

Women Encountering Jesus- Lesson #4: Woman at the Well

Introduction Questions:

- What makes you feel special?
- What gives you purpose in life?
- Are these things unending? How are they not perfect?
- What if your 'purpose' in life was taken away? What if it didn't exist?
- How would you feel? (note- we will be coming back to this)

John 4:1-42

Background:

- Most Jews did everything they could to avoid traveling through Samaria
- Samaritans were a mixed race. A mixture of Assyrians and Jews
- Going through Samaria was much shorter but most Jews went out of their way to avoid it

Question to ponder/discuss:

- Are there areas like Samaria in the town you live in?
- Areas you avoid?
- Populations you don't want to mix with?
- What are they?

Situation:

- It was noontime
- Jesus was tired
- The Apostles had left to get lunch.
- Jesus was alone

The Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water.

- Why now?
- Why was she alone?

The rest of the women in town drew water in the cool of the morning... together.

This woman was:

- Alone
- Isolated
- Hurting

And then, Jesus asked her for a drink!

The fact that Jesus spoke to this woman was amazing.

There were lots of religious rules a Jew would have been bound by:

- No talking to a woman in public, even your wife
- It was forbidden to greet women
- You could never be alone with a woman
 - o What would people think?
 - o Guilt by association
 - o Avoiding the appearance of evil

Plus, she was a Samaritan!

Jesus crossed many cultural barriers to preach the Good news. Are we prepared to do that?

Think back to the list about people you avoid:

- What can you add to that list?
- What cultural barriers or kinds of people do you avoid?
- What types of people are undesirable? Dangerous?

But wait, there is more.

Jesus approached a Samaritan woman with a lot of past sin.

What must this woman's life have been like?

- Married and discarded five times. **REJECTED**
- Living with a man who was not her husband. **DESPERATE FOR LOVE**
- Public Humiliation
- Isolation

You may know why she was avoiding people. She was trying to avoid getting hurt more.

- But there was longing. *There always is, isn't there?*
- Longing for genuine connection—longing for relationship
 - o 1 good friend
 - o Falling in love
 - o To feel safe with someone
 - o A smile, a hug, a conversation
- We were made to be in relationship with others.
- But then we are vulnerable and can get hurt.
- So, we shut down.

A familiar story:

- Britain's Got Talent
 - o Simon Cowell, Piers Morgan
 - o The next contestant was announced and out walks a dowdy, overweight, badly dressed, bushy eyebrows, middle-aged woman.

- If you search for the video on YouTube you will see a pan of the audience.
 - o People snickering, pointing.
 - o Simon rolls his eyes and asks what this woman will be singing.
 - o 'I Dreamed a Dream' from Les Miserables

You can tell the audience, judges, everyone is prepared for a joke—a public humiliation.

Instead, this woman—Susan Boyle—sings the most emotional, beautiful rendition of the song and immediately becomes the most unlikely overnight sensation.

There are parallels to the woman at the well.

- She was rejected.
- People saw a joke, a failure.

But Jesus saw an opera singer. He saw his Masterpiece.

This is what Jesus sees when he looks at you too!

Living Water

Verses 10-15

Many spiritual functions parallel physical functions.

- Hunger, thirst
- Souls need spiritual food and water

At first the woman was interested in Jesus' message because she thought it would make her life easier.

But here is the rub:

- Christ did not come to take away our challenges but to change us on the inside and empower us to deal with problems from God's perspective.

In this instance, Jesus offers living water—the kind of water only Jesus can offer.

Only Jesus can quench our thirst (refer back to list at the beginning of the class).

What else do we try to quench that thirst? How do we fill that void?

This woman clearly had been trying to fill that void---but she only made it worse.

Verses 16-26

So, Jesus rips the band aid off and confronts her about her sinful past... kind of.

Let's go back to that masterpiece.

- Jesus exposed her
 - o You have to deal with your sin in order to receive the gift
- But he also graciously reached out in love.
- Jesus offered truth and grace, not condemnation.

Do we graciously reach out in love to people who offend our sense of moral decency? Why or why not?

Can you imagine what is going on in her head right now?

- Will kindness cease when the truth is revealed?
- Will he be angry?
- Will he leave?

However, this woman takes a risk and trust Jesus... and then the most amazing thing happens!

Verse 26- Jesus reveals himself as God for the first time to *this* woman

- Reveals himself in a rejected land
- Reveals himself to an ostracized woman

What happens next?

- Apostles return
- Verse 28- The Samaritan Woman becomes the first missionary!

Leaves her water jugs behind!

Water jugs symbolize:

- Burden
- Old life

This woman leaves her old life behind.

She was transformed from a harlot to a heroine.

Verses 39-42- *many souls were saved because of her testimony*

Jeremiah 2:13—talks about broken cisterns

We live in an age where even Christians try to drink deeply from shallow waters.

We thirst and look for substitutes for meaning and purpose.

We continually return to broken cisterns.

Jesus offers:

- *Belonging*: you are needed

- *Intrinsic worth: You know it*
- *Innate value*
- *You are beautiful*
- *A masterpiece*

How do you live like this?

How can we reach out the way Jesus did to give others the opportunity to drink from living water?