

That You May Have Life In His Name - John 4:1-45

Pastor Matt Dean

Context:

Nicodemus the Pharisee

A foreign woman from Samaria

Both in need of Jesus

From Jerusalem to Galilee - journey

Social context - conversations on religion between Jesus and Nicodemus vs Jesus and woman

Social standing - Nicodemus (respected Pharisee leader) / woman (five divorces + living with)

National standing - Nicodemus (Jewish) / woman (Jews hated Samaritans 722BC / syncretism)

Moral / Immoral

The longing for more / The spiritual thirst / soul's hunger

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

4 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. [Jesus is traveling north from Jerusalem in Judea to Galilee]⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. (noon)

This well is still there today – Mount Gerizim (a place Samaritans considered holy, where they would worship) is visible from this well.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. [unusual time to get water for the day, this woman likely avoiding others because of social shame and reputation] for Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." [Culturally, this is not normal – men did not have conversations with non-family females]

⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) [Jewish tradition held that Samaritans were continually unclean, so for Jesus to drink from her cup was impure by their customs]

Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 16:24) – and when Israel was exiled, foreigners also settled in the land, mixing their religious views alongside the true God of Israel. There was much hostility between Jews and Samaritans, especially in regard to their holy sites and location – Jews were adamant Jerusalem was the place for the temple, while Samaritans thought this place to be Mount Gerizim.

[722 BC, Jewish anger because the Samaritan had blended pagan idolatry into worship, and part of the controversy was centered around where God has centered His worship, further complicated by an event 20 years before Jesus' ministry, where according to historian Josephus, some Samaritans defiled the temple in Jerusalem during Passover, when they scattered human corpses in the courtyard of the temple, and because of this Samaritans were permanently banned from Jerusalem's temple. The hatred and alienation between Jews and Samaritans was palpable, and yet Jesus intentionally is present with this person....¹]

¹ IVP Commentary John, Whittacre

¹⁰ 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.”

[For both Jewish and Samaritans, water was representative imagery of God’s revelation, the Torah, and the Spirit]²

¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”

[It’s evident she is still thinking literal water ,where Jesus is and will ultimately point to something eternal, both Jews and Samaritans had elevated views Jacob, and their mutual connection to Jacob as God’s covenant people³]

¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

[“The woman is still thinking physical water from a man made well, and the thought of not being inconvenienced by needed to come back to this well and draw more water... but Jesus is talking about something greater... “The provision of living water speaks of the superiority of Jesus’ revelation to that of the old covenant, for Jesus not only brings revelation of God but gives the Spirit by which this revelation is internalized in believers” ⁴]

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” 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.” 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.”

We need to see – that in the contrast of this woman’s broken life – Jesus is also revealing who He is. This is what happens in the life of people who trust in Christ. We see our sin exposed. We see our shame and need for redemption, and we see these needs in the presence of Jesus – and He alone, the Lamb of God - shows us that He has come to take away our sin and shame.

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.” 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.”

² IVP Commentary John, Whittacre

³ Whittacre / Odeberg

⁴ Whittacre

[The Samaritan view of the Messiah was different from Jews, Samaritans were not expecting a Davidic king, but “rather the *Taheb* who would be primarily a lawgiver, a teacher, restorer, and revealer... she is expecting someone who will come clear up the confusion.”⁵⁻⁶]

Again – let’s remember, one of the divides among Jews and Samaritans, was “where” God was to be worshipped. If we think back to Nicodemus, Jesus speaks of necessary new birth, of being born again, his high morality and Pharisee zeal would not be enough – and in stark contrast, this Samaritan woman in a life of shame, is seeing her own shame in light of Jesus who is now speaking to her and what worship truly looks like.

Big picture – we are seeing that Jesus is revealing something to the Jewish mindset, to the Samaritan mindset, but also what happens when any human responds in faith to Jesus the Messiah.

