

The Woman Who Became A Well - Part 2

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[0 : 0 0] Our scripture lesson comes from the Gospel according to John, chapter 4, second half of the chapter. We're looking at the story of the woman at the well, the woman who became a well.

We've already seen Jesus offer her living water and talk to her about worship and reveal who he is to her. We pick up the story at verse 27 of chapter 4.

If you are able, will you please stand for the reading of God's Word? And at this point, Jesus' disciples came, and they marveled that he had been speaking with a woman.

Yet no one said, what do you seek or why do you speak with her? So the woman left her water pot and went into the city and said to the men, come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Could this be the Christ? They went out of the city and were coming to him. In the meanwhile, the disciples were requesting Jesus, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about.

[1 : 0 7] The disciples, therefore, were saying to one another, no one brought him anything to eat, did he? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Do you not say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

For in this case, the saying is true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. Others have labored and you have entered into their labor. And from that city, many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified, he told me everything I ever did.

So when the Samaritans came to him, they were asking him to stay with them. And he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. And they were saying to the woman, it is no longer because of what you have said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is indeed the Savior of the world.

Spirit of the living God, we believe that some time ago now, you inspired John to write down these words.

[2 : 2 4] And we pray now that you would cause these words to come alive in our minds and hearts and wills as never before, for we pray it in Jesus' name and for his glory.

Amen. You may be seated. Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Her words virtually dance with joy and wonder. Can you feel it? Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?

Now, to be told everything you ever did could be a very terrifying thing. To be told everything you ever did might crush the spirit and immobilize you.

Yet this unnamed woman from Samaria rejoiced in this Jewish man telling her everything she ever did. Why? Why does she rejoice? Because the man told her everything she ever did, yet treated her with dignity.

[3 : 32] With incredible dignity. The man even offered her a gift. Living water, he says. A gift she only began to understand but was experiencing even as he spoke. She felt safe in this man's presence.

She felt loved in this man's presence. And she simply wanted other people to experience that safety and that love. She wanted everyone else to meet him and experience that kind of love.

Come see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? Could this be the Christ? It happens to everyone who authentically encounters Jesus Christ.

You cannot keep him to yourself. There is a passion to make him known to others. I agree with the church historians and the mission experts who claim that the church in North America has now been handed an unprecedented opportunity for evangelism.

We are living in what the theologians call Kairos time. One of those unique moments when, in Jesus' own words, the fields are ripe for harvest.

[4 : 42] I would not have said that seven years ago. Seven years ago, Sharon and I and the children returned to the United States, moving to Sacramento after living for four years in Manila, Philippines.

The contrast was overwhelming and deeply grievous to me. Asia, where people were wide open to the message and claims of Jesus Christ.

America, where people seemed so closed, even seemed hostile to the message of Jesus Christ. Manila, where seven new churches a week were opening.

Where people would stay in worship as long as the leader had strength to lead them in worship. Sacramento, where church buildings were being converted into restaurants.

Where sanctuaries built for thousands now held only dozens. And where people complained that the worship went past the hour. The contrast to me was depressing. We arrived in Manila the first week of September of 1985.

[5 : 45] And during that week, a new church was formed just across the street from Union Church of Manila. Formed in a hotel ballroom. That was September. By December, that little group had grown to 1,000 members.

Because they didn't want to look for another facility so they could grow larger, they decided to split. So 500 stayed in the one hotel ballroom. 500 went to the other hotel ballroom.

By Valentine's Day, only two months later, both of those congregations had risen to 1,000 each. And then in 1989, I had to come back to the United States.

And it felt to me as though I had come from life into death. But that was seven years ago. That was seven years ago.

That was seven years ago. Something has happened in those seven years. Maybe all that happened was something in me. Maybe my perception changed. Maybe my attitude changed. But I don't think so. Something has happened in the soul of America.

[6 : 43] There is a new openness. Hearts are not as hardened. Would you agree? This is due in large measure to all the change that we have gone through. And all the change that we are going through.

It feels like nothing is the same anymore. If you are feeling that, all of our contemporaries are feeling that. Do you realize that since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, since the fall of the wall, we have witnessed and we have experienced more change than all of history before 1989?

Certainly more technological change. And also more change in national boundaries. Just consider the consequences of the collapse of the old Soviet Union and all of its puppet satellites.

