

John 4:16-30

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[27] Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to him. (ESV)

This is part two of the passage we began last week

Just to refresh our minds, let me recap for just a moment Last week we left Judea. Jesus HAD TO GO TO SAMARIA, the one place that everyone avoided. The conflict and tension there was great, and everyone hated Samaritans. In fact, it was historically evaded so often that most folks would have traveled through the Jordan river instead of going through this awful town. But Jesus had to go.

He meets a woman at Jacob's well

It's the middle of the day, no one else should be around, it's hot, and these two are alone. Jesus asks for her water bottle, and she thinks he's crazy. But Jesus said, if you knew who I really was – you'd be asking me for water! And so he goes on to explain that he can offer her water that cannot be found anywhere else on earth. His water is alive, and wells up to springs of eternal life in the souls of man. Which means that His water is greater than Jacob's! And though this woman has been deflecting much of the conversation, it appears that she does want the living water. But she has doubts. And really, she just

doesn't want to go out to the well every day like she is now. She wants a modern convenience. So with the next 15 verses, Jesus is going to up the ante a little bit and cut straight to the heart. No more small talk. The disciples will be back soon and I don't have all day.

Church, prepare your hearts to be cut to the core by the very mouth of God

He is going to expose sin, show us himself, and commission us once again. Here are the three sections so you can follow along with me:

1. *Jesus Knows Our Sins*
2. *Jesus Is Salvation From Sin*
3. *Jesus Commissions Sinners*

Let's dig in at verse 16 and behold the Word of God together

Jesus Knows Our Sins

[16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

A Surprising Response...

Why is this Jesus' first reaction to her saying, "Give me this water...?" Just as she was seeking out Jesus' motives in having a conversation with her, now Jesus is seeking her motives in desiring his water. As we talked last week, I'm not convinced that she totally understood what she was asking for. She wanted a water that would make her life easier, and that's not the water that Jesus was offering. Maybe she was beginning to understand that Jesus was greater than Jacob, but she just doesn't get it yet. So what does Jesus say? Go... Call your husband... And come back here...

What would you have said?

Any other pastor, preacher, evangelist, or whoever would have been like, "Alright! Praise God! You are saved! Your ticket into heaven has been punched and it's all hunky dory from here!" I mean seriously? Wouldn't you have fired up the baptismal? Be honest. Sometimes we care more about getting someone to say a prayer and get dunked than we do about their eternal soul. I've heard one of the wisest things a Pastor can do when someone tells them they have been saved is saying, "*We'll see...*" I think Jesus is saying "we'll see" to this Samaritan woman. And what is he wanting to see? Fruit. Evidence. He's wanting to see the same thing that Paul wanted from the church in Galatia. He's wanting to see the same thing that James encourages the believers to have – a faith that results in works. Where is the fruit? And so I believe Jesus is giving a test to find the sincerity of her desire for living water. And this test involves finding out her personal life and where her heart's desires lie.

But why this question about her husband? Why does he request to meet him above all things?

Because Jesus knows her sin. It might be like you coming to me saying you want to be baptized, and I respond with, “Where were you last Friday night?” Jesus knows what this woman has spent her life doing. She knows the kind of water she has been pursuing. It’s full of sin, selfishness, idolatry, adultery, infidelity, lies, and cheating. And you know what? It’s the same water you and I have been drinking of.

[17] The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

A Truthful Lie

The woman’s answer is technically truthful. Jesus acknowledges that doesn’t He? He says twice, “You are right in saying you have no husband” and he says it again at the end of verse 18, “What you have said is true.” Jesus repeats himself on purpose here. He is ironically calling her out on her “truthful lie.” She is thinking, “this is a conversation that I do not want to get into with this spiritual Jewish man, so I need to deflect the topic quickly.” As a matter of fact, the topic she did not want to discuss with Jesus is most likely the reason she’s coming to the well all alone in the middle of the day. This Samaritan woman probably doesn’t have the best reputation.

None of us have every told a truthful lie have we?