“To worship God in spirit and truth means we have received the truth - the testimony about who Jesus Christ is- and we have received the Spirit. Jesus is describing salvation. We turn from the lies and error of this world, and embrace the truth about Jesus and receive his Spirit, who then dwells inside each one who believes.”⁷

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. ³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

Imagine being a disciple of Jesus – and seeing this unfold. They knew the history and cultural divide between Jews and Samaritans. They knew the tension and hostility. They were thinking lunch with Jesus. They come back to find Jesus who they are following in a conversation with this scandalous Samaritan woman, and more than that – that she is responding in faith, recognizing this is the Messiah she has been waiting for.

³² But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” ³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

Clearly in this moment - Jesus is wanted his disciples to see He is on a mission, with something more satisfying and urgent than a meal – He wants them to see the urgency and opportunity before them to be about His kingdom and helping people see Jesus for who He is.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”

⁵ Whittace / MacDonald / Dexinger

⁶ NICNT, Michaels

⁷ Christ Centered Exposition - John, Matt Carter

This is what happens when a life is changed by Jesus. Other people hear. Other people recognize their need. The Spirit moves among them and opens their eyes to see their own sin and shame. Dead hearts awoken. Heaven rejoices. Jesus is glorified.

⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² 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 indeed the Savior of the world.”

There is no one like Jesus... They asked Jesus to stay. He does — and many more believe. Many more believed because of His word. Her story wasn't the only story. Her story was one of many — and they no longer needed her testimony to believe — they had Jesus. They say — we have heard for ourselves — and WE KNOW this is INDEED the SAVIOR of the world!

⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

(Jn 4:1–45)

Jesus has come to save sinners from their sin and from themselves, whether self righteous or immoral failures, both types of people need Jesus. Nicodemus had self righteousness — but still needed Jesus. The Samaritan woman had shame and obvious outward sin — and she too needed Jesus. We are a blend of them as well — we tend to bounce between pride and failure, between self-control and self-indulgence, between well-behaved and regretfully broken — and Jesus is the great Redeemer of all who believe.

Jesus can take the wayward and the worldly, the most zealous of Pharisees and the most broken of adulterers — and both stand before the shadow of Mercy on the Cross. How has Christ reconciled you? What has He saved you from?

We see the outcome of the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus. Not only does she believe in Jesus, but many more around her also believe Jesus from her testimony. What has He saved you for? Her life is a great reminder of Jesus seeking out the broken and lost — but it's not just what she has been saved from, but that her salvation leads to something greater — a life and testimony of pointing others to Christ. Do you believe He is the Savior? Do you trust in His grace enough to believe that He can and will redeem your story? What steps are you taking with Jesus to walk in obedience?

Jesus says, true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Jesus is not saying this is “how” you are to worship, but that true worship has everything to do with believing the truth of Jesus and recognizing His Spirit at work within us. How does this reflect our salvation? We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we believe that He is the Messiah, we believe that we have life, eternal life, in His name. We believe that His Spirit dwells within us — and We believe that worship is a whole life response to Jesus, not just what we sing, not just when we gather as the Church.

Everyone who follows Christ has a testimony, and God's work in our lives is ongoing. Recently, how do you see God at work in your life? Remember the outcome of the Samaritan woman's faith — she went back and told others and they too believed Jesus as well. God's grace at work in you means you DO have something to say, you DO have a life to offer, you DO have purpose and value and joy in Jesus. What does that look like in your life?

A broken woman, sought out by Jesus across social and ethnic lines, believed Jesus because her life was exposed – and brought into the light in such a way, and by such a God – that she saw Him as the Savior of the world.

Somehow – her sin, her broken relationships, her past, her story, her misguided understanding of worship, her cultural heritage, her current living situation, her social standing... somehow all that fades in glorious light of Jesus. Her words – He told me everything I did and still He sat with me. He knew all my sin and scandal, and still he spoke with me. He knew my background. He knew my brokenness, and still He looked at me. AT some point – she had to say more – she must have said more, because they wanted Jesus to stay with them too, she may have been a broken woman, but it sounds like the village was broken too... because the village is now saying – WE KNOW HE IS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.