

John 4

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[0 : 0 0] And it centers in many ways around what evangelism is. What is evangelism? It's a very interesting question to consider what evangelism is.

And here we have the expert evangelist Jesus himself talking to a woman from a background that leaves, even in our terms, quite a lot to be desired.

I love the way Jesus interacts with the different people he meets on his way. And to me, there's a drama here. There's a story here which I would love.

It would be great if someone like Danny Boyle was able, with Christian eyes, to look at it and show us the script through film. Because it's a fantastic drama about this woman.

And I'm sure he would perhaps start off with the end of what happened when this woman went back to the town and told the people everything about Jesus.

[0 : 5 9] And he would then look back at her life and see the interaction with Jesus. I'm not a TV producer, but I think it would be fantastic just to see that and how Jesus interacted with this woman.

And we have to ask ourselves how we would have interacted with her. It's interesting to see in the first few chapters of John that we see quite a number of people coming to Jesus.

Ian Murdoch this morning spoke about John the Baptist pointing to Jesus and saying, Behold the Lamb of God. And two of his disciples immediately followed Jesus. And Andrew was one of them.

And the first thing Andrew did is he found his brother. He went to tell his brother about Jesus. And Andrew's brother was Simon Peter. And he came to Jesus. And shortly after that, Jesus meets Philip.

And he talks to Philip. And what does Philip do? He goes out and finds Nathaniel. And so it goes on. And then we have this fascinating discourse he has with Nicodemus.

[2 : 0 1] Compared to this woman, Nicodemus was quite a member of the establishment. He was probably rich. He was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin. He was powerful.

He was a very highly thought of man in the community. And he came to Jesus. And you would think that Jesus was almost harsh with Nicodemus. Nicodemus because, you know, Nicodemus started asking him questions.

And he said to Nicodemus, look, Nicodemus, you must be born again. And Nicodemus just simply didn't know what he meant. You must be born again. He was really tough on him and said, you must be born again.

So the question does arise. Why did he say that to Nicodemus? And how he so gently spoke to this woman of Samaria. But you must remember that Nicodemus' problem was his pride.

And Jesus had to say to him, you must be born again. Whereas this woman had nothing to hang her pride on. She was an ostracized woman. She was a woman who was not a member of the community.

[3 : 05] Most of the community would have shunned this woman. So we have Nicodemus coming to Jesus. And then in chapter 3, we have this woman coming to Jesus.

So the first thing we really notice is that there is no script for evangelism. It is different if you go through the whole of the New Testament. And if you look at every single situation that Jesus interacted with people.

There is no script or template we can go outside that door with and use. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have a strategy for evangelism. That's for another day. But there is certainly no script in the scripture as to what we should do.

Evangelism is simply loving people around us and caring for them. And also being courageously transparent about believing in Jesus.

You know, Jesus loved people. If anything comes through at all about the life of Christ, it's the way he loved people. You remember how he looked at the rich young ruler and the Bible tells us that he loved them.

[4 : 10] And every single person he saw, there was something in them because they were made in the image of God. And if we identify ourselves tonight as followers of Jesus Christ, and we don't love people, and we don't care for people, and we don't love them the way Jesus loved them, even the unloved, even our enemies, we have to question our own credibility.

This woman had five husbands. The person she was staying with wasn't even her husband. I don't know how many other people she may have been staying or living with.

And in any society, even today, perhaps, that would be looked down upon. You know, I'll never remember, I'll never forget the first person who started living with a woman in Scalpy.

It was the talk of the town. Everybody talked about it. I remember his mother being distraught about it. And she had come and lived living on the island, and that was about 40 years ago.

And my goodness, what a stir it caused. And this woman came from even a worse background than that. And she met Jesus.

[5 : 28] Now, can you imagine the reaction to the people of Saecher when she went back? After meeting with Jesus, and she said to them, Come see a man. Now, you're scared sometimes about what you might say to people if you're a Christian.

Scared that you don't have the right words. Scared that you might not have pieces of Scripture you can speak to them. And yet this woman went back after having five husbands and living with another man.

And she went back to the center of that town. And she said to people round about her, the people that knew her inside out, and she said to them, Come see a man.

What a ridiculous statement from this woman. I cannot honestly think of a more ridiculous... Imagine the cynics. They would all say, Wow, she's got another one now.

Imagine the talk of the town, talking about this woman. And yet this woman went back and she said, Come see a man that told me everything I ever did.

[6 : 30] And the lesson I get from that is it's Jesus who uses words. You might be scared of not having words to tell people about Jesus, but Jesus can use your words. So never be afraid to say to people what you believe about Jesus, because he can use your words.

