

## The Messy Middle: John 4:1-32 // Gospel of John Series

Jason Gaston, Biltmore Church

May 29th, 2022

### Welcome and Intro:

- Intro Self - Announcements if necessary
- Baptism last weekend (Son Parks today!!)
- The Holy Spirit is moving here at Biltmore Church. I hope you see it.

### ALASKA FISHING STORY: LOST COOLERS: LACK OF CARE/CONCERN

*How could such a large company, with so many employees, lose something I cared so much about? They lost my luggage, and were not in a hurry to retrieve it, because they did not place value in it like I had.*

As we come into John 4 in our gospel of John series, we find a story of Jesus encountering a woman that society had placed little to no value on, but Jesus flips the script, and her encounter with Jesus changes everything.

Now, before we go any further, it's important for us to do a little recap on a common theme of what is happening in the gospel of John.

As you traverse the gospel of John, you begin to see a common theme. It's the theme of LIFE: how people search for it, and Jesus' answer to it. Just look at this....

### For Example:

1. John 1:4 "In him was **life...**"
2. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, He who believes in him will have eternal...**LIFE!**"
3. John 3:36 "He who believes in him has **life!**"
4. John 6:35 "I AM the bread of **Life!**"
5. John 10:10 "I have come that they may have **LIFE** and have **LIFE** abundantly"
6. John 11:25 "I AM the Resurrection and **the LIFE**"
7. John 14:6 "I am the WAY, TRUTH, **LIFE!**"
8. John 20:31 "I write these things to you that you may believe in Jesus the Christ, son of God, and that by believing you may have **LIFE!!!**"

As you go about the book, what you see is that Jesus encounters people, over and over again, that are looking for that LIFE, even if they don't know it.

What you find when you come to John 4, is that we stumble upon a woman who has sought her entire life to find hope, grace, love....LIFE. She was just looking in all the wrong places.

Now, it should be fascinating to the reader to see a pattern of what is happening as you get to John 4.

Just a chapter before, in John 3, we have the encounter of Jesus with the great religious leader, Nicodemus. Jesus is in the thick of it, showing the religious and cultural elite, Jewish leader Nicodemus, his great need for the gift of life that comes through the father.

Now, Jesus leaves Jerusalem and begins to head back to Galilee. And the encounter we have of Jesus leaving would have shocked the early reader. A scandal of grace, if you will.

John 4:4 And he had to pass through Samaria. [5] So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [6] Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. [7] A woman from Samaria came to draw water.

- A little context here... The Samaritans were a small, hated community of people in Israel.<sup>1</sup>
  - The hatred and conflict dates back 1000 yrs
  - The Northern part of Israel had seceded from the South, and they went their own way, strayed from God.
  - So, in 722 B.C. God punished them by allowing the Assyrians to conquer them.
  - Now, in those days, when you conquered a people, you didn't want them repopulating themselves and rising up against you to avenge their parents, so what they would do was twofold:
    - 1. They would carry off the majority people into exile, where they would make them slaves and concubines, causing them to lose any distinct culture identity;

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/the-samaritans-hope-from-the-history-of-a-hated-people.html>

*Samaritan history borrowed from JD Greear sermon on John 4.*

- And 2. They would send a bunch of their people into the conquered land to mix with the remnant left there to do the same thing. ○
- Well, bible historians tell us that the Northern kingdom of Israel didn't resist this integration at all; they freely embraced the Assyrians, marrying them and integrating their culture and religion into their Judaism.
- That's what we now know as the Samaritans.
- So, the Southern kingdom of Israel, which thought of themselves as the only real Israel left, viewed the Samaritans as compromisers. They were religious mutts.
- Well, around 100 B.C. a renegade Jew named Manasseh defected to Samaria and established new places of worship around some ancient historic sites in Samaria, places like Jacob's well, claiming the Jewish temple was corrupt.
- So the Samaritans were like a cult. The Samaritans used some of the OT books, like the Pentateuch, but they omitted several that they thought were too pro-Jewish, like the Psalms.
- There was so much disdain between the Jews and Samaritans that if you were trying to get to the Northern part of Israel, rather than going through Samaria, Jews would walk around it...adding 6 days to their journey. But here's why they did that:
- They risked their lives going through Samaria. They could have been killed
- The simple fact of breathing the same air as them would have, in their minds, defiled them DIRTY simply by proximity.

**The woman in this encounter was a Samaritan.** And Jesus was a Jew. And notice the detail about it being the 6th hour when she goes to the well. That's noon.

