

"THE MISSIONAL JESUS"

The Woman at the Well - John 4:1-42

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at Jesus Fellowship of Believers

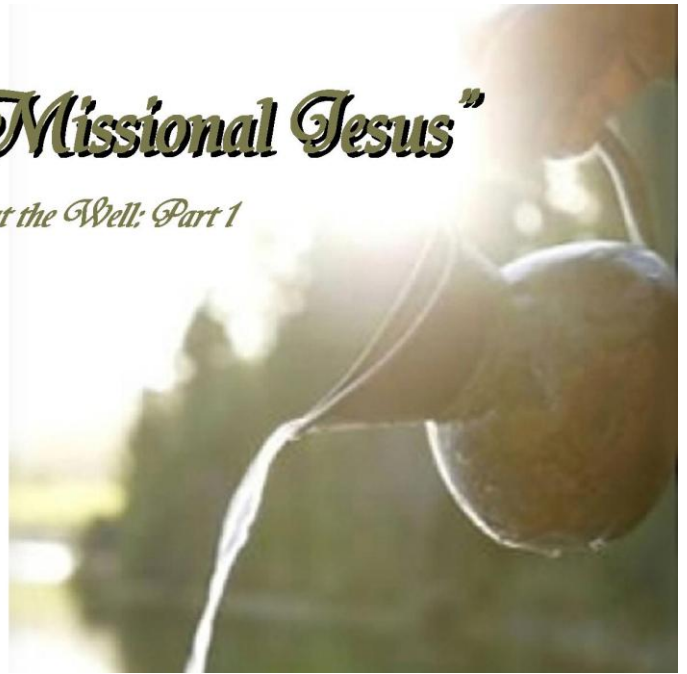
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The Woman at the Well: Part 1

John 4:1-42



1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John **2** (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), **3** He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. **4** But He needed to go through Samaria. **5** So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. **6** Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. **7** A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." **8** For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. **9** Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. **10** Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." **11** The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? **12** "Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" **13** Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, **14** "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." **15** The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." **16** Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." **17** The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' **18** "for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." **19** The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. **20** "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." **21** Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. **22** "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. **23** "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. **24** "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **25** The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." **26** Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." **27** And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" **28** The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, **29** "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" **30** Then they went out of the city and came to Him. **31** In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." **32** But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." **33** Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" **34** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. **35** "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! **36** "And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. **37** "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' **38** "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." **39** And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." **40** So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. **41** And many more believed because of His own word. **42** Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Joseph Turner, the great English artist, invited the minister, university professor, historian, and writer Charles Kingsley to his studio to see a painting of a storm at sea that Turner had painted. Kingsley was greatly impressed, and exclaimed "It's wonderful! It's so realistic! How did you do it?" Turner replied, "I went to the coast of Holland and hired a fisherman to take me out to sea in the next storm. We got into his boat just as a storm was brewing, and I asked him to tie me to the mast. He then steered that boat into the midst of the storm's chaos. The storm raged with such strength that at times I very much wanted to be in the bottom of the boat where the waves would blow over me. But I could not as I was tied to the mast. Not only did I *see* the storm in all its raging fury, I felt it! It blew into me until I literally became a part of it. After this crazy venture, I returned to my studio and painted the picture."

I guess you could say that Turner "got it" when it came to storms. In the same way Jesus "gets it" when it comes to life. And because of that fact, we therefore have someone to go to when we face life's storms. We have somewhere to go to when we get tired, because as we see in this story, He knew what it was to be tired. (Heb 4:16NKJV)

It has been said that all different kinds of people from all different walks of life have bowed before Christ. From Kings to paupers have knelt before Him and *will* kneel before Him as scripture promises that "*every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD.*" (Php 2:10-11) Please note that it does not say everyone will acknowledge Him *Savior*, but that all will acknowledge Him *LORD*, which should prove to be a surprise to even many of those sitting in pews across America this morning!