And he can bring people to Christ through your words. In 1980, a gentleman called C. Everett Cope, he was a former Surgeon General of the United States, and Francis Schaeffer, a famous evangelist, Christian, they sat together at a conference in America, and they said that the day was coming in the West when the name of Jesus would not be recognised by the average young person, and if it were recognised, not a single historical fact about him would be known.

Now, I was reading about a man who was at that conference, and he said he didn't think it would ever happen. He said they were just being provocative. And yet you look at the world around about us today, and you wonder, how true is it?

How many people in our streets know about Jesus? They know it as a profanity, but how many people know who Jesus is? And that is, in my view, it's a reflection of those of us who profess to follow Jesus that we don't tell people about who Jesus is.

Unless tonight we understand the message of Jesus and the glory that is attached to that message, we can never tell others about who he is.

[8 : 12] And I believe tonight that if any honest seeker here, if you really want to know Christ, and if you come before him, and you have your questions for him, I'm sure he will answer them.

In this book, you will find the answers to all the questions that you'll ever have. And you can come to know a way of life that is second to none. We live in an age when Christianity is despised, despised even in this country.

There's new spirituality all around us, but we hear very little about Jesus and about the message of salvation. And it's up to us, those of us who are Christians, to tell others about this marvelous message so that we leave a legacy, not only to the next generation, but to the generations after them.

So I want to look to you very briefly tonight on this discourse Jesus had with this woman and what we can learn from it. And I want to put it into context first because Jews and the Samaritans hated one another.

I'm not going into a lot of detail, but basically after the reign of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was split into two bits. In the north, there was Israel, and the capital of that was Samaria.

[9 : 28] And further south, there was Judah, and the capital of that was Jerusalem. So you had the two countries, as it were. In about 700 BC, the Assyrians, they were called, they invaded Israel in the north.

They didn't want to invade Judah in the south because they were a buffer against Egypt in the south. So they didn't want to upset them in any way because they knew they would stop the Egyptians attacking them.

They were obviously scared of the Egyptians. So the Israelites, so the Jews who were in the north, mixed with the Assyrians, and they had children, and these children were called Samaritans.

The Jews absolutely despised them, even to the extent that the Jews would not walk through Samaria if they were going on the journey Jesus was going on because they considered that they would defile themselves.

Now, Jesus recognized that defilement wasn't something that happened on the outside. Defilement was something on the inside. So he was obviously quite happy to walk through Samaria.

[10 : 31] In about 128 BC, the Jews destroyed the Samaritan temple. We'll hear a year about Mount Gerrasson, and there was a temple there. And in 128 BC, the Jews in the south, in Judah, they attacked that temple and destroyed it.

And the Samaritans got their own back a few years before the birth of Christ. When they came into Jerusalem, they scattered dead bones in the temple area, and so defiled the temple at the time of Passover, so the Jews were not able to celebrate the Passover.

They hated each other. They wouldn't even share a cup of water. If you gave one a cup of water, they would not touch it. And so that's the bit of the background about the history, and that's why the woman was so surprised that Jesus spoke to her.

Not only that, but woman didn't have any status in society when Jesus came. And women should really thank Christ for all he's done for them.

And I think when we look back at history, Christ did more for the status of woman than any other person in history. It's quite interesting reading some of the bits and pieces about what the Jews thought of woman at that time.

[11 : 45] I'll just read a couple of them. There was a man called Ben Shearach, and he wrote between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and he said about woman that they are responsible for sin coming into the world, and their spite is unbearable.

And he also wrote that daughters are a disaster and a source of shame. And, of course, the Jews prayed every morning and thanked God that he had not made them a woman.

So if you think of the circumstance, there was this woman coming on her own to the well at 12 o'clock in the afternoon because, obviously, she didn't go with the rest of the woman folk who had been there in the morning, and she met Jesus.

Rabbis, in fact, wouldn't even look at their own wives when they were walking outside. And to look at another woman was a real abomination. So when this woman came to the well and saw a man sitting at the well, if you can imagine the scene, she just didn't know what to do.

Normally, the man would move away, so the woman would move away and wait for the man to move away so that she could go to the well. But Jesus just sat there.

[13 : 03] And this was Jesus' first encounter with this woman of Samaria. And when she came to the well with her bucket, he said to her, give me something to drink because Jesus was tired.

Let's never forget that Jesus was human, the same as we are ourselves. He was without sin, but let's never, ever forget that he was a human being.

And here was a human being dealing with this woman. And he said to her, give me something to drink. And the woman was taken aback, totally taken aback, because he had spoken to her.

