LIVING WATER: JESUS MEETS A WOMAN AT THE WELL

Scripture: John 4:1-26.

Do you believe in divine appointments? Do you believe that God actively seeks out lost sinners? Jesus, speaking of Himself said: “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). So Jesus is a seeking Savior. He is seeking the lost. Who are the lost that He seeks? Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way…” (Isaiah 53:6). We are the lost. We’re lost sheep. I am. You are. Every human being who sins is lost. But praise be to God that Jesus, who will later refer to Himself as the “good shepherd” (John 10:11), actively seeks His lost sheep. He seeks to save us from the peril of our sinful, rebellious, lost state. We can all give personal testimony about the day and time that Jesus found us and saved us. In today’s lesson Jesus seeks to save the lost soul of a Samaritan woman. It IS a divine apt.

Thus far in our study through John, Chaps 1-3, we have heard the testimony of a number of eye witnesses. Each one has stated in their own words who they believe Jesus is. Today the Apostle John calls a woman of Samaria to the witness stand. We don’t know her name, but she will offer her testimony about how Jesus changed her life.

READ John 4:1-4.

At the height of His popularity Jesus and His disciples leave Judea and they head northward to Galilee. The normal route for most Jews traveling from Judea to Galilee was to head east and cross over the Jordan River to the other side and then head north for about 30 miles; then cross back over the Jordan River to the west side, and into Galilee. They preferred to take this rather circuitous route rather than travel straight north in order to bypass Samaria. You see, the Jews hated the Samaritans with a passion. Let me give you a brief history lesson. If you will recall after King Solomon died the nation of Israel was split into the northern and the southern kingdoms. The northern kingdom (comprised of 10 of the 12 tribes) followed King Jeroboam and took the name “Israel.” The southern kingdom (made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) followed King Rehoboam and adopted the name of the larger dominant tribe “Judah.” All the leaders of the northern kingdom of Israel were evil and that nation quickly plummeted into gross idolatry and blatant immorality. God's judgment fell hard on them and they were taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 720 B.C. Most of the Jewish population was transported away. Gentile nations migrated back into this region and they intermarried with the Jews that remained there. This was the region known as Samaria in Jesus' day. The population was a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles. The orthodox Jews looked down their noses with contempt on this mixed breed. So it is that the Jews hated the Samaritans and the Samaritans, in turn, hated the Jews. There was no love lost between these two groups.

So, while most Jews avoided Samaria, Jesus did not. Verse 4 tells us that Jesus “had to pass” (KJV says “needed to go”) thru Samaria. Why did Jesus have to pass thru Samaria? Because He had a divine apt. He was seeking out one who was lost, specifically, a woman of Samaria. And so it is that Jesus and His disciples make their way north to Samaria.

READ John 4:5-6.

Jesus arrives at Jacob's well just south of Sychar. This was a very familiar place to Jews and also to Samaritans. It was hallowed ground to them because it initially belonged to Jacob (perhaps this is the land mentioned in Gen 48:22). Just before Joseph died in Egypt, he gave instructions that when the people left Egypt they carry his body with them and bury it in the land of Canaan. Eventually, some 400 years later, they did and carried Joseph’s bones with them and buried them at this location near Jacob's well.

Verse 6 tells us that Jesus was tired from His journey and He sat down by Jacob’s well. Here you can see the humanity of Jesus Christ… Jesus became tired. The writer of Hebrews says that He “sympathizes with our weaknesses” (Heb 4:15). Jesus knows how we feel. He understands us. And here we see Jesus, hot, tired and thirsty, sitting by Jacob's well. He is in the right place at the right time. God the Father has directed Him to this place.

READ John 4:7-8.

So here is Jesus sitting by Jacob's well outside the city while His disciples head into town to buy some food. It’s about 6:00 PM (according to verse 6, remember that John uses Roman time) and a woman comes out alone to draw water from the well. We presume she is alone because there is no mention of any other person with her. She walks out of town by herself to draw water most likely because of her questionable reputation, which we will see here in a minute. She is an outcast, unnamed, a Samaritan and a woman. She is by the world’s standards, an unimportant, insignificant nobody. But she is important to Jesus. It must have shocked her when Jesus spoke to her. You see, in that society men just did not carry on conversations with women in public. But Jesus is no ordinary man and He is seeking out a lost sinner. With Jesus there are no barriers. Galatians 3:28 says that in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female”...no barriers. No distinctions.