Most disturbing, of course, has been the disintegration right before our eyes. The disintegration of the moral order that once made America great. And it feels like nothing holds it together anymore.

And so as a people, we are open to something new, something different, something bigger, something beyond ourselves. Would you agree? Diogenes Allen, who is professor of philosophy at Princeton Seminary, is arguing that we are now on the verge of the greatest opportunity the church in the West has ever had.

[8 : 00] The greatest opportunity. In his book, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*, Dr. Allen argues that the basic assumptions of Western civilization, the basic assumptions that were erected during the time of the Enlightenment, are now crumbling.

Dr. Allen demonstrates that due to revolutions in 20th century science and philosophy, the Enlightenment, which seemed to make faith obsolete, is now itself a spent force.

And so is modernity, which it caused. Philosophers are now grappling with the obvious fact that humanity is not as good as the Enlightenment ideology taught.

There is an increasing recognition, says Dr. Allen, that evil is real, that it cannot be removed merely by education and social reform. The saviors of the 60s, the 70s, and the 80s, the gods of science and education and materialism are simply not delivering the goods.

They have not gained the upper hand on crime and poverty and racism and abuse and addiction. The great dream that given enough time and given enough money, we mere mortals could rebuild paradise has now been exposed as the grand illusion.

[9 : 11] Dr. Allen argues that most people in the West are not aware of this. Most people in the West are not as aware, as scientists and philosophers are, that the Enlightenment is over.

And he predicts that when the dust settles, we will see that the fields are ripe for harvest. This does not mean there are no obstacles. There are many very real obstacles, many, ironically, created by the church.

But it is a new day. It is that we have an unprecedented opportunity to do evangelism. Last Sunday, after worship, Brock Morgan, our junior high director, was sharing with me an amazing set of statistics.

Get this. 70% of all decisions made to follow Jesus Christ have been made since 1900. In all of history, 70% have been made since 1900.

70% of those decisions have been made since World War II. And 70% of those decisions have been made in the last three years. Now, if you can multiply fast, you'll discover that means that 35% of all decisions made for Jesus Christ in history have been made in the last three years.

[10 : 27] It's a new day. Remember the statistic I was sharing with you in the fall. Every day, worldwide, 3,000 people are coming to faith.

That's a new Pentecost every day. Oh, every hour. 3,000 an hour. That's 72,000 a day. That's 500,000 a week.

George Hunter III, who is the dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of Evangelism and World Mission in Kentucky, says this, The situation the church faces today is much like what the church apostolic faced.

This is a new apostolic age. This is now the time when the church is once again going to discover the joy of being an apostolic community, a missionary community, an evangelistic community.

Now, I know why you're not saying amen. It's because we're afraid of this word evangelize. Am I right? Am I right?

[11 : 36] How many will admit that that scares you? Come on. Come on. Come on. Come on. Come on. The word evangelize has a lot of negative images to it. But the word need not scare us.

Evangelize is built on the word evangel. And evangel simply means good news. Which means that to evangelize means to good newsize.

That's all it means. To evangelize means to tell others in word and in deed the incredibly good news of what the living God has done, will do, and is doing in Jesus of Nazareth.

I was thinking this week that maybe what we ought to do is just jettison the word evangelize and substitute for it the word good newsize. Good newsize. You like that? Will you say the words with me?

Good newsize. Good newsize. Again. Good newsize. It's not so scary, is it? You want to be a good newsizer, don't you?

[12 : 41] Our culture is dying for good news. We have an unprecedented opportunity. The question is how. How do we do it?

How do we good newsize? The answer is the way the woman at Samaria did. I submit to you that this woman, who turns out to be the first great evangelist in the New Testament, this woman is the best model of what it means to good newsize.

And she's the best model because of her motive and her method. Her motive and her method. Consider first her motive. Why did she do it?

She did it because she could not keep what she found to herself. Simple as that. She had received living water, as Jesus called it.

Water which Jesus said would become a well gushing up to eternal life. She simply could not keep that well down. It overflowed.

[13 : 48] She had to tell someone. John tells us that after this conversation with Jesus, the woman left her water pot and went to the city. Left her water pots.

You notice that? Why did she leave her water pots? Because in her enthusiasm she's not thinking well, or because she now thinks she doesn't need the water pots, or because she left them so Jesus could take a drink, or because she fully planned to come back.

