

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 4:1-26

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[0:00] Well good morning fourth. Good morning fourth. There we go. I want to welcome you. I know we've got some friends that are visiting some family. I think Wendy has a sister. So sorry just had to make mention.

But we want to welcome you and I know that there's some watching on our video feed and so we just want to welcome you this morning.

Go ahead and turn open to John chapter four. We just read the passage. We'll be looking at this morning together as we study. We're doing a series. Expositively we're working through the Gospel of John together and this morning we have a very familiar story to look at. So let me pray for our time and then we will dive in together.

Lord it is good to be here this morning. We think of the psalmist as he pens and writes that he stored your word in his heart that he would not sin against you.

And Lord this morning we want to store your word in our heart. Lord we want to eat on your revelation, your special revelation. Lord we want to hear your voice.

[1:15] Would you disclose to us things about yourself, truths that would give us life this week. Lord they would bolster our resolve to seek you each day.

Lord thank you that you're a God that died for sinners. We're here solely because of that. Thank you that you reveal yourself specifically through your word and Lord we come to study and hear it this morning.

And so would you do a work in each of us whatever we need and we will give you thanks. It's in your name we pray Jesus and all God's people said. Amen.

I'm wondering if there are any folks here this morning that are like me that ever begin a task and then all of a sudden you forget why you started that task.

It seems to be happening more and more as I age. I'll leave and go down to the shop thinking I'm going to go grab a hammer and then I come back to the house and there's nothing in my hands.

[2:28] And it's a common occurrence these days. We're actually going to be looking at a story. We're looking at a woman who makes a half mile journey to a well and she comes back without water.

And in fact it says in John 4:28, so the woman left her water jar and went away into town. So something caused this woman to forget. In fact something extraordinary occurs when this woman goes to the well and then comes back empty handed.

But she doesn't come back empty handed. And we're going to find out exactly what occurs this morning in a story that actually only the Gospel of John records for us.

Let's just begin here the first six verses. John writes, now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples in John. Although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples. He left Judea and departed again for Galilee and he had to pass through Samaria.

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, we read as he was from his journey was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

[3:49] So Jesus is heading up to the Galilee region from the Judean wilderness where he is there with some of his followers.

The buzz is increasing in terms of Jesus amongst the religious establishment and it wasn't God's timing yet to see things escalate.

And so he leaves the region during his Judean ministry. It says that Jesus was not baptizing. We talked about that last week briefly.

But I think it's good to note that for those that want to add baptism to salvation, it's interesting that even Jesus wasn't baptizing personally.

Well, he heads up to the Galilee region. I think I have a map for us that we can sort of get kind of a 30,000 foot view here. We've got these three regions of Judea, Samaria, and then Galilee. And it's about 120 mile stretch of land there east of the Mediterranean.

[4 : 59] And there's a couple of routes that one could take if they were going from Judea up to Galilee. Either you trek through Samaria or you take a longer route in a Gentile region over your head east and you go through Peria.

Now, if you were a devout Jew, which route would you suppose that you would take? You would take the longer route. You would go through Peria. Why? Because Jews hated the Samaritans. Everything about them. The way they looked, the way they smelled, their politics, their religion, their ethnicity, everything.

Just a little background here on the vitriol between these two people groups. There's a little bit of a history lesson for us this morning. And we can recall back to our study in Amos where we saw that the capital of the northern kingdom, those 12 tribes that went north, the capital city was Samaria. We know that God used the nation of Assyria to come and destroy Israel in 722 BC. And when they did that, they deported most of the Jews, not all of them. Logistically, it was a difficult task, but they took the best and the brightest.

And then they leave the rest and to ensure that those that they left lost their cultural identity, they would carry out a resettlement policy of importing foreign nations into that Samaria region.

[6 : 45] In fact, we hear about that in 2 Kings 17 verse 24 where it says, And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cthulhu, Avah, Hamath, Sephar, Vium, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel.

And they took possession of Samaria and lived in these cities. So 700 years before Jesus, this is the origin of the Samaritan people.

They are the product of these intermarriages. The Assyrians brought with them foreign gods. So the Jews living there in the day lost their faith in Yahweh. You had a synchronized worship.

You weren't maintaining your distinctives as a Jewish nation. And these Samaritan people, they altered the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, they basically tossed out most of them and just held to the first five books of the law.

They held some of the Jewish feasts, but not all of them. And then in 400 BC, they ended up building their own competing temple on Mount Gerazim.