In our last gathering we saw a man named Nicodemus come to Jesus and have that eventual and ultimate "one-on-one" meeting that we all have or will experience. Nicodemus was from the "correct side" of the proverbial "tracks." He was religious, he was orthodox, he was powerful, influential, and no doubt rich and connected. And now in today's text Jesus is meeting with an individual from the opposite end of the cultural and social spectrum. I doubt if Nicodemus and this woman would have ever crossed paths. But Jesus is the great "common denominator"...the great "equalizer." Before Christ they both were sinners and lost. Before Christ, we are *all* sinners and lost!

This woman was so common and so socially anonymous that we do not even know her name. But we know that 1Corinthians 1:27 speaks into that issue saying "...*God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.*" God would do *to* her and *with* her great and powerful things. That is the "M.O." of one so redeemed by Christ! Such would be realized and proven in the fact that she would immediately after this event share her faith and manifest the reality of having had a "meeting with the Messiah." Such is the case with millions of such meetings that would follow hers, and so many yet to come!

This before us is a perfect example of the radical style of ministry for which Jesus was not only adept but was indeed the inventor. He was and is the author of quintessential missional ministry, for which this story bears a clear and wonderful example. Everything that is going to happen in this historical account was intentional. Nothing in the ministerial style of Jesus says "fatalist." He operated His life and ministry *on purpose*. Many of us in truth are just "blowing in the wind." We operate our lives like a tumbleweed in the desert, just being pushed around by whatever is "in the wind."

God will use anybody if they are willing, but we must actually make ourselves available and seek the Holy Spirit of God to fill us and control us. But we must seek to live our lives in an intentional manner. Focusing on the goals ahead and pursuing them. I think sometimes we stand around waiting for God to *make* us do something or force us into His service. But we must take responsibility for our own participatory heart and actions. We must step up, and He will then equip for the task. (He will also actually affect your heart if you ask! But the lack of prayerful request is the answer unto itself...) This is a matter of “progressive sanctification.” While we are positionally whole and complete upon rebirth, I have, as the poet Robert Frost wrote, “miles to go before I sleep.” I must with intentionality move forward always in my walk in Christ...pursuing greater holiness and purity, and greater personal missional pursuits.

Jesus reached out herein beyond the normal and acceptable evangelistic practices on several fronts. There were “walls” of separation between them. A religious wall, a gender wall, a racial wall, and a moral wall. And yet we see that Jesus found His way through all of them. To begin with, this woman was a *Samaritan*. I will give a pass on the details and the historical background of just what that means, except to say this: the Samaritans were considered Jewish mongrels by the culture of that day for having intermingled with the people groups of the surrounding nations, some of which were historically pagans and enemies of Israel. They had their own brand of Judaism, and were not at all accepted socially amongst the average Jew, of which Jesus was typical in bloodline. Secondly, Jesus broke a long line of taboo "no-no's" when He opened up a conversation not only with a Samaritan, but a woman to boot, and worse, *a woman alone*. And then finally there was this factor:

In the first half of the century in this country we carried on the disgusting racial practice of the separation of black and white to the degree where there were ‘white’ drinking fountains and “colored” drinking fountains. Can you imagine actually blueprinting the plumbing of your building to accommodate that level of prejudice? On this day though, there was only *one* fountain and it was the “colored” fountain. And the verse 9 language in the original is more specific and more enlightening than our usual cursory read of this account.

The woman’s comment was “*How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? ...Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*” But more literally it says, Jews don’t “*use together*” with Samaritans. See, it wasn’t just the *well* He wanted a drink out of, but He was asking to actually drink out of the **bucket she brought** for the purpose of getting water out of the well and carrying it home. Jesus is standing by the fountain marked “Colored” watching a black woman fill her water bottle and then He effectively says, “*Can I have a drink from your water bottle?*” Imagine that scene in the south in 1955, and you get the picture of what was happening here. You can’t be asking to use the same bucket. That wasn’t done.