She left the water pots there because she was going to come back with as many people from the village who would come with her. She drank the living water. She became a well.

She could not keep it to herself. That's the pattern we see in the New Testament. Someone encounters Jesus Christ, he touches them in some life-changing way, and they simply have to tell someone.

Andrew meets Jesus, and immediately he runs and tells Simon Peter, his brother. Philip meets Jesus, and immediately he goes and finds Nathanael. He says to Nathanael, we have found the one of whom Moses and the prophets spoke.

[14 : 53] Nathanael says, can anything good come from Nazareth? Philip says, you come and see. No one who met the man could keep it to her or himself.

No one. Even those whom Jesus overtly orders not to say anything couldn't keep it to themselves. They had to disobey.

You ever notice that? Don't tell anyone, Jesus says, and they go and tell. Tell. I was thinking this week, perhaps the master strategy to get the church to do evangelism in our time is for me to say, don't tell anyone.

Monitor your feelings now as I say that. This week, don't tell a soul about him. What's going on inside of you? This huge revolt.

No way. Living water automatically overflows. Come see a man who told me everything I've ever done.

[15 : 55] Well, the point I'm making is this then. Good newsizing is not something that we crank ourselves up to do. Good newsizing is the natural overflow of lives touched by and filled with Jesus Christ.

Which is why, early on in my ministry, I made the decision that I would never exhort the church to do evangelism. You will not hear me do that. Yes, we are sent.

In John 4, Jesus says, I sent you. And yes, not to go is disobedience. Not to be involved in some way in sharing the good news in the city is disobedience.

John Stott calls it our guilty silence. So yes, it would be wholly appropriate for me to exhort the church to obedience, to go. But I have chosen never to take that tact.

Because I'm convinced that if we are alive in Jesus Christ, good newsizing naturally happens. When we drink living water, it springs up and spills over.

[17 : 01] If the people of God are not doing good newsizing, the problem is not disobedience. If the people of God are not doing good newsizing, it means they are not filled. And that's our problem.

That's the problem with the church today. And so the exhortation is not go. The exhortation is come. And drink. And eat.

And be filled. The woman of Samaria was freshly alive and that life could not be contained. She had to tell someone.

It was a scary thing to do. It's always a scary thing to do. She was an outcast.

Which is why she came to Jacob's well at noon, at the hottest time of the day. She was not welcomed in the cool time of the morning and evening by the cool ladies who came. She took a big risk in going back to the village and sharing good news with people who despised her.

[18 : 04] But she had to do it. Because what she found in Jesus Christ was so good, she would risk losing further reputation. Come see a man who told me everything I have ever done.

She simply had to tell him. Well, consider now her method. Her method is very liberating. It's not something that she sat down and thought through.

The picture is not her sitting by the well and going, okay, let's see. I've got to share this. Let's see. What should we do? There's a book that Tim wrote. I can look at that. You know, it's none of that at all. She just does what her heart wants to do.

Her method comes out of her motive. And in her method, I see four how-tos in our work of Good News, Isaac. First, she simply invited people to take a look.

Come and see. She didn't shove anything down anybody's throat. She didn't try to convert anybody. She simply invited them to come and take a look. No pressure, no hype, just an invitation.

[19 : 08] Come and see. She had tasted living water and she simply wanted other people to give it a try. Or as D.T. Niles of Sri Lanka says, changing the imagery, evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread.

That's all it is. One beggar telling another beggar where to find the bread. Have you found the bread? Then say to another beggar, come and see.

Not go and see. Notice that. But come and see. Come with me. Let us do it together. Let's check out this Jesus together. Now, as I was reflecting on it this week, this seemed to me to be the place where it is going to be the hardest for us to follow her.

This is really hard to do in Southern California. Most of us are too busy to reach out. Many of us are too busy doing church work to do the work of the church. Most of us are like our contemporaries.

We're disconnected from our neighbors and from our coworkers. And most of us are like our contemporaries. We have walled ourselves in by all of these safe fences. Come and see.

[20 : 23] It's going to be a hard thing for us to do. How can we do it? How can we become a more inviting people? It seems to me that one of the natural ways for us to do that is to invite people to share a meal with us.

Something happens when you share a meal with somebody that doesn't happen anywhere else. Walls come down and real issues begin to surface. You know that most of Jesus' ministry was done around a meal. Something a number of other churches are doing is that they're holding what they call gospel parties or come and see parties.

