

# Saviour of the world

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 15 October 2023

Preacher: Adam Penwright

[ 0 : 00 ] Hello, if you've not met before, my name's Adam. It's really nice to see you all today. Bible reading means we're jumping right into the middle of a story this morning. So it'll be helpful to remember a little bit what we looked at last week. And last week we heard of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at a well. And that conversation was surprising for two reasons. Firstly, because of who it was that was talking together. And she was a Samaritan and Jesus was a Jew. And these two groups did not get on with each other. And as we heard as well last week, in that culture it would have been really unusual for a man and a woman to be talking alone together. They would never talk in public alone. And secondly, the conversation was surprising because of what they spoke about. And maybe you can look down and see at verse 18. The woman points out that she's had, or Jesus points out to the woman, she's had five husbands. And the man she currently lives with is not her husband. That's pretty surprising to talk about with someone you've just met. And we don't know why each of these five marriages ended.

We don't know who's at fault. We do know that relationships are complicated and often painful. And whatever's happened, it's been really tragic and messy. But not only was that surprising, what Jesus said about himself was surprising too. He offered to this woman, maybe you remember from last week, living water. Jesus promised that he could give her living water that would well up to eternal life. She'd never go thirsty again. That too is a surprising thing to talk about with someone you've just met. And right at the end of the conversation, Jesus said to this woman that he's the Messiah and the saviour of the world who God promised hundreds of years ago. So this surprising woman has a surprising conversation with Jesus. And the result was that she understood who he was and trusted in him. But what happens next? This woman has met Jesus. How does it look like for when her life is transformed? And that's important for us to know. Because we would want to see, do our lives look anything like hers now that she's met Jesus? Or perhaps you're wondering if you did become a

Christian and believed who Jesus was, you'd want to see what it might look like if your life was changed too. It's important to know. So we're going to look at the passage in three blocks to see what it's like to know Jesus and how that can transform our lives. So firstly, Jesus is amazing from verse 27 to 30.

So join in. As I said, we're jumping in halfway through this story where this woman and Jesus are having this conversation. The reason that they were alone in the first place was because the disciples had gone to buy some food. And verse 27 says, and just then Jesus' disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. See, they think it's weird. Remember, she's a Samaritan woman.

He's a Jewish man. The disciples find that really odd that they're talking together. And probably the only reason they don't question or confront Jesus is because they respect him. But while it was normal to think that those two people should never have spoken together, Jesus doesn't agree with that.

[ 3 : 37 ] And Jesus cares about the woman and wants to speak with her. Jesus is not put off by the fact that she's a woman or a Samaritan. Jesus does not agree with the view back then that it would have been dangerous or shameful for them to speak together. Do you notice Jesus gives us just a little challenge already that he is kinder and has a more expansive vision than others do around him?

And what's the woman's reaction after she's had this surprising conversation with Jesus? Look at verse 28. Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done.

And you can imagine this woman with her water jar at the well. But she is eager to go and tell her town. She's so eager, she leaves her water jar behind. And remember, the only reason she's gone to the well originally is to get some water. But actually, she's found something so much better. She's found someone so much better than just ordinary water. And so she's excited and wants to tell everyone about Jesus.

Now, I'm sure you know the feeling of being really excited about something and it bursting out of you like you're desperate to tell other people about something. Perhaps it's a new baby in your family, your baby niece, and you just want to show everyone some photos of the new baby in your family.

Or if you've been on holiday and you just want to show everyone your amazing holiday photos. If we've ever spoken, it's a good chance I've tried to tell you about a book that I've read and just how excited I am about any book that I've read. Or perhaps you know the feeling of someone coming over to you and wanting to tell you about the most amazing restaurant they've been to and how everyone's got to visit their restaurant. We know the feeling of being really excited about something and it just bubbling out of us that we want to tell others about it. This woman becomes an evangelist in that. Someone who wants to share good news with other people.

