

The Hearts of Men

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[0:00] Okay, you're in trouble now. We're going to be talking about the hearts of men. I was given this piece of scripture that was pretty long.

! Chapter 4-26. I mean, that's a lot of verses. And it has several stories in it, and I was trying to figure out what to do with it, and then it dawned on me that I needed to look further.

So, that's why you're in trouble. We're going to actually look at how John, a little bit about how John organized this part of his gospel, and see what the theme is.

And it's the same theme that you find throughout his whole book. The whole book of John is basically a thesis, if you want to call it that, to show that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the God come in the flesh.

In fact, he said that in the very, very beginning. He says, he was with God, and he was God. And now he's writing this gospel from chapter 1, that description in chapter 1, and he's going to show or demonstrate through what Jesus did in his life, that he was in fact the Son of God, human, and God himself, divine, in one person.

[1:22] And so, when we start, I wanted to remind you, next slide, Mark, it says, John wrote at the end of his gospel, there are many other things that Jesus did.

If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. So, John is not writing a comprehensive story of Jesus.

If you want a more comprehensive story, there are two that you should go to. One of them is Matthew, and the other one is Luke. And Luke is probably more comprehensive than Matthew even.

So, if you want a big story, go to there. Now, it's not the whole story, but it's bigger than what John wrote. John had a very particular purpose, and he wrote with a very particular theme in mind, an organization that he wanted to demonstrate who Jesus was.

And we're going to encounter him saying who he is at one point in this passage. So, when you read John, and we're doing the devotional, I hope you all, should I show up?

[2:32] How many of you read your devotional? Yeah, hopefully. They're good. You're going to see some very poignant lessons pointed out there.

But I also want you to keep in mind what John is doing in his gospel. He's trying to demonstrate who Jesus is. And as you go through there, look for indicators that show you one way or the other, one part or the other part of Jesus' nature.

And you'll be surprised, I think. So, beginning with my assigned text, we need to put all this, we're going to put all that that I'm supposed to talk about into a context.

Now, this story talks about John, John the Baptist's disciples coming to him and talking to him about Jesus. It also includes a much longer story of the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman.

And most of you know that story pretty well. We need to go and go before that because this whole thing is linked to the story of Nicodemus that Matt preached on.

[3:36] You go, I don't know, how is it Nicodemus and the woman in the well and John the Baptist? Well, I'll show you. If you go, open your Bibles, if you would, to chapter 2 of John's Gospel and look at verse 25, the next slide.

We have a discussion going on back there. There we go. Alright. In verse 25 of chapter 2, John wrote this.

He said, He did not need anyone to testify about man for he knew what was in the heart of man. Jesus knew what people were, what was really going on inside him.

And that is sort of like the mission statement for these three stories of Nicodemus, John the Baptist, and the woman at the well. He knew their hearts.

Let's find out how he knew that, how we know that he knew that, and how this verse tells us that.

Well, first, if you look at Nicodemus, next slide, in John 3, verses 1 through 4, this is what it says.

[4:49] Now, a certain man, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to Jesus at night and said to him, Rabbi, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.

And Jesus replied, I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born from above, or again, as we talked about last time, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old?

He cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time, can he? Most of you notice that there is a disconnect. Have you noticed there is a disconnect?

Nicodemus says this, and he is going this direction, what does Jesus do? He goes this direction. And Nicodemus is confused. Alright?

We will just leave that for a moment. Next slide, this is the next story. This is John the Baptist. It's in chapter 3, verses 27 through 36.

[5:57] You want to look there. John replied, No one can receive anything unless it is given to him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, I am not the Christ, but rather I have been sent before him.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands by and listens for him rejoices greatly when he hears the bridegroom's voice. Then it is my joy and it is complete.

He must become more important while I become less important. The one who comes from above is superior to all. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks of earthly things.

The one who comes from heaven is superior to all. He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but nobody accepts his testimony. You want to change the slide back there? There you go.