Spouses? Ever been asked about that chore she asked you to do and you come up with some response that’s half-way true, hoping that the conversation will be over and you can go do the chore before she gets home? Come on now... We’ve all done it. Or Parents... What do your kids say when you ask them about school? “fine.” School may not be going “fine.” But they don’t want to talk about it right now. Right? A truthful lie. Jesus catches her right in the middle of one. “I have no husband” might mean she ain’t married, but it also means she does not want to talk about it. Conversation over. Next subject. But that’s not the sin Jesus is trying to expose.

What is the sin that Jesus is trying to expose?

It’s the statement right in between Jesus’ to ironic “you are right” phrases. Jesus, full of the Father’s will and the Spirit of God, knows this woman. And he knows her heart’s intention in changing the subject. And He knows every sin she’s ever committed. So what does he say? You are right! You don’t have a husband. Rather, you have had five husbands. And the one you have now is not your husband.

Remember John 3:20? “For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

Here we have a sinner standing directly in front of the light, and it’s uncomfortable. Here are Jesus’ two surprising answers that shed light on her sin:

1. You Have Had Five Husbands

How did he know that??? Down to the number! And we don't know exactly what that means. It could mean that she has been intimate with five men and never married. It could mean that she has been married 5 times, but has been either widowed or divorced from each relationship. It could mean that she has been married and committed adultery with 5 other men. Either way, it's an immoral act outside of the confines of Godly marriage and Jesus has called her out on it, exposing her to the Light.

2. She's With A Man Currently, But She Is Not Married To Him

And you know what He says about it? He's not your husband. Just in case anyone is unsure, sex outside of marriage is sin. There's no such thing as being "married in your heart." That piece of paper that you claim doesn't "define" your marriage is a poor argument according to Jesus. Jesus is saying that this woman is with a man intimately, and they are not married. They have not gone before God and before witnesses to join together legally and spiritually. Jesus knows it. And Jesus is exposing it.

Not much has changed culturally

Sexual immorality is the big one. No one wants that to be exposed. If you find out someone in the church has been getting speeding tickets, stealing time on the clock at their workplace, smoking cigarettes, or committing adultery, which one of those do you think is the most embarrassing? Which sin makes you feel more uncomfortable as I say it from the pulpit: "pride" or "pornography." Which sin would you be more likely to not confess: "idolatry" or "sex outside of marriage." Every sin is equally condemning for our souls and separates us from God. But we have to be honest in saying that certain sins have different impacts on our lives. And here Jesus exposes sexual immorality. Why? Because the word expose is supposed to make you feel ashamed, embarrassed, and uncomfortable. This lady most likely had a poor reputation for her sexual immorality, leaving her ashamed, embarrassed, uncomfortable, and going to the well in the middle of the day when no one else would be there.

But here's what we should see when it comes to Jesus exposing her sin:

He is exposing her sin with the foreknowledge of God, and is thereby proving both his authority to know all sin and maintain his willingness to pursue sinners. Jesus knew this woman and her sins before she even approached the well. He knew her adultery, he knew her sexual immorality, he knew her lack of faithfulness to one man from the very beginning. And yet here he is talking to her at the well, offering her a spring of living water that is eternal life. This is one of the most beautiful pictures of the mercy of Christ ever demonstrated in the Scriptures.

Church, Jesus Knows Our Sins And He Still Wants Us

He knows we have profaned His name and dragged the reputation of Christ through the mud with our sinful idolatry and lust and pride and selfish ambition. He sees it. He sees it every day. And it's not that he just ignores it, but that He exposes it to His Light, and our sinful desires are melted away in the awesome power of the gospel.

Hebrews 4:13, “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.”

Do you see it? Jesus’ eyes have looked upon your nakedness! He has seen your most heinous sins! He has seen our sexual immorality, our guilt and shame all laying out in the open at Jacob’s well in the middle of the day. But he’s looking at it so that it might be forgiven and replaced. This is good news church. Every other person on this planet will judge you according to your shameful deeds when they are revealed. But Christ’s unconditional love has not derived from earth. He is the only one from Heaven, John 3:31, and He is the only one who mercifully and unconditionally pursues sinners. If you’re longing for approval, look no further. It won’t be found on earth, no matter how hard you search or how hard you strive for it. Christ is your only hope for approval.