[8 : 10] This mountain, they professed or believed that this is the mountain where Abraham, Jacob, they had built altars, but they believed that this mountain also was the place where Eden was located.

They believed that Noah's Ark rested on this same mountain, not Mount Ararat. They also believed that Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac there, not on Mount Moriah, but rather on Mount Gerazim.

All of those claims being false. So the Samaritans built the competing temple, but then in 128 BC, the Jews invaded Samaria and destroyed the temple.

You can see there's no love going both directions here between these people groups. In Jesus' day, there was about a million Samaritans. Today, there is roughly 800.

They live in the West Bank, Samaria. And I was reading a story actually this week, an article on them where the Samaritans that are alive today, they're lacking women.

[9 : 21] And so in order to not become extinct, they're beginning to import Eastern European women who are willing to adapt to their culture and embrace very difficult and somewhat isolating lifestyle because of the choices that they make in terms of foods and religion and so forth.

But these, all to say, these two groups, there was a deep hatred for one another. The Jews do not like Samaritans. They are half-breeds in their minds.

They are compromised. They are heretics. They are unclean. And we even recall that in Luke 9, there's a narrative of Jesus' apostle saying, hey Jesus, let's bring fire down on this Samaritan village because they did not accept you.

So the question is, what route does Jesus take? Does he walk around? Does he take the longer route? No, he does not.

In fact, it says in verse 4 that he, it says he had to pass through Samaria. It was purposeful. It's very strong language. I must go there.

[10:33] It's almost as if God had a divine appointment prepared for him. And I would say he did. That this meeting of this woman was not an accident. It was not just serendipitous.

It was not coincidence. Rouser, this was providential. So it says that Jesus enters the city of Sychar, which is this region associated with Jacob, where he raised his family.

He lived there in exile for 20 years, avoiding Esau for good reason. He eventually passed this region, this town on to his son, Joseph.

But it says here that Jesus arrived at this well. It says Jesus, we're as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. So Jesus is tired. He's thirsty. He's been walking for hours.

And he's sitting now down by a well. It's the heat of the day. It says it is the sixth hour. And that would have been measured from sun up at 6am. So it is noontime.

[11:43] And here is Jesus. And then this divine encounter occurs. Look at verses 7 to 9. It says, there came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, give me a drink.

Her disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The 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.

So Jesus now, he's sitting alone at the well. It says the disciples, they all took off to look for food. I don't know how many men it actually takes to go to the grocery store, but apparently the Bible tells us.

It takes 12. And I get that. I mean, I walk into the grocery store. I'm overwhelmed right off the bat. I mean, my wife says, go get carrots. There's a lot of options there. Right?

There's carrots in a can. There's carrots in a baggie. There's carrots in a bag. There's just little carrots, big carrots. It's just overwhelming. Right? It's like three hours go by and my wife's like, have you got what I asked you to?

[12:54] I'm like, honey, there's so many options here. I mean, early on, we were first married. I got a list. And my wife said, turkey. So I came home. I got a turkey.

Frozen turkey was on the list. And she's like, what am I going to do with a frozen turkey? It's July. I said, it's on the list. She says, honey, that's lunch meat.

Maybe she just adored me so much she wanted to like oven roast that thing and cut fresh deli meat every day for my sandwiches. No, it wasn't the case.

Jesus is resting by the well and He's by Himself now. There's woman approaches and Jesus just initiates a conversation.

And at first blush, you know, it just doesn't seem like a big deal. Right? Southern hospitality, Midwestern kindness is just just striking up conversation.

[14:03] But in this culture, that was a big deal. That was something that you would not do. Men did not typically talk to women in public, especially the religious men, the rabbis.

Even if she was your wife, you wouldn't do it because you may have been accused of flirting, folks then talking. A stranger, certainly you would never speak with and especially a Jew with a Samaritan.

And Jesus here breaks all the cultural imperatives of the day. He talks to a woman. She's a stranger. She's a non-Jew. She's in fact a Samaritan.

This lady knows the social boundaries have been broken, which she's probably startled, which is why she asked the question, how is it that you, a Jew, asked for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

There's cultural imperatives today of what you should talk about and what you should not talk about. You don't talk about politics. You don't talk about religion. Well, let's be a little rebellious and talk about religion.

[15:18] I don't think you're being rebellious by just stream of consciousness on how bad politics are and whatever vein you want to talk about them. But I think, man, let's talk about the Lord.