And she, you know, you said what she said. How is it that you are a Jew? Ask me for a drink. For Jews have no dealing with Samaritans. She just couldn't understand why he spoke to her. And then instead of what Jesus said to her then, well, I might have asked you for a drink, but if only you would realize what I could give you.

If only, he said, you could realize that I can give you living water. And this woman, she probably, I can't imagine what her circumstances must have been like.

[14 : 26] She must have been a terribly lonely woman. And she came to Jesus, and he said to her, if you knew the gift of God, and who is it that saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

Not only did he ask her for a drink, and when she responded, wondering why she, a Samaritan, had asked why he, a Jew, had spoken to her as Samaritan, he offered her a gift.

Can you imagine what she must have thought when Jesus offered her a gift? I wonder if this woman had forgotten what a gift is like. It's great getting a gift, isn't it? It doesn't matter how big or small it is.

When someone gives you a wee gift, it's a great feeling, because you haven't earned it, and someone comes along and just gives it to you. And the Bible talks about the gift of God.

It also talks about wages. Wages is something you get for working. If you work for a week, you get paid for the week. But if someone gives you a gift, it's something that you have not worked for, you have not deserved.

- [15 : 34] And this Jesus said to this woman, I am prepared to give you a gift. You know, for a woman like that, who are ostracized in society, a gift must be absolutely wonderful.
- Maybe, I don't know whether her mother or father were living. I don't know whether the man she was staying with now ever gave her a gift. But it must have been fantastic for someone like Jesus to offer her a gift.
- I don't know whether any of you have ever heard the Tony Campola story. Tony Campola is quite an interesting character. He's a Christian man. He's a professor in the American.
- And there's a lot of work amongst the poor people in Haiti. Very, very poor people there. And he arrived in Haiti at one time off a flight and he was suffering from jet lag. And he couldn't sleep.
- So two o'clock in the morning or thereabouts, he went into this diner, as he called it himself, and had a cup of coffee. He went there about half one and he was sitting there having his coffee. There was just himself and the owner there chatting away.
- [16 : 41] About two o'clock in the morning on the dot, this crowd of women came into the diner. And they were talking and back and forth. And they left after a while.
- And Campola had noticed that during their conversation, one of them had said that it was their birthday tomorrow night. And Campola asked the owner of the diner who they were.
- And it so happened that these women were women of the street. They were selling their bodies for money. And Campola was deeply disturbed by what he saw.
- So he said to the diner owner, he said, let's have a party tomorrow night, he said. Let's have a birthday party for that girl. And the man said, he was really taken aback, but Campola said, well, I'll buy, everything has got to be bought and I'll buy a birthday cake for her.
- So the next night came and Campola went in and helped the man decorate the place, put happy birthday around about it, around about the diner. And sure enough, about two in the morning, the woman came out, came in.
- [17 : 46] And the woman whose birthday it was, looked round and Campola went to her. And he handed her the cake. And he says himself, she took the cake and just held it so close to her chest.
- And the tears flowed from her eyes. And she says, no one's ever given me a birthday cake. I'm going to show it to my mama. And she ran out crying. And Campola didn't know what to say.
- And he said, we'll pray. And he prayed in front of those other women there. And the diner owner asked him, what do you do, sir? And he says, I'm a preacher man.
- And the diner owner said to him, where do you preach? Because I'll come to your church, he said. And that's Campola's experience of giving a gift to a woman.
- And this is Jesus telling this woman that there is a gift. But the Bible also talks about the gift Jesus was giving her was eternal life.
- [18 : 46] And we live in an age where everyone is looking for longevity of life. But the Bible also talks about perishing. The gift of God is eternal life.
- There is no question about that. But in John 3, 16, we read that God sent his son into the world to save. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Do you know every single one of us here tonight is perishing? If you think you're not perishing, just look in the mirror when you go home this evening. And then take out a picture of yourself a few years ago and compare the two pictures.

And there's an obsession in our society about looking young. Last Monday night in the Horizon program, there was the program was headed, The Truth About Looking Young. They have found out that if they take something out of the eye of a squid, they can give you cream that'll make your skin look better.

And there's a new biology, or it's not exactly biology, but it's a new science which they now called glycobiology. and it promises a breakthrough in making us look younger.

[20 : 00] It's fascinating how we tried to make ourselves look younger and we're all perishing. I mean, I was putting air into my tires yesterday and I noticed the rubber was perishing.

I look at myself in the mirror and I realise I'm perishing. I see grey hairs and I know I'm perishing. I can't run the way I used to run, so I'm perishing.