The one who has accepted his testimony has confirmed clearly that God is truthful and the one for whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he does not give the spirit sparingly.

[6:58] The father loves the son and has placed all things under his authority. The one who believes in the son has eternal life. The one who rejects the son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.

Again, John's disciples came and said, don't you understand? He's getting more people fall on him than you are. They're leaving you and going to him. And what does John say? Does he really answer that question?

He sort of does. He says, yeah, that's no big deal. Don't you understand? I'm not the Christ. And by implication, he's saying what? He is. Alright?

Let's go to the third story. Samaritan woman. Now, this is a long passage. If somebody wants to volunteer to read it for me, it'll spare my voice.

Alright? Alright, Gretchen. Alright, chapter 4, verses 7 through 26. A Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, give me some water to drink.

[7:58] For his disciples had gone off into the town to buy supplies. So the Samaritan woman said to him, how can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for water to drink? For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritan.

Jesus answered her, if you had known the gift of God and who it is who said to you, give me some water to drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

Sir, woman said to him, you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where then do you get this living water? Surely you're not greater than our ancestor Jacob, are you? For he gave us this well and drank from it himself along with his sons and his livestock.

Okay. What's on the next slide, Mark? Okay. Can you see where Jesus knew the heart of men from each of these encounters?

I mean, it's different. He didn't, like Nicodemus. Go ahead and change the slide. Nicodemus says, you're a teacher from God. No one can perform a miracle of signs you do unless God is with them.

[9:05] So he understands, here's Nicodemus. Think about it. Who is he? How is he described? Well, he's a religious man, a very religious man.

He's a Pharisee, so he's a law keeper. He keeps every little part of the law.

He's a leader in the council, so he's an important person. He's a teacher of scripture. He's got the religion down. So like Paul says, I was a Pharisee of Pharisees.

You know, he has done everything he can and why does he do that? Why does Nicodemus pay so much attention to the law and all this fine stuff of his religion? Because he wants to be what?

Righteous. And how is he doing that? How is he making himself, how does he think he's making himself righteous? By keeping the law, all the works.

It's me, me, me, me. I do, I do, I do, I do. Don't you see? He's not quite as bold as the young rich man who came. He says, look, I've kept the whole law since I was a kid. What do I need to get eternal life?

[10:04] But he's basically saying the same thing. Don't you see? I am a righteous man because I do all these things according to the law.

And I've been recognized for being a righteous man because look at me, I'm in a high position and I'm a teacher. What's his heart condition? Self-centered.

Self-centered. And Jesus says, you're missing the point. God doesn't want self-important, self-improved, self-centered people.

They don't worship God. They worship who? Themselves. And he says, your problem, Nicodemus, you need to be reborn. You need to have a brand new life given to you and your whole world will turn upside down.

Your heart needs to be focused on God. God-centered. Not self-centered. He knew that Jesus was an important man.

[11:11] He knew that he had, there's something here that didn't fit his theology. In fact, you can change the slide there. Oh, that's the woman.

Everyone. Everyone. Everyone. Everyone. Everyone. I don't know where you are now. Go back one more. There. Yeah.

Okay. That's good. That'll work. We'll make it work. I hate slides. He's saying, look, I know you are from God.

You are doing things by the power of God, but it doesn't fit my theology. How can this be? What am I supposed to do with this?

It doesn't work for me. I don't understand. And Jesus, again, that the answer, the same answer, is just a different way as they talk to the side of you. He says, don't you know you have to have the Spirit of God?

[12:14] You have to have the Spirit living. You have to be made new. You have to start over. You can't continue in your own righteousness. You won't see God do things through you in power unless you have surrendered your life to Him.

and you're filled with His Spirit. Nicodemus has to think about this. We don't hear about Nicodemus until the end. Apparently, I think, he got it before it was over with.

All right, next one. We're going to skip John for a moment. We're going to go to the Samaritan woman. Here they are at the well. Jesus comes and sits down. She walks up.