- The reason she is going then is because she can't go at other times. She's hated by the other women.
- **She is, in the mind of the Jews....filthy. She is, in the mind of her own people, filthy.**
- **She was the lowest of lows according to cultural structures.**

Which is what makes this whole story so shocking, and especially Jesus' next statement: Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)

[9] The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

What you hear in her voice is two fold: Shock and Anger. WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME, and WHY ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

**What you see unfolding right in front of you is the...**

### **1. Scope of Jesus' love and grace.**

As a people, we have developed social networks and ideals. And we live within those constructs day in and day out. Before we jump too far down the 'these people are dumb' train, it's only been 60+ years since we had water fountains, bathrooms, and places for eating that were for whites only, no 'coloreds allowed.'

- It hit every facet of our society. It ran deep. A black man and a white man weren't even allowed to share the same baseball field.

But the gospel EXPLODES those social constructs. It EXPLODES the moral constructs of one being better than the other based on their race, their socio-economic status, and their ability or inability to keep the law.

**Remember, Nicodemus one chapter earlier...the up and up. The elite. The well thought of. He had it all.** He had a house up on the mountain with the gated community, with the perfect view, with the big job that paid the bills **YET** He was in the crosshairs of love and grace.

- ***He was needy even though he had everything he thought he needed.***

**Now, the down and out. The downtrodden. The hated. The despised.** The one holding a cardboard sign on the side of the road, living in a trailer off the beaten path, the one with drug addiction.

**Are you hearing this, church?** The GOSPEL OF GRACE AND LOVE has in it's crosshairs the one that votes on the left side of the aisle and the one that votes on the right side of the aisle.

The GOSPEL OF GRACE AND LOVE has in it's crosshairs the human born into a family of Ivy League graduates to the kid in a village in Southeast Asia that can't read or write.

The scope of the GOSPEL OF GRACE AND LOVE is not a cast net that covers a small pocket in a small pond. It covers the entire ocean of humanity, and everyone is caught in its crosshairs of deep need.

**Hear me very plainly:** the grace and love of God, the gospel, is not just for the family living in the gated community with the great views and the good jobs. The gospel is also for those living in a tent camp somewhere off of Long Shoals road and I-26.

That's important for two reasons:

- ***You and I are never ABOVE nor BELOW the love of God.***
  - We are a needy people.
  - May we never forget that....AND
- ***May it be true of Biltmore Church that we see beyond the social constructs.***
  - ***May we be a people, a church, where***
  - Republicans and Democrats are united in the gospel
  - Where our worship centers AND our connect groups are filled with people of different ethnicities and socio-economic statuses
  - Where the one struggling with their sexual identity is equally pursued as the one with a spouse and 3 kids.

May it be so, Biltmore church. May it be so.

**Let's look now at (2) The DEPTH of Jesus' love and Grace**

**11** "Sir," said the woman, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?" **12** You aren't

greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

• I love this. She's straight up getting Sassy with Jesus. She's like "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!???!!!!"

**13** Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. **14** But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well[f] of water springing up in him for eternal life."

**15** "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

Many theologians have noted right here that one of two things is happening: She's either being sarcastic OR there is a subtle shift of grace happening in her heart. She's opening up.

[16] "Go, call your husband, he told her, and come back here."

**17** "I don't have a husband," she answered.

"You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus said. **18** "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.

Feels like a hard shift, right? I mean, we're talking about water, now we're talking about husbands. Many are probably thinking "SEE! THIS IS WHY THE BIBLE IS SO CONFUSING TO ME." But I actually think the meaning is right there:

- Everyday, this woman came to this well to get water. And she drank that jug that was full, until it was no more and her craving for more water resurfaced.
- So she gets up, and goes back to that same well day in and day out.
- ***In the same way, she has done the same thing with her desire of her flesh. She's gone to man after man after man, hoping to find fulfillment....to find LIFE.*** But that jar of happiness keeps running out.
- She had, just like all of us "an ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure"<sup>2</sup>
- It's a bandaid on a bullet hole.

May I ask, what well are you drinking from that continually leaves you thirsty? Never satisfying. Endless chasing.

- Status within the community?
- Athletic success
- Relationships. (Serial Dater....)
- We're all drinking from wells that will never fully satisfy.

**19** "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. **20** Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

I'm starting to feel a bit sorry for her. She keeps deflecting the conversation to other things. Now she's trying to jump into some questions about worship. She doesn't want this teacher digging up her junk, so she deflects!