What happens is two or three believers will band together and put a party on in their home, a dinner party at their home. They'll invite five to nine other people and they're very up front with those people saying, we're going to have this evening and we're going to share with you some of the things we've discovered in Jesus Christ.

So they have a nice meal together, then someone prepares a very winsome, creative, engaging presentation, and then they throw it open for questions for the rest of the evening. It has proved to be a very non-threatening way to help people come and see.

One of the reasons that this is successful, of course, is that over a meal you have the opportunity to listen to someone else. Very naturally, you begin to hear where the other people are coming from, what their longings and needs are, where their questions are.

[21 : 38] Someone has said that people can't hear until they know they've been heard. Someone else has said, no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. How can we be a more inviting people?

And what can we, as the gathered community, do to be a more inviting people? What can we do to let the people of the city know that we're here and that we care? What can we do to make the campus and the buildings a more inviting place?

What, what, I want you to join me in this. What can we do so that this campus throughout the week says, come and see? Paint it some bright colors? Cover it with banners?

We've got a lot of blank walls right out there and up here. Some way to let the community know that we're here and we have something for them. On the east coast, a number of Presbyterian churches are buying space on billboards near their congregations.

There's a billboard out here that changes just about every day. You've noticed that on Broadway. I'd love to get my hands on that billboard. These Presbyterian churches on the east coast have a very neat little saying.

[22 : 46] They bought the billboard that says, tough week, question mark. We're open Sundays, Presbyterian church. See? Simple ways for us to say, you're welcome, we have something to offer, come and see.

I better move on. Second, the woman put the spot, the second thing about her method is she put the spotlight on Jesus himself. Come see a man. He did not invite, she did not invite people to consider a new religion or a new organization.

She did not invite people to consider a new movement or new principles. She caused people, called people to consider a person. Come see a man.

Now, I think this is where many of us make a mistake in our good newsizing. We make the mistake of allowing the conversation to shift off the man and onto Christianity or onto the church.

They are not the issue. Christianity is not the issue. The church is not the issue. Besides, what is Christianity? It's not a religion. It's a relationship with a person. And what is the church?

[23 : 57] It's not an organization. It's an organism made up of people who love a person. He is the issue. Now, I cannot overstress that enough. In my experience of trying to relate to our contemporaries pretty quickly, the response is a criticism of the church.

You get that right away? Right away, we get into stuff, negative things that people have seen Christians do in Jesus' name. And I used to try to defend the church. I used to try to defend Christianity and point to all the good things that are done in Jesus' name, but I don't do that anymore.

It's a waste of time. Besides, we're guilty. So instead, I confess the sins of the church and try to move the discussion back to Jesus himself.

Yes, we who name his name blow it. Big time. We will. I can't promise you that we won't. But what do you make of Jesus of Nazareth? The woman stayed with the focus on the man.

Come see a man. Again, I cannot overstate this enough. One of the painful questions that leaders of the mainline churches are asking in our day is, why is it that we have lost our children?

[25 : 10] Why is it that our children are not in the church today? It seems to me that we have lost our children because we have not kept the spotlight on the person.

We have emphasized everything but the person. we have not emphasized this relationship with the person. We have allowed ourselves to become more concerned with the forms of the relationship than the person.

Am I right? We've become more concerned. This is the thing that concerns me right now about where the mainline churches are. We are more concerned with the preservation of the institution and its rituals than we are with nurturing a dynamic, intimate relationship with the person.

The institution and its rituals, the movement and its principles seldom win anyone. None of us came to Christ because of the institution. We came because we were won by the person.

Come see a man. Third, the woman of Samaria shares her own personal experience of the person. Come see a man who told me everything I've ever done.

[26 : 22] This means that she did not tell the whole story. She told her story. Now, had I been in that encounter by Jacob's well and I was the one that went back to the village, I would have told the story very differently.

I would have run back to the village and talked about the fact that Jesus was jumping over all of these barriers. I would have talked about the fact that he jumped over the racial barrier, the Jew-Samaritan barrier. I would have talked about the fact that he jumped over the gender barrier, the male-female.

The disciples of Jesus are horrified when they come back and find him speaking with a woman. I would have talked about the fact that Jesus jumped over the sin barrier. Unknown to that woman that day is the holy God himself jumping over the barrier to get this unholy woman.

