

The Bad Samaritan

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[0 : 00] Well, we're in a 12-week sermon series called Meeting Jesus, and I hope that every time you hear a sermon, you meet Jesus.

And that's one reason that we listen to a sermon. The sermon should always deliver an encounter with our Lord. However, a number of factors work against that.

Preachers sometimes can work against the listener meeting Jesus, and of course, listeners can work against meeting Jesus. But God never works against us meeting the Savior.

Our human condition is such that we thirst for God. And whether we know it or not, our condition for God can be dry. The story of the woman at the well shows us our desperation.

Like Nicodemus was outwardly in the dark, he was also inwardly depraved. The woman is outwardly thirsty, but she is inwardly parched.

[1 : 06] In both cases, that is Nicodemus and the woman, who is nameless, they were separated from God. Neither one thought that they were all that far from him.

Nicodemus was pretty curious. And so he sought out Jesus. The nameless woman was pretty clueless. Jesus is the one who sought her out.

What would you rather be, though? The one who thinks that you're seeking Jesus or the one who actually wasn't? In the end, I think it's pretty clear that the woman came out further along than Nicodemus.

Jesus doesn't make it easy, but he does make it clear. Meeting him is on his terms. And he could have ignored this woman because of ethnicity or morality or maybe even gender.

But Jesus is keenly interested in this woman because, as he discloses later on, God is spirit. And God seeks such as this to worship him in spirit and in truth.

[2 : 18] And so through this encounter, Jesus reveals his identity. He draws her into it. She names it. And then he actually claims that. He is the Christ.

The Messiah. And so Jesus draws the thirsty to himself. And Jesus, through this encounter we see, meets our deepest need through worship.

So I want to look at those two things. Jesus drawing us in, those who are thirsty, and then meeting our need through the worship of him. And so verses 1 through, well, 40 all the way to the end, take place in a place called Sychar of Samaria.

To be exact, Jacob's well. And Jesus and his disciples were in between Jerusalem and Cana when they meet at this place. At the time of day, which is probably noon, Jesus and his disciples stop for some refreshment.

And they encounter, or there is this encounter between Jesus and a woman. The encounter begins with water, but it ends with worship.

[3 : 27] Though it starts off with a command and it finishes with a promise. And Jesus' command is this. Give me a drink, is what he says in verse 7.

And then in verse 14, he promises, The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Jesus uses this outward and physical need to address an inward and spiritual condition. These two things seem like they have nothing to do with one another.

Just like it seems this Jew has nothing to do with a Samaritan. They have nothing to do with one another. The woman's need for physical water parallels her need for living water, which leads to eternal life.

As essential as water is to our bodies, even more so is eternal life to our souls. This living water that Jesus names is the delivery system of eternal life.

[4 : 30] And as you know, water is a big subject in the Bible. Now, it's a commodity in our market-driven economy. And we speak of conserving and consuming water.

And we're concerned about it, but probably don't appreciate it nearly as much as someone else who has to fetch it. Water, like darkness, though, is there in the beginning of creation back in Genesis 1.

Look at it later today. But day one, God creates light. And day two, he creates expanse in heaven. But there is darkness and water before that in verses 1 and 2.

Well, Jesus stirs up something deep and desirable within this woman to draw her to himself, his life. And our Lord makes it clear to the woman and to us that eternal life comes only one way.

By using the subject of water, Jesus is actually showing that one, we want eternal life. But two, we get it when Jesus and only Jesus gives it to us.

[5 : 39] And that's the main idea in these opening 15 verses of chapter 4. God is the only one who can give us living water, which is this sign of eternal life.

And the operative word here is give. Verses 7, 10, 14, and 15, the word is repeated. What is the gift of God? Verse 10, as the question is raised.

It's living water, which leads to eternal life. The second thing after water that Jesus presses in on, though, is worship.

Eternal life isn't an end in itself. Living water is only the beginning like new birth for Nicodemus was the beginning. Both come by the Spirit.

New birth and eternal life. Living water and eternal life is then for the worship of the living God. And Jesus brings this home in a very shocking way.

[6 : 43] Abruptly, in verse 16, he issues a second command. After telling her, give me a drink, he then tells her, go call your husband. Out of the blue it comes, but after addressing her vertical condition, he then addresses her horizontal one.

He doesn't notice address the moral one first. We know what that's about. We let our imaginations go there. But it's her spiritual one that he addresses first.

It's not the other way around. There's an order here. Her vertical relationship with God and then her horizontal one with others. All along, Jesus has been addressing this woman's spiritual condition.

But now, she is shocked and takes the bait, raising the subject of worship. In verse 19, she acknowledges that Jesus must be a prophet.

But how else could he know these things about her, about her fifth husband? And it's followed by this cascade of a conversation about worship. Our spiritual and moral conditions are related to one another.

[7 : 56] They're not the same, but neither are they mutually exclusive. There is an order to them. One takes priority or comes before the other. While our morality discloses our spirituality, it is our spirituality that shapes, directs our morality.

So the woman raises the subject of worship with a sense of confusion, yet curiosity. Jesus, leading her all the way, then discloses his identity to her through this conversation.

In verse 24, he gives this definitive statement. God is spirit. A worshiper, following that, Jesus says, then does so in spirit and in truth.

This Samaritan woman, something of a misfit, not a Jew, but not really a Gentile either. Something of a mixture. She knows that central and primary to worship is the Messiah, the Christ.

And so Jesus seizes the moment and reveals his true identity to her. The Messiah, the Christ. This is Jesus, the one whom she thought was just a prophet.

[9 : 14] They're one and the same. Jesus is the Christ. And that is the moment that the woman meets Christ. She met the man, God Jesus, the moment he engaged her at the well.

Something took place once he revealed his true identity to her, though. Another way of translating verse 26. Look down at that.

Another way of translating it would be, actually, I am. Who speak to you is he. You know what it says there.

As you look down at your Bible, it says, Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. But it could say, I am who speak to you is he. Did you get that?

The I am. The same I am that revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush is the same I am at Jacob's well. He is the same I am we worship here this morning.

[10 : 13] And what does that mean to you? It means that sheerly by the grace of God can we meet Jesus. And only by his grace can we meet him.

And so we're here this morning by the gift of God. We're here to worship the Lord like the woman in spirit and in truth. The spirit within us that is met by God's spirit.

The truth that is beyond us that shapes our thoughts and our wills and our affections. The way we meet Jesus is through worship.

Worship on Sundays and every day of the week. Every moment we listen to him when he speaks to us as he said to the woman. Through his word.

His word preached and heard verbally. His word celebrated and seen visually. That's when we worship the Lord. That's when we meet him. And worship is essentially a listening to Jesus.

[11 : 16] When we listen to him, that's when we meet him. John Webster said this about the church. He said, The church is not first of all to live and proclaim the gospel, but to hear the gospel.

Of course, if the church is to really be a hearing church, it must also live and proclaim it. But first, it must hear and listen to Jesus.

And listening to Jesus is really hard work. In fact, it's impossible apart from the grace of God. Impossible except when he gives us his spirit and it is in truth.

So friends, when you come on Sunday mornings or midweek Bible studies or listen to someone's personal testimony, listen closely. Because when you do, you meet Jesus.

And when you listen to Jesus, you will discover that listening is love in action. As an author by the name of F. Scott Peck once wrote, Listening is a road less traveled, but one taken by the woman at the well, and maybe you and I too.

[12 : 33] I speak to you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.