<sup>2</sup> CS Lewis, Screwtape Letters, p.44

**She's struggling with the same thing that all of us struggle with....**

- **We all want to be found, but we're afraid to be seen.**

What do we do when we don't really want to be seen? We deflect. We let people close to us, but when they get too close, the walls go up. We don't want to be really seen. We don't want them to see just how bad it is deep down inside that heart of ours.

But the gospel SEES YOU FULLY. Just listen to the Psalmist in Ps 139

Where can I go to escape your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

**8** If I go up to heaven, you are there;

if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

**9** If I fly on the wings of the dawn

and settle down on the western horizon,[a]

**10** even there your hand will lead me;

- Jonah tried to deflect. Ended up in the depths of the belly of a fish, in the deepest parts of the ocean. YET GOD MET HIM THERE
- Joseph, sold into slavery by his family, GOD MET HIM THERE
- Jesus met Nicodemus where he was, he met the Samaritan woman where she was,
- and he meets YOU where you are.

Jesus leaves no stone unturned. His love and grace meets you in your darkest pits and your shallow wells.

**Accutane-** Bad acne in middle and high school. Lots of side affects.

But it was worth a shot. I was desperate.

- Over a few weeks, got progressively worse. Went back to dr
- *“It had to get worse before it got better.”*
- I almost gave up in the middle of what IS currently to what could be EVENTUALLY, because it got hard, messy. But then...it happened. It worked!

**You see, the Samaritan woman was caught in the messy middle.**

She was caught in the middle of that moment of transitioning from the depths of sin into the mountaintops of redemption. And that middle, though painful, was necessary.

**Where are you deflecting where the love and grace of God wants to dig?**

**Jesus continues this discussion with the Samaritan woman, and he begins to break down for her the constructs that people have put up about the worship of God.**

21 Jesus told her, “Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

~~22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews.~~

23 But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth

Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

**25 The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”**

**26 Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”**

**Let’s look briefly at (3) the RESPONSE to Jesus’ Love and Grace**

After Jesus reveals the news that HE IS THAT PROMISED ONE, something happens.

**28 Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”**

Wait for this...don’t miss this!!!!

**39 Now many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of what the woman said<sup>[k]</sup> when she testified, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 41 Many more believed because of what he said.<sup>[j]</sup> 42 And they told the woman, “We no longer believe because of what you said, since we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world.”**

**Jesus took the outcast, and made her a mouthpiece for his glory.**

### Isn't that what God does?

- Paul - Murderer → Church Planter
- David - Shepherd boy → King → Adulterer / Murderer → Man after God's own heart
- **Peter → Denial → Rock upon which Jesus would build his church**
- **Samaritan Woman - Adulterer → Missionary.**

Once you encounter Christ, that's all it takes for you to have a testimony to tell other people to look to Christ, see who Jesus is, see what Jesus has done.

- Jesus isn't after the professional Christian with all the knowledge...You don't have to go to seminary
- He's looking for people that have been rescued from their sins, from the depths of depravity to the mountaintop of grace, that will DECLARE WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE.

### **\*\*LANDING THE PLANE\*\***

So now, full of the gospel of grace and love, we take that same message to the places in our communities and around the world where many won't go. We take the gospel to the people we think are too far gone. We love them as Jesus does. We meet them where they are, just like Jesus did, and we keep meeting them there, day after day, until we see them say "Come and See...taste and see....DRINK from the well of love and grace."

- Repent and Believe. The well of grace is DEEP
- Worship for the deep well of Jesus!

*Now I'm alive to tell the story*

*How I've overcome*

*It's goodness and mercy*

*And the power of the blood  
I'm so glad that my freedom  
Wasn't based on what I've done  
But the goodness and mercy  
And the power of the blood*

**\*\* PRAY\*\***

### **OTHER RESOURCES USED FOR THIS SERMON:**

The following is a list of extended resources (beyond what was quoted in the footnotes) that I visited for insight, thoughts, themes and context for John 4:1-42.

- Christ-Centered Exposition "John" Carter/Wredberg
- All Loves Excelling, John Bunyan Puritan Paperbacks
- Right Color, Wrong Culture, Bryan Lorrits
- Knowledge of the Holy, AW Tozer
- Delighting in the Trinity, Michael Reeves
- How People Change, Lane/Tripp
- Gospel Wakefulness, Jared Wilson