It's midday. Now, most of you already know this, but why would she come in midday? When do women usually go get water? In the morning. Why is she there at midday?

She has a woman of ill-reaching. A woman of ill-reaching. She has a bad reputation no matter what. Why does she have a bad reputation? She's been married five times and she's living with someone that's not.

[13:20] Ah, we heard about that yesterday, didn't we? Yeah, she's had five husbands and they're not in the picture anymore and now she has another man and I guess, I'm going to say this, but I have a person in my family who's, you know, tried it a hundred times and it hasn't worked and so, you know, fortunately for her she said, I'll never do that again.

But, you know, you go, how many times do you have to shoot your shot in the foot before you lose your foot? I mean, I don't know. But anyway, she's living with this guy. Just living with him. And she comes in to get water and Jesus says, can I have some water?

Now, there's a problem there. There's a couple problems there. One is, she's alone. Would a good Jewish man talk to a woman who's alone?

No. He wouldn't expect her not to be alone unless she was in the company of other women or her husband. Well, we already know that's a problem because she doesn't have one currently.

And so she, that's one problem. The other problem is she's a Samaritan and he's asking her for what? Water. Well, that means he, and she's going to tell him, you don't have a bucket, you don't have a cup.

[14:35] How are you doing? So he's going to have to take what she has and use it. What's the problem with that? Unclean, unclean. You've touched an unclean person and an unclean person stuff and you're unclean.

And she says that. How can you ask me for that? Because she recognizes Jews are religious. They're very religious people. Samaritans are not so religious. They're sort of like the rest of the world. You know, they know about it, they think about it occasionally, but it doesn't affect their lives and they don't worry about it.

Now this woman is looking for something. Have you figured that out? She, have you ever met anyone like this? I've met someone when I was teaching high school. Afterwards, I kept running into these girls and kept going through men like most of us go through milk bottles.

They're looking for something to satisfy their lives. And they think they can find it in a man. If I was just married to you, then I'd be loved and I'd be terrified for her.

[15:45] And then they get married and it doesn't work. Why doesn't it work? Well, because they're looking for love in the wrong places. And so they get rid of that one and they say, if I just find the right man, and they try it again and they do this repeatedly.

That's what this woman, she's looking for something to satisfy her life and it's not working. So she finally says, well, you know what the heck? I'll just, why make it hurt?

It's so much trouble to get a divorce. I'll just live with the guy. Who cares? It's not a big deal. Isn't that what we say these days? Who cares? It's not a big deal.

Oh, you're living with him? Well, wow. I'm not surprised at all. And then, Jesus says something to her.

Like, if you just knew who you were talking to, you would be asking me for water. And what He's really saying is if you knew who you were talking to, you would see that I can give you what you need to satisfy your life.

[16:48] I can give you what you need to have a fulfilled and full life. You haven't found it yet because you're looking in the wrong place. But I know where it's at.

It's in me. And He tells her, you know, when she gets through, she says, well, I know you're a prophet. Now, she doesn't want to go there or she wants to change the subject.

Why? Because the subject, the personal topics that they've been talking about are not very comfortable. So she says, well, let's try this. You're a Jew. Let's talk religion.

And we'll get off topic and we just won't talk about me anymore. And He said, He tells her this, and then she answers with this, I know the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ.

Whenever He comes, He'll tell us everything. Because that's been the topic. We don't know one way or the other. He says, when He comes, He'll tell us everything. Do you know what He finally says?

[17:56] Well, we're going to get there. His answer is very, very interesting. So, now you go, well, what's this all have to do?

Well, let's go back and talk about John the Baptist. Do I have a slide on John? There we go. John is being confronted.

Your ministry is dying and his is growing. What are you going to do about it? Isn't that how churches work? You talk to pastors. How are your church doing? And when they say it's doing well, that means it's growing.

We don't mean in depth. We mean in breadth. I hate to talk. That's one of the reasons I avoid pastors. You go to gather with a bunch of pastors and that's, first somebody, somebody's going to ask you.

