

John 4

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Date: 22 September 2019

Preacher: Fr. Caleb Evans

[0:00] Amen. Amen.

So this week, we're wrapping up what has become, kind of in effect, a series within a sermon series. As we've gone through our series in John's Gospel, we have come to the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

And because it's a long passage, we broke it down into three sections, and we're finishing that today. We've seen the initial encounter already between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

We have heard Jesus telling her about the living water that only he can give. We've seen also that he knows about her life including her sins and her failures.

Finally, saw him reveal to her that he is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. So that's where we pick up, right where those goofy disciples come back from buying food.

[1:50] They are a combination, I would say, of surprised and clueless about what they find with Jesus talking to this Samaritan woman.

Let me be clear, before we are too hard on the disciples, I think it's good that we see that these men who left everything to follow Jesus sometimes thought and said stupid things.

And were clueless at times. And sometimes even needed rebuked. As someone who seeks to follow Jesus, myself, and who sometimes thinks and says stupid things, and sometimes doesn't get it, I find great comfort in knowing that I'm not the only one.

Anyone else? So what happens when the disciples come back right after Jesus has told the woman that he is the Christ? What we read in John chapter 4, verse 27.

So 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? So the disciples don't ask the woman why she's talking to Jesus.

[3:03] They don't ask Jesus why he's talking to a woman. But they're surprised. Why? Well, a number of reasons, I think.

One is the fact that not only is Jesus clearly talking with a woman, he is teaching a woman. It's likely that the disciples were coming from a cultural understanding that would have regarded it as a waste of time for an important rabbi like Jesus to spend his time teaching the scriptures to a woman.

In addition, she was a Samaritan. In their eyes, she was unclean and cut off from God and his promises and his people. So, you know, they're probably thinking Jesus talking to this Samaritan woman in this way is inappropriate, right?

They don't come out and say it, but that's probably going through their minds. something really interesting happened. The woman leaves as soon as the disciples return.

text tells us that the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, come see a man who told me all that I ever did.

[4:21] Can this be the Christ? They went out of the town and were coming to him. Notice that she leaves her water jar. It's a striking detail, isn't it?

Because she came to the well to get water. She's already made it clear that going to the well, having to go to the well to get water is not something she particularly likes doing.

But that's why she goes and then she leaves the water jar. Either because she wants Jesus to have water to drink or because she's in such a rush to get back to town and tell people about Jesus.

Either way, she left the water jar behind because all of a sudden she seems to have more important things on her mind.

She has Jesus on her mind. She tells the people in her town, come, see this man. Told me everything that I ever did.

[5:26] Is this man more than a prophet even? That she does that is really a turn in the story that we wouldn't expect, right?

Remember, she came alone to the well at midday, alone, because she was ashamed of her life. Was probably a social outcast, probably wanted to avoid people.

All of a sudden, she's rushing back to her village to talk to people about Jesus. Even though she has no social status, was probably an outcast, she goes and she tells people what Jesus has said and done for her, and they decide, well, that's at least worth checking out.

So they do. It's almost as if talking about Jesus and what he has done in our lives has a way of getting people's interest, right?

Meanwhile, the disciples are trying to get Jesus to eat the food they brought, and he sees this as an opportunity to teach them. I've got to be honest, as I was preparing for this sermon, this little section made me laugh out loud, and made Elaine laugh out loud too when I was talking with her about it.

[6:57] We read, Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about.

So the disciples said to one another, Has anyone brought him something to eat? Jesus is pointing his disciples to deeper truth, right? And it sails right over their heads.

He is talking, of course, as we'll find out, about doing the will of God, and it's like they're wondering if someone brought Jesus a sandwich while they were away. Jesus clarifies, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.

Jesus, elsewhere, says something very similar. When he says, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

His point is that Jesus doing the work of the Father is more important than physical food.

[8:18] And what is that will and what is that work? It's seeking and saving the lost, which is what he has been doing at the well while the disciples were gone.