Because the one thing I have learned in driving Uber for all these years, I just found out how long I've been doing it because on my app it gave me a little reward.

I'm kind of a big deal. It says, you've been driving 7.5 years. I know. I know.

I drive. It's a skill you might acquire at some point. But the thing that I've learned over these years is that, man, people think about God far more than you would think.

They think about God all the time. So let's break the rules and talk about the Lord. And here, Jesus, he breaks the social conventions of the day.

[16:26] But it's even almost more scandalous. I mean, let's take this to another level because this scene is far more unusual than even what we see at first.

Because the first thing we need to ask is, when does one typically retrieve water from a well? Well, typically, especially if you're making a half-mile trip, you're not going at noon.

You're going in the morning or you're going at dusk. Why? Because in the Middle East, what do you not have a shortage of? Heat. It's always hot.

Julia and myself were in Dubai when we were adopting the twins and it was like 9 p.m. and it was still sweltering out. It's like unbelievable.

And so we have this scene where this woman is going in the middle of the day.

[17:28] Culturally, in this day, whose role was it to go retrieve water for the family? It was the wife, the mother. It was the woman's role in this day.

Which actually explains why Jesus talks about a sign in Mark 14-13, Passion Week. He actually tells his men. He says, hey, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the city.

A man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. So they're looking for a guy carrying water. That's not really a sign if all the guys are carrying water.

But guys didn't do that. It was a sign because that was unique. Well, in this day it was the woman's role to go and retrieve the water for the day.

And so the local well, think of it like the local coffee shop, if you will. Or park or wherever women gather. I don't know, it's a secret society, men, but they have a place.

[18:38] And the women would gather before the sun or in the evening. And just the cultural rhythm of the day, they would walk as a group. They would talk together. They would catch up on life together.

Would you hear what's going on over here, so and so. Oh yeah, my husband, he wants the new version of the latest camel that just is being sold. And I said, the old camel is good enough. You don't need the new version.

He can make more money if he gets that one and he'll bring a little income in. This is the time when the women would gather. And they would talk and socialize. And what's the local gossip that's going on?

Well, what time is it when this woman goes to the well? It's noon. It's noon. Church, this is not the hour of friendship.

That occurs in the cool of the day. This is noon time. It's the hottest time of the day. This is the hour of the outcast.

[19:47] Who travels a half mile by herself in the heat of the day to retrieve water? And maybe the picture is beginning to sort of come into focus on what's going on with this individual, this lady.

Because in the eyes of those around, she is a pariah. She is an outcast of the outcast. She's not even accepted among the Samaritan women, those who understand being looked down on by much of society.

Now, why is she an outcast? Well, we'll learn in verse 18, and we read it already. We see the scandal of her life that she's been a promiscuous woman. No self-worth at this point in her life. She's been used by men her whole life. And now she walks alone to the well without friendship. Maybe she is invisible to many around her. And really the only grace in her life in walking by herself is that at least there's no one there to ridicule her and look down on her.

[21:08] There is great scarcity in the soul of this woman. And yet on this day, on this day, she meets Jesus.

And Jesus sees this woman, this shunned woman that no one would love. God had to go to Samaria.

God singled this woman out. And I love that, just the truth that that speaks to us, that God cares more about broken people than social convention.

That's our God, amen? And I love that this story, it just falls on the heels back to back with Jesus conversing with Nicodemus the Pharisee.

And it's a wonderful picture that our God, he's a pursuer of all men. Whether you are a religious elite white collar, important, or whether you're unseen, forgotten, broken, Jesus love the world, it's true.
[22 : 28] I spoke with a gentleman and his wife. I think it was Friday night. I picked up an architect in town.

Very accomplished young couple taking him out to a nice restaurant in town. And they were asking what else I did. And it doesn't always come up, but I shared with them, you know, I work at a church.

I'm a pastor. It's my side hustle. And they're like, oh, well, like what's the mission? They're trying to figure out the word, right?

Like, what do you do? Like, what's the mission of your church? I said, well, to tell people that Jesus loves them, that he came, he died for sinners.

That's our mission. We want people to meet the Savior.

[23 : 30] That's what it was like in my car. They didn't know where to go from there.

Got heavy. Oh, okay. All right. Yeah. What else are we going to talk about? You know, Jesus, he came for the world and we need to tell people, amen.