So this Samaritan woman must be surprised when Jesus speaks to her. He says, “Give me a drink.” He’s tired and thirsty and so he asks the woman for a drink of water. A simple request.

READ John 4:9.

She cannot believe that this Jewish man is speaking to her, a Samaritan woman! She doesn’t understand why Jesus would even ask her this. She implies that there is no way she can give Him a drink. There is this huge wall between the Samaritans and the Jews. By the way, lest we be too critical of the Jews and Samaritans, racial and religious and socio-economic barriers still exist even in our own society, don't they? So we Americans are really not that much different! People put up all kinds of barriers. But Jesus, He tears them all down!

Notice His reply to her... READ John 4:10.

“Jesus answers her, If you knew the gift of God…” What is the “gift of God”? John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...” Jesus says “If you knew the Son of God, and who it is that says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him and he would have given you living water.” Jesus turns the woman’s question around. It starts out with Him being the one who is thirsty and her having the source of water. All of a sudden, she's the one who’s thirsty and He’s the source. Jesus tells the woman, “I am the supply for your spiritual thirst.” Isaiah 55:1 says, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters…” Jesus tells this woman, “If you knew who I was, if you knew it was the Messiah, the very Son of God talking to you, you would be asking Me for living water.”

Well, the woman didn’t completely understand did she? Notice her reply...

READ John 4:11.

At this point she still thinks Jesus is talking in physical terms about physical water. Confused, but curious she asks, “How can you get this water? You don't even have a bucket to draw with and the well is very deep!” And then she says this…

READ John 14:12.

"You must be something. You must think you can do something that not even Jacob could do! Hey, if you've got some secret way to get out this water, then you must know something Jacob didn't know. Are you someone greater than Jacob?” At this point, little does she know! Jesus responds by telling her something else about His kind of water, what He calls “living water.

READ John 4:13-14.

Jesus basically tells her, “What H-2-O, physical water does for your parched dry mouth, My water will do for your parched dry soul. My water springs up into eternal life. My water completely satisfies your spiritual yearning, your search for real meaning in life, for real significance. That’s what my living water will do.”

I love to walk and there have been many times when I’ve been out on the road or trail walking in the heat and my mouth has gotten parched and dry. I couldn't wait to down a cold glass of water. I wanted it so bad! The problem with physical thirst is that once it has been quenched, it comes back again and again and again. The living water that Jesus Christ provides quenches your spiritual thirst forever!

Of course, this woman doesn’t understand much about this living water that Jesus is telling her about. One thing she does know is that she wants some of it!

READ John 4:15.

“OK, Jesus, you've sold me. I want what you have to give.” Getting saved is not about us getting something. “I want, I want, I want” like some spoiled little kid who sees what somebody else has and wants it too. Coming to Jesus Christ is not simply a want or recognition of a need. It is much more than that. Sure, it starts there - I recognize my need for Jesus – but it does not end there. At this point the Samaritan woman has not recognized two things that must be recognized before we can ever come to God. One is an awareness of our sin. The other is knowing and understanding who Jesus is. Recognizing our need for a Savior is not enough. People all over this world know they have a need. But they must be willing to forsake their sin and turn to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And she has not yet faced her sin or discovered who Jesus is yet. Oh, but she is about to!

READ John 4:16.

Jesus hits right at the heart of the woman's sin. Notice her response…

READ John 4:17-18.

He exposes her sin. Jesus has never met this woman before but it is as though He has been reading her autobiography. She is stunned. I’m sure her mouth dropped open.

READ John 4:19.