The Father's will we will find as we read on in John. It's for Jesus to live a perfect life and die in the place of sinners as our substitute and our representative so that we who have not lived perfect lives and deserve to die in our sins can find salvation in his perfect righteousness and his shed blood.

Jesus is doing the will of him who sent him. He's finding lost sinners and bringing them home.

Jesus then says to the disciples, 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.

Jesus is pointing out that it's time to gather in the lost for them to find salvation in Jesus.

[9:53] He goes on to say to the disciples, Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps. Now, what Jesus is getting at here is really kind of a multi-layered thing.

As I was consulting a number of commentaries kind of doing my preparation for this sermon, I couldn't help but notice that this little section here gets a lot of treatment because it's a little bit tricky to figure out what's going on.

But Jesus is probably talking about the history of the prophets who prepared the way for Jesus culminating in John the Baptist. All of them pointed forward in time to Jesus, right?

He's also making clear the principle that in ministry and the work of the kingdom, some people sow, that is, some people spread the gospel or prepare hearts, and sometimes it's only later that the positive results are seen.

[11:12] So, some people prepare hearts to receive the gospel, and some people later are the instruments that God uses to bring people to faith in Jesus.

practice. And it's really important to note that whether we're sowing or reaping, we are all in this thing together. What we're seeing in practice and in what Jesus is teaching is that the gospel is being proclaimed and people are coming to faith in Christ because Jesus has arrived.

He's here. And then Jesus tells the disciples, I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored and you have entered into their labor. I'm sure the disciples at this point are wondering what in the world Jesus is teaching them. I imagine they probably looked pretty puzzled at the time.

But Jesus is telling the disciples that others prepared the way for the success that they would have in the work of the gospel. Think of the long line of prophets.

[12:34] Think of John the Baptist who had already been doing ministry in recent history for them and really at the same time at this point. So they are being shown that they will be about the work of reaping what others have sown.

And after this teaching session with the disciples, it's interesting, the passage switches back to the Samaritans. We see this, many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

He told me all that I ever did. So this woman shares her testimony and what happens? Well, what we find is that many there believe in Christ.

We find they ask Jesus to stay with them and he stays for two days. He stays teaching them for two days.

That is absolutely striking from what we have seen so far because as we talked about the last couple of weeks, there was a long history of animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews.

[13:46] And now they're asking this Jewish rabbi to stay with them because they have come to realize who he is. And he does and then we read what?

That many more believe because of his word. and then we see nothing less than an amazing confession of faith.

They say to the woman, it is no longer, her fellow Samaritans say to her, it's 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.

He is the Savior of the world. They've come to realize that the Messiah, the Savior that the Jews were expecting and hoping for is in fact the Savior that they too were expecting and hoping for.

And it does not matter at all as it turns out that they are Samaritans and not Jews. Jesus is their Savior too. The Savior of all those who believe from every nation.

[15:07] He is the Savior of the world. Harken back to the prologue for a second. He gives eternal life and the right to become children of God to everyone who receives him and it does not matter where they're from or what their backgrounds are.

As I think on my own ancestry, I believe my ancestors at the time this was happening were in northern Europe practicing paganism.

So I'm rather personally rather glad that it doesn't matter where we're from or what our backgrounds are. Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Lord, what do we take away from this morning's reading? I think there's a lot that we could take away here, more than I could get into in this morning's sermon, but I want to touch on a couple of things.

First is that I think we find a lot of excellent instruction by example about evangelism in this passage. Notice the woman who meets Jesus at the well.

[16:19] She sees a glimpse of who Jesus is and what does she do? She immediately rushes to tell other people about Jesus. That should be humbling because we have to ask ourselves, do I have the same desire to see others come to Jesus?

Because she drops what she's doing and she's gone. She just goes. Again, she's not a respected member of the community.

