping in Spirit is offering all of ourselves to Him and not being wrapped up in

forms of worship. Worshipping in truth is when we worship Him according to His revelation and not false worship.

²⁵ *The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."*²⁶ *Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."*

The Samaritan Woman will come to know Jesus as Savior and not just as Messiah. In fact many in the town will come to know Jesus as Savior and Lord through this broken woman. Jesus spoke to the woman very differently than He talked with Nicodemus in chapter 3 just prior to this account. Nicodemus needed to learn that his good works were not enough to save him, but that he needed to be born again.

Jesus is speaking to this woman in a different way. He is telling her, "I value you and I forgive whatever you've been involved in, I value you, and give you myself. I want to be your Savior and redeemer regardless of what you've done." You know, God loves each of us just like we are. But He loves us far too much to leave us like we are.

In the account we see the woman going back in to the town to proclaim that Jesus had told her everything that she had ever done. She asked the crowd, "Could this be the Messiah?" And the text tells us that "³⁹ *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."* ⁴⁰ *So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.* ⁴¹ *And because of his words many more became believers.* ⁴² *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."*

I think there are several important truths that come out of this passage:

1 Following God might take you to the edge or the end of your comfort zone. In the account, Jesus pushes the woman at the well to understand the depth of her own spiritual brokenness and thirst.

2 Jesus is not able to be able to be put in a box of the Samaritan woman's expectations. She wanted to think of Him as just another Jew, but He was in fact the Messiah. Likewise, God works in ways we do not understand and the message of salvation transcends all human divisions (race, societal and otherwise).

3 Jesus never ridiculed, denigrated, or put down the woman. He loved her unconditionally and called her to repentance. God does the same thing with each of us. He loves us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us as we are. He wants to redeem us, heal us, and fill us with His Spirit.

4 God can and does use whomever He wills to reveal Himself. The Samaritan woman was broken and spiritually bankrupt, and God used her so that "many of the Samaritans believed in Him". God still uses the broken and spiritually bankrupt to draw all men unto Himself. He uses the simple to confound the wise. His ways are not our ways. Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.