Blessed are the feet. Have courage, church. Let's borrow courage from one another. We got missions week coming up. Reminder on that. Well, let's continue the conversation continues verse 10 to a 12.

Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that says to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. The woman said to him, sir, I have nothing. You have nothing to draw water with.

And the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob?

He gave us the well and drank for it himself as did some his sons and his livestock.

[24 : 41] So Jesus turns the tables on this woman at first. He asked for a drink and then he interrupts himself and says, I actually know where there's some better water.

In fact, I know where we can get some living water in that day. She's thinking spring water, running water, fresh, clean water as opposed to well water that could have gone stagnant.

And this woman's taken it back. First, she's like, Jesus, you don't have a bucket. You don't have a skin bucket and a rope to draw the water from this well is deep.

And usually archaeologists, they have believed they found this well and of course there's an Orthodox church built over it. But this well, according to archaeologists, is one of the deepest in the region.

It's like 150 feet down before you get to the water. So you're not just going to scoop down some water. So this woman's like, this well is deep. So I'm not sure how you're going to pull this off.

[25 : 46] Secondly, she knows the terrain. This is where she lives. There's no rivers or natural springs anywhere. Even Jacob the Great Patriarch, he had to use the well water to sustain life.

And who are you, Mr. Stranger? Telling me you know where there's some better water. Let's look at verse 13. Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.

But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become to him a spring of water well enough to eternal life. And this woman said to him, Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.

Man, verse 15 kills me. Sir, give me this water. I said I will not be thirsty and have to come here to draw water.

Man, she wants this bad. Why? It's a lot of work, obviously. I believe for this woman, it's about shame.

[26 : 58] She want to travel there by herself. So they don't have to do it in the heat of the day. Lord, give me this water. So what's going on here?

This woman, she's thinking on an earthly level like Nicodemus. Born again? I can't do that. It doesn't make any sense. This woman's thinking on that sort of plane.

Jesus is actually speaking about spiritual realities here. Living water, it's just another metaphor to describe salvation. Ultimately, the giving of the Holy Spirit.

It's a wonderful metaphor, right? Water equals life in the desert. You ever been thirsty? I mean, really thirsty?

You couldn't get enough water? I can think back to high school days of two days in football. And when the coach says you can get some water, you're just drinking and you're drinking, he says,

alright, it blows the whistle, but you're still drinking.

[28 : 00] You're just a little more. A little more in the tank, a little more. You get done 30 seconds later, you're just like, I'm parsed again. And what Jesus is saying here, actually, living water, he's saying, hey, only God will satisfy the longing of the heart for good.

You'll never thirst, in fact. Sort of reminds us of that 17th century French mathematician, philosopher Blaise Pascal, that concept of the God-shaped hole, that void in all of us. To be filled with God, actually what Pascal writes is this, this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object.

In other words, by God himself. So as man attempts to fill this void with drink and sex and ambition as Louis says, distractions of every variety, ultimately, you're gonna need another fix.

Another drink of whatever the medication is that you're taking, whatever you're choosing, it's not gonna fill.

[29 : 19] And we have a culture that medicates. It would be shocking to some if they were to sit outside a pot dispensary in town.

That's your homework. No, it's not. Don't do that. But as an Uber driver, I will often do that because I'm dropping someone off and I wait for them to get whatever they're getting and then get back in. And I've sat in the parking lot 10, 15 minutes before waiting for my passenger to come back and I will tell you it's shocking because it is a cross-section of Spokane that goes into the dispensary. It's not in your mind of like, oh, the stoner kid in Heise... No, it's everyone. It is your moms, it's your dads, it's your grandparents, it's your professionals.

It would shock you. What's this woman filling the void with?

For her, it's attention. It's affection for men to be loved. And just as an aside, by the way, another person in this life will always fail here.

[30 : 39] You are not going to be completed because of another person. Only the Lord does that. Only the Lord does that.

Jesus says, hey, I'm going to give you something better. I'm going to love you perfectly and give you joy that's going to last.

Living water for your soul. Ultimately, my spirit to live within you. We'll look at that a little bit later in John 7.

Because the thing that you want is joy and you're only going to find that in me. And so He's really offering Himself to this woman. But before you can receive me, before you can receive salvation, there's something that you need to do.

Let's look at verse 16. Jesus said to her, call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband.

[31 : 46] And Jesus said to her, you're right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands. And the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

I love that. Just understatement of the story, right? I'm going to... You just told me everything that you should not know. I think there's something different about you.