She probably does not have any reason to believe that people are going to actually pay attention to what she says. She is almost certainly living in great shame.

On top of that, she doesn't overcome that by going with eloquent words either. her. And she still goes.

Why can't any one of us do the same? We can find ourselves being so nervous about talking to other people about Jesus, right?

[17:30] Why is that? Well, maybe we think that people won't listen. That concern didn't seem to stop her. Maybe we think that we aren't well-schooled in philosophy or systematic theology, so we're not equipped.

Now, don't get me wrong, I think that every Christian should be able to give a reasonable explanation of what we believe and why. But notice, all she does is share her testimony, share her encounter with Jesus.

any one of us can certainly share what Jesus has done for us and what Jesus means to us.

Is there a believer here this morning who can't do that? I don't think so. She shares what Jesus has done in her life based on this short conversation at a well.

She's speaking not the as a well-regarded and respected member of the community. And here's the shocking thing.

[18:39] People still listen. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that if we are willing to talk about Jesus, we will find that people will be interested in Jesus.

And it's not because we are awesome and eloquent and so persuasive, but because Jesus is who he says he is.

So let's talk to people about Jesus. Why not, right? If the Samaritan woman can do it, and we're not doing it, what's our excuse? We might be tempted to say, and most of us have probably said something like this at some point.

Well, I've tried to do that, but I've never really seen any results come from it. Keep in mind what Jesus says about those who reap and those who sow.

In the life of someone you know, you might be the one who sows, who raises the topic of Christ with that person. And that might sow the seeds through that person's conversion to Christ down the road.

[19:57] Keep in mind, the results of evangelism are not what defines its success, because the results are not up to us. It's the Holy Spirit that draws us and brings us to faith in Christ.

We are responsible for sharing the gospel, but we are not responsible for the results. And that means that if we share the gospel and we don't see immediate results, that is no reason to be discouraged or to give up.

It's our responsibility to sow. Someone might reap later, and that's okay. But I think we also need to be careful not to simply see ourselves in the place of those reaching out to people like the Samaritan woman.

It's appealing if we put ourselves in the story in the place of Jesus who's reaching out to the woman. But as Deacon Mark said last week in his sermon, we need to see ourselves in the Samaritan woman, don't we?

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He came to seek and to save people like the Samaritan woman, sure. But that also means people like you and me.

[21:27] The Samaritan woman, yeah, she had five husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. But if we think that makes her a greater sinner than ourselves, it's probably a sign that we don't know our own hearts very well.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Reminded of one of the sessions from the Christianity Explored series, which we've used a number of times here, that puts it this way, the qualification for coming to Jesus is not, are you good enough?

It's, are you bad enough? Jesus came for sinners, for people who know that they are lost and broken, not for those who think of themselves as holy and righteous.

Because this human tendency, if we think about salvation at all, is to think of salvation as this pat on the back that God gives to good people for being good. That is not what salvation is.

This encounter, this passage, reminds us that salvation is a free gift of grace alone, that God gives to those who admit that they are sinners, and turn to Christ for forgiveness.

[22:56] If we're thinking in terms of religion as usual, the testimony of the Samaritan woman will make absolutely no sense to us.

She was a lost sinner who encountered Jesus and encountered him as the Savior of lost sinners. I can relate to the Samaritan woman because that is my story too. hope is in Jesus.

It's not in who I am or what I have done, but totally in who he is and what he has done. Notice we never see the Samaritan woman make any claims about her goodness or her worthiness or her qualifications for coming to Christ.

She doesn't. Jesus, as the Samaritans say at the end of this passage, is the Savior of the world who came to seek and to save the lost.

[24:12] And the story of the Samaritan woman is not just something that happened a long time ago. it still happens. People still encounter Jesus, put their trust in him, and their lives are changed forever.

The power Jesus has to seek and to save those who are lost, hope of the gospel, hope. That is our hope.

It's our reason for living. It's what drives our mission. Because we know that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.