Let’s continue on in the conversation here. It’s intensifying quickly. How does the Samaritan woman respond to Him?

Jesus Is Salvation From Sin

[19] The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”

This Woman Is A Master Deflector

Okay okay... I get it, you’re a prophet. That’s what this whole thing has been about. You are supposed to tell me the future and how I need to get back to my Jewish roots and worship in Jerusalem right? That’s what the whole living water spiel was about? Well listen. OUR fathers worshiped on this mountain. Mt. Gerazim. We built our own temple up here and it’s been doing just fine. (By the way, you can actually read God making a covenant with Moses on top of Mt. Gerazim in Deuteronomy 27) They believed this place was ordained by God and was the only place where man could worship Him. “But you are telling me, Jesus, that the true temple is in Jerusalem, and that’s where God dwells...” And so you can see where all the tension comes from when it comes to religious conversation in Samaria... “Jacob gave us this land! And even though Assyria took over and the foreigners came in, it’s still Jacob’s blessed land! We’ve got our own temple here! So what if we’re uncircumcised and the name of YHWH gets thrown in with some Baal worship here and there... Jacob gave us all this. So if your living water is in Jerusalem, I ain’t leaving...”

Jesus Exposed Her Sin, But She Changed The Topic Anyway

And in His great mercy, after exposing her sin, he basically flatters her and allows her to change the topic. And though he follows her topic, he puts the emphasis back on himself.

[21] Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Woman, Believe Me...

Sound familiar? Can't you just hear Jesus saying to his mother in ch.2, “woman... what does this have to do with me?” And so Jesus says with great seriousness and inspiration from the Father, “Ma'am, believe me.” Those words grab hold of not her ears, but her heart. Believe me when I say that an hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. In other words – don't occupy your time fighting over a location for worship. Because soon, man will not worship the Father in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerazim. Soon the glory of God will no longer be bound by four walls. The glory of God has been revealed through Jesus Christ, the invisible God has been made known, and He has come to vanquish a physical location for His glory to dwell in and replace it with people that love Him. Just as Jesus Himself is the very temple of God that was spoken of in John 2 as He was whipping people out of the physical temple – so those who call Him Lord inherit His priesthood, allowing God to now dwell within the souls of His adopted children. If only you knew who I was ma'am... You would not be worshipping at a temple, but you would be worshipping me, the one true temple of the living God who is going to flip religiosity upside down. The bickering over locations ends with me.

Why?

You are worshipping what you do not know. We (Jews) are worshipping what we know.

In other words, all of your foreign gods that have come from your foreign husbands have convoluted the name of YHWH. You know the Pentateuch. You know Genesis-Deuteronomy. You know Jacob. But you don't know who YHWH is any more. Those who have kept the covenant of God are His chosen Hebrew people, the descendants of Israel. We, Jesus speaking for His Jewish lineage, know who we are worshipping. We are worshipping the God of salvation, for salvation is from the Jews. Through this conversation, Jesus is getting closer and closer to revealing His glory to her. When He said, “Salvation is from the Jews,” He is referring to God's salvation for His chosen people fulfilled in this Jew that is now standing in front of her. Jesus is salvation. And the Samaritan woman is getting closer and closer to seeing who this man is that asked to drink from her water bottle.

Verses 23-24 Are A Sermon By Itself

Jesus explains further about how worship is about to change drastically. Historically, if you want to worship God, you do it in a temple and there is likely a physical sacrifice of some kind attached to your worship. You go somewhere, you provide some sort of action in a specific place and in a specific way, and God gives a specific blessing, usually atonement for something. Jesus is saying that the hour is here. Those days are over. The Father is seeking true worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. Think about it. Going to a location and bringing a sacrificial offering and expecting something in return has NOTHING to do with the state of the heart. It has nothing to do with truth and the spirit of worship. It can perhaps be a by-product of a worshipping heart, but the actions themselves are not what the Father is seeking.