[ 5 : 52 ] And do you notice what she says to her town? Come, see a man who's told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? See, she brings up two very important things from the conversation we read last week. Firstly, about her messy past. And isn't it a bit weird that she seems almost proud about her messy past and that Jesus told her everything she's ever done. You imagine for the town, they've probably known bits of her life story. They've probably gossiped about her. And there must be intrigues that she's reminding them all about it. But why is she not embarrassed about it? How is it that she can boast about it now? Because she doesn't have anything to hide anymore. Jesus knows everything about her.

That might be a little bit scary. Can you imagine that for yourself? Jesus knowing everything about you, every bit about your past, every bit you might try to hide. But in knowing everything about her, Jesus loves her. She's secure in his love for her. She doesn't need to hide anymore. She can be honest.

Can you imagine that for yourself? Being totally relieved and unashamed about everything messy or hidden in the past. That's only deeply possible through Jesus, the one who totally knows you and totally loves you. Her humble message that she preaches to the town says that she's not done anything impressive. She's had a pretty messy life, but that Jesus is amazing. Of course, even if her personal story is not intriguing, knowing that the Messiah has shown up would be very intriguing. Her message is not long or complicated. It's just two sentences. She doesn't go to the town with a great apologetic philosophical talk or an amazing exquisite Bible exposition or dramatic miracles. She just says, come and see. That's a message all of us could copy. If you know your sin and you know that Jesus is amazing, it's the most natural thing in the world to like this woman, want to share Jesus.

[ 8 : 14 ] It's like wanting to share the baby photos or the restaurant recommendation. If we found Jesus and have joy in him, it'll be the most normal thing in the world to want to share him. All Christians can see this woman's example and join in with her. Jesus is amazing. So remember that and let that bubble up from out of you. And I want to tell you about my gran, Jean, and she was someone a bit like this woman who knew that Jesus was amazing and that joy just bubbled up from within her. And my gran had a pretty tough life in some ways. Her husband, the father of her children, just out of the blue, left her for another woman one day. And that past would have been very painful. Yet she knew that Jesus loved her and she longed for others to know Jesus too. And my gran was just an ordinary person, but she did all she could to invite others like this woman, come and see Jesus. And she set up a group for her town through her church for people who found themselves single for whatever reason, so that they might have some friendship and might be able to hear about Jesus. Or she helped buy a bus and turn it into a youth club so that teenagers on a Friday night who would otherwise just be roaming around the street could come and hear about Jesus. My gran didn't think that she was that important, but she knew Jesus and that he was amazing. And so that love of Jesus bubbled up from within her and sometimes meant she did some pretty unusual things. But just like this woman, when you know that Jesus is amazing, that he loves you despite your messy past, when you know that Jesus is the Messiah, then join in with this woman to speak of Jesus. Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be

the Messiah?

Meanwhile, as the town come with her back out towards Jesus, Jesus sees this as a teaching opportunity for his disciples. So secondly, from verse 31 to 38, Jesus' work is happening, so join in. Read with me in verse 31. Meanwhile, his disciples urged him, Rabbi, eat something. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you know nothing about. Then his disciples said to each other, could someone have brought him food? And the disciples are totally misunderstanding what's going on. And to be honest, it's not going to be the last time in John's Gospel that Jesus confuses someone about food. But Jesus says, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Have you ever had one of those days where you are so busy doing something that you totally forget lunch and miss what the time is because you're so busy occupied in your work? It's a little bit like that. Jesus is busy at his work.

But more than that, he finds doing God's will satisfying and nourishing is so much better than just bread alone. And see, Jesus' whole life is one big mission on which he's been sent by his Father. And what is that mission? Well, we'll find out more as we keep on going through John's Gospel. But see what it says here today. Verse 35, Jesus says, don't you have a saying, it's still four months until harvest. I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest.

[12:04] While they're having this conversation, presumably it is four months till harvest. It must be, I don't know what it is, like May time equivalent for us compared to September. But he says this as the Samaritan town are walking towards him. And you can imagine as he says it, he kind of points towards them and says, look, just over there, the harvest is here. And like the disciples, isn't it easy for us to be pretty blind to all those around us, those who really need Jesus. But Jesus says, there's work to do right now. There's potential right now. So come on and join in. And harvest, it's today.