So I would have run to the village talking about breaking down barriers. Or I would have run back to that village talking about this gift of living water. I mean, imagine. Water that quenches the deepest longing of the soul that wells up inside gushing to eternal life.

I would have gone back to that village telling them the good news of this ever-present source of satisfaction placed deep in the core of my being. But I'm not the one telling the story. She is.

[27 : 34] She emphasizes something very different. What touches her is Jesus' amazing knowledge of her. This man who knows her and yet does not condemn her. This man who bestows on her incredible dignity.

That's what grabbed her and that's the story she told. Now that's so liberating as we seek to do good newsizing. It means we don't need to know everything. We just need to know what we know and what we have experienced.

We've been called to be witnesses by the risen Lord. When a witness is brought into a court of law he or she is only to talk about what he or she knows. What he or she has seen and heard.

The witness does not have to know everything. Which means then that as we dialogue with our contemporaries it is perfectly alright to say I don't know. I think that's one of the things that hangs us up isn't it?

As we try to reach out. We're afraid someone's going to ask us a question we can't answer. It's okay. You don't have to have the answer. Remember the story in the ninth chapter of John. Jesus gives sight to this man who was born blind.

[28 : 38] Jesus did this on a Sabbath which means that this poor guy now gets interrogated big time. Who did this? What do you know about him? Give God the glory. We know this man's a sinner. And then the healed man answers.

You know the line. Whether he's a sinner or not I don't know. But what I do know is that whereas I was blind now I see. Just like the woman at the well.

He just told his own story. Not the whole story. His own. What's your story? You have a story.

And someone needs to hear it. One of the things we need to get into our being is that God never does something for us just for us.

There's always someone else who is going to benefit from this story. Leighton Ford says we will not be able to keep from telling our stories because we are our stories.

[29 : 37] What's your story at this point in the journey? If you were to finish this phrase come see a man who what would it say? Come see a man who relieved the burden of guilt or who broke the grip of some addiction or who brought you out of depression or who gave order to your once fragmented life or who gave you the power to forgive or who gives you hope to endure a coming situation.

Come see a man who what? What's your story? For me right now? come see a man who has given me the capacity to love what I did not think I could love.

Come see a man who is freeing me from the need for people's approval and freeing me to be alone if that is the price to love him wholeheartedly.

We tell our own stories not the whole story our own part of it and let that be enough to shine the light on the savior of the world which brings us to the fourth how-to in this woman's method.

The woman invited her village to consider the implications of her story. Come see a man who told me everything I've ever done could this be the Christ? If he was able to tell me everything I ever did could this be the Messiah?

[30 : 56] Could he be the one that we have been waiting for a long time? Could he? She simply posed the question what do you think? What do you make of this Jesus?

Could he be the one that we have been looking for all of our life? I'm convinced that once people begin to entertain those questions they are not far from the kingdom of God.

See questions have this power. Question has a power of getting inside and getting to us. Someone has said those who raise the questions set the agenda.

it's time for the church to set the agenda by raising the questions. Could it not be that Jesus of Nazareth is the one who can heal the hole in the soul?

Could it not be that Jesus of Nazareth after all can be the one to lead us out of this mess we found ourselves in? Could it not be that Jesus of Nazareth is the one who can give you the life you're seeking?

[32 : 06] Come and see. I wonder if this woman at the well this woman who became a well had any inkling of the privilege of being able to say those words.

You see she's not the first to use the phrase come and see. The first to use it is Jesus himself. To a group of disciples of John the Baptist Jesus turns and says come and see.

Come and see. If you have ears to hear it's being spoken all around us. In the beginning was the word all things came into being through him and from the beginning the word has been calling out come and see.

The whole fabric of the universe resonates with it and to us has been granted the privilege of amplifying that call for our contemporaries. Well we're going to now go to Holy Communion the Lord's Supper.

This is the meal where the man the God man meets us and feeds us the bread of life and living water. I invite you to do a number of things with the time we have.

[33 : 16] We've got about a 15 minute time which is enough time to do some good work with him. I invite you to do three things. First I invite you to ask him to lay the names of five people on your heart.

Five people he is seeking and commit to pray for those five people every day till Easter Sunday. Second take a moment and finish the sentence come see a man who what is your story?

and third drink deeply because good newsizing is simply the overflow of hearts filled with living water.

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