Why?

Because God Himself is Spirit.

God is metaphysical. God transcends all substance and physical form as we know it. He can be found in the quiet of your bedroom, in the middle of Times Square, at the bottom of the deepest ocean, and at the top of the highest mountain. God is spirit. You cannot contain or grab hold of a spirit. How are we going to worship him in spirit and in truth if we put him in a building and tell him he can't come out? God far transcends the physical realities of time and space. He cannot be contained. He is infinite, immortal, holy, limitless, inconceivably large, and without any form or substance known to man. God is spirit. He is not "the big man upstairs" with a beard and a halo. He is everywhere, all powerful, and all-knowing. And "doing good deeds" with a stagnant heart is not going to satisfy YHWH. He wants people who are going to worship him in spirit and truth.

And so Jesus has just ended 90% of all the tension that was held with the Samaritans having their own place of worship

Main Street – you know full well that this building is not the one place where you can meet God. We often call it a sanctuary, the house of God, or some other like term – but God cannot be contained. You are to worship him in spirit and in truth with your life as a living sacrifice. You are to worship him at the grocery store, at the gas pump, in your home, in the car, at your job, on the phone, out in the woods, on the golf course, on the internet, on your cell phone, in every conversation, whatever you do, do it unto the glory of God. Now I should say that this passage does not permit you to dismiss the gathering of saints, called "church." Christ is best glorified when His bride is singing in unison, bearing each others burdens, and leaving their sins to follow the Husband TOGETHER. But it was important for this woman to see that the God of the Jews, YHWH, was infinitely bigger than any building, whether it be in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerazim.

Jesus Is Salvation. Jesus Is Not Your Preferred Worship Style.

Jesus, the Son of David, the Root of Jesse, the Savior of Samaritans, the Redeemer of all nations, the living water of God who came to bring life to all the thirsty people across the globe by going to the cross as a substitute for sins and rising from the dead, giving his

living inheritance to all who have tasted of His living water. Mt. Gerazim cannot do that. The temple at Jerusalem cannot do that. Main Street cannot do that. Bluegrass Sunday's cannot do that. No matter the worship style, the location, the preference – only Jesus can save. I was talking with someone this week who was serving at a church that was trying to decide if they were going to move from using hymnals to singing contemporary music. My answer? WHO CARES. There are children whose parents are on meth, women prostituting themselves for a meal, and souls who are dying without living water right here in Spindale. Worship styles and arguments about preferences aren't going to save them. Only Jesus. Perhaps the Samaritan woman was finally about to understand this.

[25] The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he 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."

I Who Speak To You Am He.

It appears here that the woman has taken this Jewish prophet's words to be mere opinion. "I hear you, and it sounds alright... But when the Messiah comes, he'll tell us all things... I'll just wait and see what he does." Jesus has already told her that if she knew who he was, she'd be asking him for water. Jesus has already shown her something different by pursuing her when any other Jew would have walked the other direction. Jesus has already prophesied the sin in her life and told her "every thing she had ever done." Jesus has already communicated to her that his water is infinitely superior to Jacob's water. All the signs are there. Jesus is clearly the Messiah, but she just hasn't seen it yet.

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Remember Mary?

It reminds me of the first time that Mary meets Jesus after he has been resurrected. She's outside of the tomb just weeping because his body is gone. And then she hears someone asking her, "Why are you weeping?" And we're reading the story like, "Look Mary! Open your eyes! It's him! He's alive! Don't you see!!!" But Mary was too consumed with doubt and sorrow and circumstances to possibly believe that the voice talking to her was Jesus. But then Jesus called her name... Mary. And she realized that her Savior was standing right before her. And so here's the Samaritan woman having this long conversation with Jesus, and she just cannot see that the Messiah is standing right in front of her. We, the readers, are just watching from the outside saying, "Look! Don't you see! It's Him!" Instead of listening to Him and rightly observing His words and what he's trying to communicate to her, she just throws up her hands and says, "I don't know what to believe... I'm just gonna wait for Messiah to come..." And just as Jesus said, "Mary..." So Jesus is saying to the Samaritan woman, finally piercing her heart, "I who speak to you am he." It's me. It's been me the whole time. The tired, thirsty Jew that you've been talking to. I am the Messiah. Woman. Believe me. My words are true. And you will thirst to death without me.