Your church problem? Yeah. In depth, it may not be getting this way fast, but it's getting ready this way. That's not what they want to hear.

[18:54] Because why? What do we want? We want numbers, right? We want something that our ministry should be growing. We should be, Matt and I should be in charge of two mega churches. Yeah, I don't want that.

And you say, well, no, but you know what? We're doing a lot of good things in the community and we're reaching out and we're seeing people saved and we're da-da-da-da-da. They go, oh, that's very nice.

How many baptisms? I mean, we just got the notice that they want us to do the yearly survey of churches and guess what? They don't want to know how much you've disciplined your people. They want to know how many people have you had in? How many have you dunked? How many have you done this? How many have you done that? How many went to your VBS? How many went to your Sunday school? Why do they want to know that? Well, because those they can measure. But they can't measure.

You know, we have four people who finally got the idea that maybe their life was just sort of not quite where God wanted them to and so they turn and they're really got on fire and they're coming to understand the depth of God's work in their life and da-da-da-da-da.

[20:05] There's no place to put that down. But John gets it. He says, he's got to become more important than I. Why? He's the Christ. I'm just the guy coming forward going, the herald.

Da-da-da-da! He's on his way! He's on his way! His disciples don't get it. John did. Think about that. If Nicodemus was self-centered and the woman was self-centered in a sense, she was sort of world-centered, but what is John? Christ-centered.

Christ-centered. He understands. He looks and says, look, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

Because why? He has to. He's God. He comes with all authority. I don't have any authority. He has it all.

[21:06] He's from heaven. I'm from earth. My role is coming to an end. His is just beginning. Do I have another slide?

John? He says this. And there's some discussion. Did John write this? He had this? Or is this part of John the Baptist's response?

Because in Greek there are no quote marks here. You don't know. But it follows on after he talks about one increasing and the other decreasing in the bridegroom and the best man and that kind of stuff.

He says, For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God. For he does not give the Spirit sparingly. So the words that he's saying, the words that Jesus speaks are the words of what? God. The Father loves the Son. You notice? He sees that. He says, it isn't the Father loves this man. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things under his authority.

[22:15] The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him. John's saying, look, don't look to me.

I don't have salvation in my hands. Look to Him. He does. Now, there's something you need to know.

Next slide, I think it is. Oh, this is Paul. We missed a slide somewhere in there. I don't know. Go back to the woman at the well.

At the very end of that story, Jesus says something to her. It's in verse 26. After she said, I know the Messiah is coming, and He'll tell us everything, Jesus answers her.

And He does it in a very peculiar way. Does someone have that verse? They can read? There it is. I don't know what they're doing back there.

[23:29] He said, I, the one speaking to you, am He. Now, that's how it says in English. Guess how they say it in Greek. Greek. He says, Ego, or Ejo, I'm, Ene.

I am. He said, the answer is, so it really reads, Jesus said to her, I am. What's He saying? I'm the Messiah. I am God. How do we know that?

It's the name that God gave Moses. Yahweh. It means, I am that I am. I am sent you. Moses was told, tell him that I am sent you.

This is the first time Jesus in this Gospel says, I am. He's going to do it seven times. Why will He do it seven times? Why will John record seven of them?

[24:34] Completion. Completion. Completion. He's also going to do seven miracles, and they're all going to be different. And they're going to show that He has power, like John said, over all of things.

And that means, if He does seven of them, that He has all power for all purposes over all things. So these little hints that John puts in there are things that you need to get.

You need to grasp and say, I see what John's doing. Now here's another point. Who did He say this to? A Samaritan woman.

Why didn't He say it to a Pharisee or a Jew? He will eventually, yes. But this is the first time and He does it outside of Israel, in Samaria, to a non-Jewish person, a Samaritan of all people, and a woman on top of that.