What she is basically saying is, “You're right. That is my life.” To her credit this woman acknowledges her sin by agreeing with Jesus about it. She does not argue with Him nor make excuses. She humbly acknowledges that He is right. This woman sees her need for living water, but one step further she sees that her sin is keeping her from that living water. You've always got to take a person to the point of their sin. And quite frankly that’s where a lot of people put up their hands and say, “Stop! Don't go any further. It’s my life and it’s none of your business!” They refuse to admit they are a sinner. They don’t want to face their sin and deal with it. They prefer to think they’re OK. People want something just as long as it doesn't cost them anything. However, this woman admits her sin, though it takes a little prompting from Jesus. There is, however, one more step needed. She needs to know who Jesus is and place her faith in Him.

READ John 4:20.

When you first read this you might ask, “What does this have to do with anything? How did this enter the conversation? What’s she talking about here?” To understand this verse you need to understand the point she is at spiritually. She senses her spiritual need. She realizes now that Jesus is talking about spiritual things. She is convicted of her sin and knows she needs to be saved. So she reasons to herself: “I've got to make things right. And in order to make it right I need to go worship God. Where should I go to worship Him? Should I go up to this mountain (nearby Mount Gerizim where the Samaritans went to worship God) or should I go down south to Jerusalem to worship?” She figures she had better ask Jesus what He thinks. I really believe she wants to do the right thing. She's been brought to the point of conviction. She recognizes her need and she wants to make things right with God.

Notice what she says. “Our fathers (the Samaritans) worshiped in this mountain (Mount Gerazim) and you Jews claim that Jerusalem is where you are supposed to worship. So, Jesus, where do I need to go to worship God and to straighten out this mess in my life?”

Isn't that just like sinners? The man or woman comes to the end of their rope and says, “Oh, my life is in shambles. I better get things right. I need to go to church. I need religion. Well, I got news for them. They do NOT need religion. Religion is NOT the answer. The answer is found in relationship…a relationship with the living Lord, Jesus Christ. With that in mind, look at Jesus’ response to the woman in verse 21…

READ John 4:21-24.

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that there is coming a day when the church is going to be established you're going to worship in spirit and in truth. When that happens you are not going to worship in any particular place. You won’t have to go to Mount Gerazim or Jerusalem or Mecca or the Vatican. “Don’t worry about where you worship. All that matters is the inside of your heart – you worship right where you are.” It doesn't matter where or when you worship. It only matters that in your life, that you worship God. You worship Him in spirit and in truth. Remember that when Jesus died the veil of the temple was ripped from the top to the bottom and God was saying, in effect, “That's the end of the whole Jewish system, the old covenant. It's over.” But as Jesus speaks to the woman in Chapter 4 that time has not yet come. This is why Jesus says, “the hour is coming.”

The salvation process is almost complete. The woman just needs to come to an understanding of who Jesus is. And so Jesus tells her.

READ John 4:25.

She says, “I know that one day the Messiah will come and He will clear all of this up.” That was the conventional thinking of the time – that the Messiah is coming. But Jesus delivers some good news to her…the Messiah is here!

READ John 4:26.

Jesus looks this woman in the eye and says, “I am the Messiah that you’ve been waiting for.” And she believed Jesus. Why do I come to this conclusion? Because down in verse 29 the woman goes back into town and tells others that Jesus is the Messiah. Her testimony to them is, “Come and see for yourselves!” And then, based on her testimony, the whole town of Sychar follows her out to see Jesus.

I firmly believe this woman came to Christ. She had a divine apt with Jesus. God sought her out. Jesus met her right where she was. In closing, every man, every woman, every boy and every girl must recognize first their need for living water. We must recognize our need for rebirth spiritually. Every person must face up to the sin in their life and deal with it. Finally, every person must recognize who Jesus is. Who is Jesus? He’s the Son of God, the Christ, the Messiah, the King of glory, the forgiver of sins, the lover of our soul. He is the One who provides living water.

Have you come to know this Jesus? Then pray for divine appointments and go tell somebody!

Now that we’ve been saved from the fires of hell by His grace it’s our job to point people to Jesus. Now we are the ones standing on the ground looking up at people on the ledge of the burning hotel. “Jump, He’ll catch you! He’ll save you. How do I know? Because once I was where you are at and He saved me!”