I'm thinking you might be a prophet. Well, the something that this woman needs to do before you can receive salvation, you actually need to deal with your sin.

You need to confess your sin. You need to turn from it. And I love that Jesus here sets the stage for her to do that. He's actually very gracious. He's very kind.

He's making it very easy on this very wounded spirit. Does she have like initially confess her sin? No, I mean, not really, right?

[32 : 51] I have no husband. It's just sort of what we do as humans, right? I mean, parents know this. Interrogating children.

What did you do? Right? And they'll reveal just enough to sort of stay out of trouble. And then we have to continue. What else did you do? And then what were the screams I heard? What was that about?

That large sound, that crashing and breaking of stuff. What was that, right? And we have to continue to, you know, prod and prod and... And this woman just reveals enough just, I think, to retain actually a little bit of dignity.

I think this woman is just, she's ashamed. And Jesus and His grace and His kindness, He actually responds not by interrogating her. It's a wonderful scene.

He just, He names her sin. So that she didn't have to, church. And it was very gracious of Him to do that. He sees right through her.

[33 : 54] And I think for the first time in this woman's life, she has collided with somebody who knows everything about her. And his eyes aren't there of condemnation. It's there of grace and forgiveness and somebody that would accept her filth and all.

And actually we come to understand that she was feeling that because later in the story we'll see in a couple of weeks in verse 39, she says, He told me all that I ever did.

And the sense there is that, and He didn't condemn me. He knew it all. He knew all the dirt. And He didn't condemn me? Who does that? This man.

This Jesus that I ran into. And really the story of this woman, it's the story of the prodigal in real life. This really occurred. Son, put on the robe. No. You don't know where I've been. I can't put on your robe, Dad. Here's my ring.

[34 : 54] Put my ring on your... Dad, you don't know what these hands have done. And the Father was like, Son, stop talking. Let's kill the fatted calf.

Let's celebrate your homecoming. And so this scene of Jesus and this woman, it's really a very palpable scene of grace. This woman has never experienced.

She's had to go to the well by herself in the heat of the day because she is such an outcast.

And now we understand why she came back without a water bucket. It didn't matter. Because I think for the first time in her, she's like, I'm actually going to be okay.

I'm going to be okay. Well, then she has a follow-up question here, verse 20. She says, our Father's worship on the mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is a place where people ought to worship.

[36 : 04] And Jesus said to her woman, believe me, the hour is coming when either on this mountain or in Jerusalem you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming and is now here when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Now it may seem like this is an odd response to Jesus. And there are many commentators, commentaries that will say Jesus is just getting too personal here.

And this is sort of her way of deflecting, protecting her heart. So I'm going to move the conversation to something very personal. You've just laid out my sin.

Well, should we worship on this mountain or that mountain? And so it's like, oh, let's talk theology now. Which mountain should we worship on? But I don't think that's actually what's taking place here.

[37 : 12] I think actually this woman has been undone. And like hope has welled up in her, perhaps for the first time. I think she's been convicted of her sin in the face of kindness and grace.

She wants to get right. And the way that you would get right to make atonement in this day was to offer a sacrifice. And so she's being very practical here.

Should I go and should I sacrifice on the mountain? We know Mount Garazim or should I do that in Jerusalem? Jesus' response is, yeah, salvation is from the Jews.

They possess the truth of the Messiah. You Samaritans, you've chucked much of my revelation to you. You've added in some other foreign deities.

You're not worshiping God in truth up here. Yeah, that's true. But the location of the Jews is not the issue.

[38 : 16] In fact, Jesus says, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. The hour is coming when I will die and I will resurrect.

And then I will go ascend and I will go back to the Father and I'll pour out my spirit on those that profess faith in me. That hour is coming. You worship in truth, but you also worship in spirit.

God is spirit. And Jesus saying, hey, you can get right with me anywhere. You can do that at the coffee shop. You can do that at the parking lot of the grocery store.

You could even do it in a church building. You can do that at the parking lot of the grocery store.

You could even do it in a church building. You could even do it in a church building.

We worship from our hearts anytime, all the time. We worship in spirit, but we worship in truth.

[39 : 20] We worship Jesus alone, why Paul says in 1 Timothy 2,5, for there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ, Jesus.

So we worship in spirit and in truth from the heart, Jesus alone.