Jesus says, start of verse 36, even now, even now there's harvest work going on. See, for them, the Samaritan woman has gone out like this evangelist, perhaps sowing the seed. And Jesus is perhaps the one who's going to harvest the crop and bring the people in to eternal life. Thus the saying, verse 37, is true. One sows and another reaps. And presumably that's some kind of saying the people of the time had, as far as I know, hasn't come down to us anywhere else except for here. But it is actually a true statement. Because here, the work of bringing the Samaritan town in has been a team effort. And that's true for us too, as we seek to let people know about Jesus.

And you can imagine on a football pitch, you need different types of players. You need some defenders, some people who can race down the wing. You need a captain and a physio and a groundskeeper for there to be a good team. Or to use a more biblical picture. The church team needs different parts like body parts, hands, feet, arms, eyes. It's like here, one sows, another reaps. But they work together. Perhaps you are really good at befriending your neighbours. Others will have the ability and the time to put flyers through doors with an invitation to church. Some will be preachers.

Others, like we've had the last few weeks, will be able to share their personal story of Jesus at life and their work. Others will wonderfully be able to make coffee. Others will have a creative idea for an event where they can invite people to come to meet Jesus. Others will be able to help run that. Others will be able to help barbecue at it. As we, as a church family, work together, as we take part in Jesus' work with him, we'll have different gifts and roles. One sows, another reaps. But we're a team.

[14:51] And actually, like for farming, so is it true in inviting people to come and see Jesus. There's often a lot of waiting. For some of you, you've been praying for someone for a really long time that they might come to know Jesus. And that waiting is really hard. It is painful to sow and not to see anything to reap yet. I know from my work among university students that it's normal for people to not just become Christians in a day. Often you're just one part of a much bigger team.

Perhaps you're the first one to tell someone about Jesus. Or perhaps at a distance you're praying for them for years. Or perhaps, just occasionally, you're the person who gets to pray with them as they trust in Jesus for the first time. But it's very rare that you would be all of those people, or that they'd all happen in a day. Normally, we're on a team with lots of different people, and there's waiting. But together as a team, we all think Jesus is amazing, and we want to invite other people to come to know him. And I think verse 38, Jesus is just pointing out to the disciples that they are just one part of a team. Others have done the hard work of sowing before them.

And probably here, Jesus is speaking about the Old Testament prophets who have preached to Samaria in previous generations. See, the ground has been laid. Others have done the hard work. And now the 12 disciples can reap the benefits of their labour. But right now, they're invited to join in with Jesus' work, because it's happening right in front of them. And just as that was true then, so it is true now. Throughout the whole history of the church, Jesus hasn't stopped working.

The history of the church is 2,000 years of Jesus being at work, and his people joining in with it. Jesus leads the way, and because we think he's amazing, we want to share him, and serve him, and invite others to come to see him too. The Baptist missionary William Carey once said this, to belong to Jesus is to embrace the nations with him. What he's saying is this, if we belong to Jesus, we should reflect his heart and join in. So as we've seen, Jesus is amazing, so join in with the Samaritan woman. And Jesus' work is happening, so join in with his ministry. Finally, Jesus is the saviour of the world, so join in. As if we, or the disciples, needed any encouragement that God is at work through the Samaritan woman, John points out to us in verse 39, many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. Isn't it amazing? Just like Jesus has come for anyone, even someone like this Samaritan woman with a painful past, and from a different ethnic group, just as Jesus has come for anyone, so Jesus can use anyone. And perhaps these disciples, who were already surprised to see Jesus talking with a woman, would have been even more surprised to see that she has something useful that she can do for Jesus. But she can go out boldly and serve Jesus, whether she's Jewish or Samaritan, whether she's a man or a woman. And Mary Slessor was a Christian Scottish woman who went to Nigeria to tell people about Jesus. And she said this, when you think of the woman's power, you forget the power of the woman's God. I shall go on. And people around her looked down on her. They thought, she's not capable of much because she's a woman. She's pretty harmless. But she says, it's not about me. Like the Samaritan woman, she doesn't need to be impressive. She can be an ordinary woman or an ordinary man. But she says, I want to invite you to meet an extraordinary man, Jesus. And Jesus wants you, whoever you are, to know him. And Jesus wants you, whoever you are, to serve him. That's not going to look exactly the same for all of us. Remember, we're a team with various roles and gifts. But Jesus wants all of us on that team so that others can come to know him too. And John reminds us at the end of verse 39 of the Samaritan woman's very simple, humble message. He told me everything I've ever done. Verse 40. So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they urged him to stay with them. And he stayed two days. Do you remember, Jesus is kind and surprising to speak to this woman. And again, he's kind here too. He's not prejudiced against the Samaritan town.