From the moment we're born, we're perishing. And the Bible puts the two together. On the one hand, you're perishing. On the other hand, it offers us eternal life.

From the moment we're born, we begin the process of perishing. And unless it's halted and replaced with the process of living an eternal life, it will culminate in eternal separation from God in a place the Bible calls hell.

And tonight, we're all perishing. And I would ask you to take this gift of God that was offered by Jesus Christ to this woman and take it as your gift from Jesus this evening.

[21 : 08] You see, Jesus went to this woman and he said, what I have for you is as necessary for you spiritually as water is for you physically. See, we can't live without water.

Our bodies are made up about 50% or so of water. And it's an awful thing to die of thirst. I'm sure most of you would have read the story about Cain Corrie, who was 22, who died in a hospital recently through dehydration.

He was so delirious, the guards had to keep him down. He had dialed 999 so that he could get a drink of water. They were too late in giving him water.

But Jesus tells us tonight that there's spiritual water you need. That you need eternal life. And it's as necessary for you as is the physical water that you drink every day.

What he's saying to this woman is you're looking in the wrong places with your thirst. And he was testing her as to what her real thirst was. See, the Bible tells us in Jeremiah that we've committed two sins against God and one of them is that we've forsaken him, the spring of living water.

[22 : 23] And the second thing is that we have dug up our own cisterns and they don't hold any water. They're broken cisterns. And what broken cisterns do is they destroy you.

They make you tired. Fatigue comes in. But what Jesus says to this woman is everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. That was her water. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. You see, the water that Jesus gives you will give you a spring in your step. See, Christianity is not a philosophy or moral ethics.

It's not a practice. Christianity is not a set of rules. It's not even an experience. It can be all those things. There's something far more radical than that. Having Jesus is far more radical.

What Jesus is saying to this woman is, I have got here what every human soul longs for, which will not only satisfy you, but will change your inside so much that your very soul and heart will experience a whole new joy and dynamism.

[23 : 38] So, that was Jesus' offer to her. He offers himself to her, the gift of eternal life. Do you know him tonight? You ever come to ask him?

See, the big problem with our world is they don't know Jesus Christ. Most people aren't in church tonight just because they don't know who Jesus is. But he can revolutionise your life.

Let's look at the process he uses as the great evangelist. How does he go about it? He attracts her attention immediately.

She was coming for water to, for her own and perhaps her family's needs. But immediately he attracts her attention by giving us something sparkling to imagine, something attractive, something intriguing.

I can give you living water, he said. And she didn't know what living water was. And he probably, if we were in the same situation as Jesus, Jesus probably knew what she would do.

[24 : 48] But finally, she took the bait and she said, what is it? What is this living water?

Maybe you're not a Christian here tonight because you've never asked that question. What really is Christianity? What really does it mean following Jesus? And she asked him, what is it?

Have you thought about his claims? Have you actually gone to his word and asked, what's he asking you? And she had asked the question, unless you challenge Jesus in the Bible, unless you look it out for yourselves, you will never find out who Jesus is and what he wants from you.

So she bit at the bait and he said to her, sir, give me this water so that I will be thirsty, so that I will not be thirsty again or have to come to draw water.

So what does he do then? You would think that he's really blown it because he turns to her and says, go get your husband. Has he changed the emphasis? I don't think he has actually.

[25 : 57] I think it's a brilliant move by him because he's helping her to understand what the living water really is. And he's really saying to her, it's what you're seeking for and trying to find in men, but you haven't found it yet.

This woman was looking for living water. She was looking for that sparkle and intrigue in her life, but she hand-founded in men. You see, he's bringing her face to face with her sin and her need.

You know, it's not enough to thirst. Some of you here tonight would like to be followers of Jesus, but it's not enough just to want to be a follower of Jesus because you've also got to face the sin that's stopping you from following him.

See, Christ Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but neither is he willing to affirm her sorry predicament. He's not willing to condone what she's doing.

He didn't come to condemn her. You know, it's the easiest thing in the world to condemn sinners, and every time we condemn sinners or people who have problems associated with sin, never forget that sin is just a symptom of the way we are divorced from Jesus.

[27 : 12] And look at your own heart before you ever condemn, and me too before I ever condemn anyone. But this woman, Jesus was so gentle coming to her. Notice how even when he said to her, go and get your husband, and she said to him, no, I haven't got any husband.

Look at how he finished it off for her. He said, I know you don't have a husband and the man you're staying with now is not your husband. He wasn't interested in the gory details.

He wasn't interested in the gossip. He was interested in her as a person. Same with the prodigal. The father finished off a story for him and says, bring this, bring that. Put new clothes on him, give him a new ring, put shoes on his feet.