Look at verse 25 to the end. The woman said to him, I know the Messiah is coming. He was called Christ. When He comes, He will tell us all things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you, am He. There's a lot in that where I get to you, but I am, it's in there. I go with me. Jesus is aligning, identifying Himself with Yahweh of the Old Testament.

I who speak to you, am He. I am the one that you've been looking for your whole life. The one that you've actually been longing for.

[40 : 21] You want this living water, this new life that satisfies and brings joy. Jesus saying, I'm your guy. It's only found in me.

And your brokenness and your sin, actually it has everything to do with why I sought you out. It was the necessary precondition for you needing a Savior.

It's not the healthy that need the doctor, amen? It's the picture of astonishing grace. You know, this is the only person in John's Gospel that Jesus reveals Himself to in this way.

And we don't even know her name. And yet what I love, Jesus gives her a name.

And I love this story because I think about this woman at the well. A friend of mine, Matt, he serves as a pastor. He did. He's now in Wenatchee, but he served in Scotland for years.

[41 : 36] And he sent me a letter early on in the ministry there. It was about an exchange he had with an older woman. And she reminds me of this exchange that Jesus had with this woman at the well.

And I just want to end with this. Last week I was back in St. Andrews where I am training to be a minister for the church of Scotland. Back there, much of what a minister does is to visit people. Last week I traveled to the nearby town of Dundee to visit Ella in her nursing home. Now the older women of Dundee are a tough lot. Nearly all of them are widows.

Many of their husbands died fighting in the Second World War. And those who survived still died young working in coal mines or in fishing boats in the North Sea.

When I walked into an old Dundee nursing home, it can be an intimidating place. And Ella is the most intimidating of all. I don't know how old she is, but her mind is sharp as a tack.

[42 : 36] The only thing sharper is her tongue. And she gets great joy out of using it to make ministers feel uncomfortable, especially young ministers who are still learning the ropes.

Well, I had visited Ella before and I had made the mistake of forgetting her name. So this time I wrote her name down in my notebook. I also prayed before going in.

I asked the Lord to find a way to use me to tell Ella he loved her. It was a fool's hope, really, but at least I'm a fool who prays. Well, we got to talking and Ella was mellow at first. I think she was trying to lower my guard.

Then she dropped the bomb. She asked me a question and she did it with anger. Would you still love your daughter if she came home pregnant? Yes, I said, hesitating.

No, you wouldn't, she said, shaking her head. I didn't think I would argue with her, so I changed the subject. But Ella came back at me with a mouthful of swear words.

[43 : 38] The nurse beside us looked at me with pity and left the room. Ella said something nasty about the nurse who I foolishly tried to defend, but Ella knew I didn't really care about the nurse.

So Ella told me, you're full of so and so. I had to agree. But then I told Ella that she was also full of it. Ella was pleased to hear me swear, but I wasn't finished.

I told her the reason she always pushed people away was that she didn't believe she could be loved. She looked at me hard. She asked, do you love me?

I'm learning to, I answered, this time honestly. In that instant I could see that she wanted to believe it, but Ella is a stubborn woman. She looked away and said that the only reason I visited her is because I was a minister and was trying to please God or satisfy my conscience.

No, Ella, I said, I don't have to please God like that. I believe in his love. You're the one who doesn't. Again, Ella turned from me and started verbally pushing me away.

[44 : 51] This time she was telling crude jokes about unmentionables. But I kept looking at her and finally in a moment of desperation, she said, you don't even remember my name.

Go ahead, she pressed me. Tell me who I am. And I answered, beloved daughter, it was then that this tough old woman began to weep.

Father, how fitting that the only name we know this woman at the well by is just that beloved daughter, the name that you bestowed upon her.

And for those of us in Christ this morning, this is our name as well, beloved son or daughter of the Most High.

Too good to be true. And yet through the perfect, exquisite sacrifice of Jesus, it is so.

[45 : 59] It is those who feel too dirty that you came to rescue and forgive and make complete. And Lord, this is a joy that we will have forevermore.

Father, would you refresh us this morning by the story that you have written upon our lives and that you continue to write grace, grace.

It's all of grace. And if there's folks here that have never trusted in you, I pray today would be the day where they would simply cry out, Jesus, I am so broken beyond repair and I need a savior.

And if you pray that share that with a friend, you come and talk with myself or Scott or one of the pastors. Lord, it is remarkable that you would call us your children.

Thank you for this story and thank you for this woman at the well for it is our story as well. It's in your name. We pray Lord. Amen.