[19:54] He invests in them and wants to stay with them. And so it's a bit like this missionary team that we heard in Jesus' lesson to the disciples. Here again, she invites them to come and meet Jesus. And then verse 41, because of his words, many more became believers. Her testimony, her invitation brings them to meet Jesus and hear his words and meet him for themselves. Isn't that what we want? Having met Jesus, having seen that he is amazing, we want to bring others to meet him for themselves.

And so as we read this whole story, we might think it a little bit like there's this one woman who's found living water. And then that living water has flowed out to a whole town. Maybe it wouldn't surprise you that the Old Testament has a picture a little bit like this. That is a picture. The Old Testament doesn't literally have this picture. But in Ezekiel chapter 47, there's this prophecy that one day life-giving water will flow out from God's temple. It starts as a little stream going to just a few, and then it gets deeper and bigger and wider until you have this giant river of life flowing out bringing life and transforming all the lands around Jerusalem. Or the same picture is in Zechariah 14, where it says this, on that day, living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea, and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea in summer and in winter. The Lord will be king over the whole earth. The living water flows out from the temple, bringing life to all those around.

which means the Lord is king over the whole earth. Maybe you remember from last week, Jesus said that he is the source of living water. He gives it first to this woman, and then it carries on flowing past her to this whole town. And these ancient prophecies in Ezekiel and Zechariah are coming true in Jesus. Maybe you remember in John chapter 2, verse 19, Jesus said that he was the temple, and from him now that living water is flowing out. And so these Samaritan people, who were spiritual and national outcasts, receive this living water. That's why, verse 42, they can say, now we know that this man really is the saviour of the world. Jesus is bringing living water, not just to close

up or clean or important people, however you might want to define that, but to Samaritans, who would have been seen as unlikely, distant, perhaps dirty people.

You can imagine that the Samaritan town were very glad that they listened to the testimony of this woman who brought surprising news. And they say, verse 42, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we've heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the saviour of the world.

And what they say is absolutely right. Jesus has come to be the saviour of the world. Jesus has come for you.

[ 23 : 24 ] For God so loved the world. That's not just a few individuals or one nation. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Or John the Baptist said of Jesus earlier, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So today, whoever you are, see that Jesus has come for you. Because if you live in this world, which I think you all do, then Jesus has come for you. And if you think, but I am such a mess, I have lived distantly, I feel like I wouldn't fit in in a church. Well, Jesus has come for you.

You are welcome. He loves you. He wants to know you. And he wants you to serve him like this Samaritan woman. Jesus came for the Samaritan woman and the Samaritan town. He came to be the saviour of the whole world. And as we remember that or realise that, it's the most natural thing in the world to be full of joy and want to share that joy with other people, inviting them to come and meet Jesus.

And like this woman then, see that Jesus is amazing and join in. Like the disciples, see that Jesus' work is happening, so join in. Like the Samaritan town, see that Jesus is the saviour of the world and join in. Let the whole world know that the saviour has come. And we must speak of Jesus with those around us, our neighbours, family, friends, colleagues. Cambridge needs to know about Jesus. Perhaps there are those particular people you've been praying for and inviting for a long, long time. Well, keep going. Perhaps you need a challenge to be a bit like this Samaritan woman and join in with her, speaking of Jesus. Remember, you don't need to be impressive. Simply say, like her, come and see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Because that man is the saviour of the world.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, thank you that you have come to be the saviour of the world. Thank you that no one is too far from you. No one's life is too messy. No one is outside of your care. Please move us, give us courage and joy to join in with the work that you are doing. Heavenly Father, we pray that people around us, even in Orchard Park, would come to recognise your son for who he really is. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.