Because He's sent to say the world, not just the people. That's part of it. If He had said it at this point, He already knew. Remember, He was in Judea baptizing.

[25:43] His disciples were baptizing the same time John was, and He leaves when the Pharisees start noticing what He's doing. If He had said that to a Pharisee, He said that to Nicodemus, there would have been trouble.

Because they would have considered it what? Heresy. He claims that He's not. But He could say it to a Samaritan at this point in his ministry, and it would not cause political trouble for him with the authorities.

Also, Sandy said, this is important, because He's telling a person who is doubly out a favor. She's a Samaritan and a woman, and He tells her, I am.

And He's saying, I don't care if you're male or female, and I don't care if you're Jewish or not.

Because remember when He was talking about worship, He says, the day is going to come, you're not going to worship on this mountain or the one in Jerusalem.

but you're going to worship in spirit and truth. Woman, I am the one you said is coming. Here I am.

And I have the power.

[26:55] I know. I can tell you all things. Now, my challenge to you is we go through this, have gone through this, last slide.

You can't, see, I cut mine off too, man. This is Paul. It's out of Acts. He says, but I do not consider my life worth anything to myself so that I may finish my task and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to God's news, good news of God's grace.

Now, there's a couple things you have to ask yourself in this. Have you been given a task in a ministry, you individually and us corporately? And the answer is yes.

Now, some of us don't like to admit that we have a ministry. That just means a service. There's something we can do. How do you know you have a service? Well, you've been given a gift, right? You've been filled with the Spirit.

You don't get those things. It's not a birthday where you can just say thank you for the gifts and go away and do your thing. This is a call to ministry. You've been called to service. You have been given, equipped, and now you're being called.

[28:15] And, Paul's saying, look, I need to finish this task in ministry that he's given me. What's the task basically come down to? To testify to the good news of God's grace.

Have you experienced God's grace? Absolutely. Every day. We need to be telling people that. When they run into something that's difficult, tell them, God's grace can cover that.

You know, how many times I fall down and do bad things? Well, yes, confess it, repent, and God's grace will overcome that and allow you to restore your fellowship with him and with others.

But what, the first part of that, I think, is where we fall down. First of all, we don't, most of us say, my job is to go to church. That's all, if I just go to church and do a good, you know, behave myself, I'm alright.

And that's not true, but look at the first. But I do not consider my life worth anything to whom?

[29:24] Myself. What is he saying? Don't be self-centered. Be God-centered. That way, that's what worship is.

When you turn from yourself and you face God and you give him the glory. When you give him the praise. When you trust him for everything.

Don't be Nicodemus and try to be self-righteous. Don't be the woman and say, I don't need righteousness, I just am looking for something to make my life meaningful.

Both those situations are solved by the same thing. Turn to Christ, become God-centered. Then your life will become real and full and all that stuff that you've been doing, you'll understand you're doing it for the wrong reason, you start doing it for the right reason and it finally has worth.

You turn to the woman and you say, you really want to have satisfaction? You want your thirst cured? Turn to Christ and face him and become God-centered and he'll satisfy you.

[30:32] Amen. Like a tree planted against all the banks of the stream, you'll bear fruit and be green no matter how bad the drought is around you.

Do you get what John is telling us? Alright. Let's pray. Lord, I can't tell you that I, and I can't tell these people either, that I had it all together.

In fact, I know I don't. Lord, so often I turn and start looking inside of myself for the answers when I know the answers really have to come from you.

I start looking for purpose and direction in my own wisdom and Lord, I know that that won't get me very far. You have all the wisdom and all the answers and all the purpose.

Help us each one to daily recommit ourselves to being centered on you and listening to you and following you, giving you the honor and the glory, setting ourselves aside knowing that it's we have to decrease that you might increase.

[31:49] That when people see us, they'll see Christ. That we can become more and more daily conformed to His image and become like He is. We thank You for Your love and Your mercy and Your grace that makes all of our struggles worthwhile and possible.

In Jesus' name. Amen.