Was This Her Saving Moment?

I don't know. Maybe. This is where the conversation ends. Maybe, just as we started this passage, we have to say again, *"we'll see..."*

Finally, let's look at the last few verses to see if her experiences led to salvation in spirit and truth.

Jesus Commissions Sinners

[27] Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to him.

A Bridge

Truly, I think these verses serve as a bridge to the final section of Chapter 4. But there's a lot that happens here. At the very climax of the conversation, the disciples come back with their grocery bags. They approach the well and realize that Jesus is there alone with a Samaritan woman... They marveled over it for a moment, amazed that he would talk with her, let alone be seen in public with her. If only they had heard him ask to share her water bottle earlier... But because the disciples come back, this almost feels to me like a devastating cliffhanger. We've been watching this epic movie and something incredible is about to happen... But "to be continued" pops up on the screen. Or like the old super hero films, "Will the Joker get away with his evil crimes? Will batman ever get out of this trap and save the lady in distress? Find out next time!..." But here's what we can learn from these three verses:

The Disciples Didn't Question Jesus

That is so often the exact opposite of our hearts. We are the Samaritan woman who is thirsty but constantly doubting Jesus. We love to sing songs about following Jesus and doing His work and being His servants on this earth until He comes back for us... But man we sure love to question Him when He tells us to do something.

And then verses 28-30 serve as the clip at the end that says, "Next time on The Gospel of John..."

First, look what happens... The woman left her water jar. WOW. This is evidence number 1. She left her water jar. Maybe she was just ashamed to meet the other Jewish men. Maybe she was excited to go back to town and tell others. Either way – John made sure that he recorded this little sentence for us to know that she left her old water jar that she took to Jacob's well every single day. Why? Because she had found something so much greater, that she forgot her old water and never looked back. She leaves the well and heads back into town, saying to the people, "Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" Have you ever had such an experience that you went home telling

everyone about it? Listen to what I did today! You'll never believe it! What do you think??? Come see for yourself! As the woman began to spread the word to all Samaria, many from the city began to travel towards the well to find the man with living water...

This woman, who was just a few moments ago seen as an exposed, adulterous, lying, deflecting sinner, has become an evangelist

That fast. She didn't go to seminary and learn the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. She didn't go to her pastor and get a few gospel tracts to hand out to people. She immediately went into town and told every person she met. She told so many people that it resulted in a crowd that was traveling towards Jacob's well because they wanted to meet the man who gives living water.

Christ has called us, from the second we were born again, to go and tell it on the mountain

Which mountain do you think she went to? I can only imagine that she went to Mt. Gerazim, where the temple was. One place where she was certain to face opposition. But she didn't care. She didn't care about her old reputation. She didn't care about what people would think about her now if she started telling them about a strange Jew who claimed to be the Messiah. All she cared about was spreading the news immediately.

Jesus Commissions Sinners!

You are a servant of Christ! No matter your past! No matter what you've done! If you are drinking of His well and have experienced the saving grace of God through Christ – you are a missionary! When Christ exposes our sins and saves us, he doesn't just bring us back up to a clean slate like a fresh start or something – but he immediately flings us up to a level of righteousness that makes us His workmanship! We are the holy priesthood of Christ that worships Him in spirit and truth, who go into all the world proclaiming the name of Christ and the good news of living water given freely to all sinners!

When we read the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, we ought to recognize the power of the gospel to expose our sins, bring us salvation through Christ, and instantly change us into passionate missionaries who go to some of the hardest places and people on the globe.

He Exposes Our Sins.

He Saves Us From Sins.

He Commissions Us As Sinners.