Bring, bring, bring. Not condemning. That's the way Jesus is tonight. He's not here to condemn you. He's here to make you one of his own.

Jesus is not interested in condemning the sins you have committed tonight, but he doesn't want to affirm them.

[28 : 20] He doesn't want to condone you and your sins, but he's saying to you, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. So this woman, when she told her story, she then said to him, sir, I perceive that you're a prophet.

All of a sudden, she started, some commentators would say that she was trying to change the subject, trying to move from Gerasim to Jerusalem, but I don't think she was.

I really think that she was, she realized she had to do something. Jesus had pointed out something in her life. Jesus had pointed out to her the thirst that was in her life, and she wanted to do something about it.

And she asked him, where do we go, to Gerasim or do we go to Jerusalem? And she must have been really shocked when Jesus said to her, you don't go to any of those places. You come to me.

And she was really, must have been taken aback by that. Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when either on this mountain or in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You'll worship what you do not know.

[29 : 27] We worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming and now is here when the true worshippers 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 him in spirit and in truth. This is Jesus telling her, you don't have to go to Jerusalem. You don't have to go to Mount Gerasim.

You don't have to go to that denomination or this denomination. You have to come to me. And she was really taken aback by this because she didn't understand it really.

I don't really think she understood it at the time. Because when Jesus talks there about when the hour has come, it means it's the same as when the hour has come when he went to Calvary for this woman.

And he's saying to her, when you come, when you want this gift, you come to me. And she, and he then said to her, the woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming.

[30 : 30] And that when he comes, he will explain us everything. And Jesus said to her that he was the Messiah.

Ego imai, it says in the Greek, it says the I am. I am the Messiah, he said. And then she realized who Jesus was. It's all about coming to Jesus tonight.

It's all about accepting the gift that he has offered us. And then, of course, the disciples blew it all. Came along just as he said that to her. And then the woman left and she said, ran back to the town and said, come see a man.

What a happy woman she was going back to that town. She even left her water jar behind her. She wasn't interested in it anymore because she had found the Messiah.

You know, it's a wonderful thing to find Jesus for yourself. And I often wonder what happened to that woman. Because we never hear about her again. He had a long conversation with her.

[31 : 37] She just called the woman from Samaria, given no name. the longest conversation he had with anyone. And I sometimes wonder, as I read the story time and time again this week, I wonder if she went to Jerusalem, finally.

And I wonder if she was with this brave woman who stood round the cross at Calvary and she saw Jesus and all his shame there.

And she realised who he was and what he was doing. And as he saw his hands stretched out, I wonder if she was there when he said, I thirst.

The man who was offering her living water saying, I thirst. I wonder if she saw it when he said, I thirst. Not just physical thirst, but the sheer deprivation of God turning his back on him.

Sheer agony of it. I just wonder if she was there in Jerusalem at Calvary when he said, I thirst. And then did she hear him say, it is finished.

[32 : 44] When he gave up the last breath and he said, it is finished. And she saw that he took her place at Calvary. She realised that she should have been condemned, but through his condemnation she was saved.

And if she was there, that woman of Samaria, I'm sure that she would have said, I get it now. I really understand it now.

He took my place and through him taking my place and through him taking my place, I can have forgiveness of sins. You know, folks, it's all about Jesus.

It's not about the preacher. It's not about the elder or the deacon. It's all about Jesus. And he's asking you tonight to come to him.

He's offering you a gift. He's offering you himself. And you've heard the story many times here. And I would like to think that tonight Jesus is passing through Kenneth Street.

[33 : 53] In the old version and the authorised version, it says, Christ must needs go through Samaria. It's the same must as that is used, that I must do my father's business.

A very strong must, I understand, in the Greek language. But tonight, he must pass through Kenneth Street. And you've heard the message again.

And I pray that you'll accept Jesus into your own life if you've never accepted him. And if you're a Christian, that you'll go out with that wonderful, wonderful story of Christ dying for sinners.

I was looking up the lyrics today, did I say it, the Beatles lyrics of all those lonely people. All those lonely people. Where do they come from?

Where do they belong to? There's lonely people out there. People without hope. People without Christ are people without hope.

[34 : 58] Their only hope is that we tell them about Jesus. And I pray tonight we look at the great evangelist and follow his example and go with that gospel to all nations, to everyone.

And baptise them in the name of Christ. But some of you can't go because you haven't come to him. And I pray tonight through God's grace you might do so. Let's pray together.

Jesus. Jesus. Amen. Amen. Thanks for doing so.

Thanks for listening to me, and I'll see you next time. Thanks.