You see Jesus wasn’t just “being friendly.” He was intentionally entering into this woman’s world. **Way** in. Into a realm where it would cost Him something. He did not call her into **His** world, but rather He went into **hers**. And it was there that He got her attention. For decades the church in America has been what is called an “attractional” type of ministry. One where we ask people to “come to our church” and we called it evangelism. It was an overt attempt to bring the people to where “God lived and occupied and did His thing” so that people would come to know Him. But that was never the primary directive of Christ. In Mark 16:15 Jesus called upon us to “*Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.*” So the directive was “go” and to “go everywhere.”

We seemed to get the idea when it came to *missionary* pursuits....you know, overseas and far away. We just seemed to miss the point when it came to our back yard and around the proverbial "corner!" To make myself clear here, there is a place and time to incorporate the idea of "come out from among them and be separate." But Paul was speaking clearly there in 2 Corinthians 6 to the body of 'believers in community' within the context of not being "yoked" or "tied together" with an unbeliever in marriage or business or the like.

Understanding a little of the ambient scene in which this is occurring helps us enormously when it comes to grasping the magnitude of what Jesus was doing. I mean, He was crossing a line! It may have been invisible and culturally nuanced, but it was there for sure, and everyone in that day knew it. He didn't just edge across it nor did He trip over it, but rather it appears that He "boldly went where no man had gone before!" **Brian Bell says this:** *The One Who spoke forth Niagara; the One who shaped the Nile with His finger nail in the sand; the One Who could bring forth gallons of wine...now sits thirsty!*

This "meeting" was **on purpose** and **without apology**. The text tells us that he "*had*" to pass through Samaria." Indeed! Not only for the sake of logistics, but for the sake of the "divine appointment" which awaited Him there. It was for the "on-purpose" missional call upon His life as it is in ours. This is the personal self-availability and the expectation we are to have as we attempt to reach out to the world around us. The fact is that one must go to Samaria if you want to reach Samaritans. To rescue people from a burning house, a firefighter has to go in and get them. Note that Jesus made the journey *for one woman*. For *one person*. Not for the masses, not to feed 5000. But for the soul of this one socially inconsequential individual. So let us never feel that we are obscured from God in life's crowd, insignificant in the multitude of seemingly unending populace.

What was this woman even doing at the well in midday? No one went out there in midday in the middle east! It was just too hot. "Not fit for man nor beast" as they say. It is widely held that this woman probably was out there at that time of day because everyone else would have been gone. Such would have been imperative to a woman that no doubt was a social outcast even amongst her own people because of her loose sexual living. So let's see if we can count the cultural faux pas committed all at once by our Lord and Savior: a *Samaritan*, a *woman*, a *woman alone*, and a *woman with a socially nasty street rep*, and then ask her if you can have a drink of water out of her water bottle. Jesus had 'hit the mother load!' Nobody just trips onto all that. So if He didn't, then we can gather that He instead actually made sure He was there ...at that moment, *on purpose*.

The fact is, this is the longest recorded conversation anyone ever had with Jesus. Even recorded conversations with his apostles! In for a penny, in for a pound, Jesus was here on purpose. For Jesus this quite simply was a way of life. It was what He *did*. Late in this chapter he explained it to his apostles saying "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.*" ([John 4:34](#)) This is what made Jesus "tick." It was not a *sideline* thing...a 2 hours a week service at church. No, this is who He was and just what He wants us to be. It was not a philosophy or credo. He didn't just believe it in his head but in his hands and feet. He didn't just write a check to bless the some people called the Samaritans that he has heard need to find God. He went up there personally. He rubbed shoulders with them. He put Himself out there.

When we read such passages as this, we are reminded of the humanity of Christ. He indeed was all God but He was also all man, and we see that in this account (vs 6) that Jesus was tired. He was tired and He was thirsty and He was still in the game. We so often attribute faithful traits in Christ to His deity and yet we see Him here manifesting a very real humanity and yet still He is faithful! He was Spirit filled and deity enabled to operate through human weakness. In other words, *like us*.