

Sermon John 4, 5-42 Jesus and the Samaritan Woman 8th March 2026

Let's pray: Father God, through your word and by your Holy Spirit, may we hear you speaking to us this morning. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

“I know the Messiah is coming and when he comes, he will explain everything to us” Jesus said to her; ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’

We don't even know her name, but Jesus reveals himself as Messiah to a Samaritan woman whom he engages in conversation on a hot day where they met by a well.

We continue to journey with Jesus this lent, listening to the conversations he is having with different people during his ministry time on earth. Last week it was Nicodemus, a learned Jew and pharisee who was wondering who Jesus was. Jesus spoke a little cryptically about the need to be spiritually reborn and he goes on to share the most amazing message with him. Telling Nicodemus that *God so loved the world that he sent his only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16) But it seems Nicodemus went away still pondering that day.

But in today's passage, Jesus is very clear in his declaration of himself as Messiah...

This woman believed him, and her life was turned around.

As I said last week, lent is a good time to reflect on and refresh our faith, to be spiritually reborn. It is good to ask again the most obvious questions. So...

Have you met the Messiah?

Do you desire his everlasting water? He offers it to all who are thirsty...he offers it to you, even if you don't think you deserve it.

According to the custom of the time, Jesus shouldn't have even been talking to this woman. She was a *woman* and a *Samaritan*, and he was a Jewish man.

I quote from Rabbinic citations;

“One should not talk to a woman on the street, not even with his own wife, and certainly not with somebody else's wife, because of the gossip of men” and– *“It is forbidden to give a woman any greeting.”*

As for being a Samaritan – well in the NIV, John simply states that Jews do not associate with Samaritans, or NRSV, they do not share things in common with them. The reasons for this are historical, dating from the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon and the annexation of the northern territory by the Assyrians in 722-721 BC. The religious

divide was deepened when the Samaritans (as they came to be called) built their own temple at Mount Gerazim around 400 BC.

Basically, the Jews despised the Samaritans and avoided talking to them, so it was quite scandalous that Jesus talked to her as both a woman and a Samaritan. We see the response from the disciples when they return (v 27) *They were surprised to see him talking to a woman.*

This woman would certainly not have been expecting Jesus to greet her at all so when he asks her for a drink she responds – *“You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan Woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”*

Jesus came to show that God’s love is not exclusive – it is for all who will hear, not just the Jews who thought they were God’s only ‘chosen ones’.

Jesus challenges the ‘societal rules’ and he doesn’t seem to mind attracting scandal for the sake of the gospel. Talking to women, healing on the Sabbath, touching and healing a man with leprosy, eating with tax collectors/ sinners and so on.

Jesus constantly broke through barriers that were set up by society. Remember his greatest commandments – love God and love your neighbour as yourself. Sadly, we often judge our neighbours and put ourselves above them. Throughout history we have seen this on a big scale at times, outright racism, and judgment. There are many examples I could use but I love the movie “Hidden Figures” based on the true story of 3 black American women in the 60’s working for NASA. They were treated as second class citizens. In this movie we see the main woman being used for her mathematical genius having to trek half a mile to the coloured building to use the ‘coloured’ bathroom. She was also given a separate coffee pot marked ‘coloured’ so as not to touch the one the white men used.

The head of the Department however, who admired her work, eventually challenged these protocols – and one of my favourite scenes is when he learns of how far she has to walk to use the ‘coloured’ bathroom - he gets a sledge hammer and breaks down all the signs that say ‘coloured only and white only’. He smashes through those racist arrangements much to the dismay of many of the white people around him.

These women were treated very similarly to this woman at the well, they were not respected for being women, especially black women! It is very fitting that we are looking at this passage today on International Women’s Day. While we celebrate women, we are also reminded of how they have not been and in many places are still not treated as equal to men. We think of the oppression of women in places like Iran, and while we grieve and

abhor the current war, pray for all who are suffering, we pray for good to come out of evil, for new leadership and a new regime where women will be given respect and freedom.

Jesus was constantly smashing through the accepted norms and rules of the day to show a different way – a way of respect, love and acceptance. Jesus raises the status of women, he was born of woman, he encourages Mary to sit like a disciple at his feet, he reveals who he is to women...both in this passage and after his resurrection.

Here, he asks this woman, whom he shouldn't be talking to, for a drink. But soon the conversation is turned around and he is offering her a drink instead. A drink of living water. He knows all about her and knows that she is spiritually thirsty.

Verse 13 *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

She may have been a bit confused, thinking initially he was talking about physical water, and she engages him in conversation observing that he doesn't have a bucket, asks if he is greater than Jacob and so on...however, something has triggered a need inside her and she asks for that water –

“Sir give me that water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus responds rather strangely to her request... *“Go call your husband”*, the woman responds, *“I have no husband”*, and Jesus then tells her that he knows that she has had five husbands and the man she is now with is not her husband.

We tend to assume that this Samaritan woman is an immoral woman who has had many men. That is generally how she has been portrayed, but Jesus is just stating the facts, we don't know the details.

Biblical scholar and author Lynne Cohick, who I heard speak at Ridley College, suggests that this woman is *‘a woman of her times, living with fairly simple marriage traditions, relatively easy divorce, and haunted at the threat that death might at any time steal away a husband or child.’* A woman had little power in those days – it is possible she may have been widowed a couple of times and divorced and may be now is a concubine – through no choice of her own. The thing is Jesus knows her situation whatever it was – he knows her pain and her suffering (she may have been ostracised by her community, hence why she was collecting water in the middle of the day on her own) and he knows her sin and he loves her just the same and offers her this life-giving water.

She is amazed that he knows all about her...in fact at this she calls him a prophet, having previously referred to him as a 'Jew' and 'Sir'. A discussion follows about the difference between the views of the Jews and the Samaritans – and then she says, as we have heard, in verse 25:

“I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus declared, *“I the one speaking to you – I am he.”*

Wow!! Jesus breaks through barriers of culture, race, and religion and reveals himself to her. An unknown Samaritan woman is the first person that he clearly reveals himself to – saying “I am the Messiah”. I am your deliverer, the promised one. I am the one offering springs of living water. I am the one offering unconditional love. I am the one offering eternal life.

Jesus offers us this life-giving water today. What is this living water?

Later, in John chapter 7 when he is teaching at the Feast of the tabernacles Jesus cries out in a loud voice – verse 39,

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

God himself had been described as the 'fountain of living waters' in Jeremiah 2 and from the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 36 as I touched on last week, we see the theme of water to underlie the teaching on 'new birth' of 'water and the spirit'. (*“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you.”*)

Jesus fulfils this prophecy – he cleanses us and fills us with his spirit – his living water.

In Isaiah 55 the prophet says, 'Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters'. Hear Jesus' call today – Come to the well, all who are thirsty and drink.

What is the Samaritan woman's response at Jesus' revelation?

She believes him with no further questions asked...

The disciples return with looks of dismay no doubt – but she is not perturbed because she has just been told by this Jewish man that he is the Messiah!!

At verse 28 we read; She *'leaves her water jar* (this living water she has been offered is so much more important than the water she had come to get) *went back to town* (I imagine her running) and says to the people, *"Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.'*

Later in verse 39 we read that *'Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony' and ... 'now we have heard for ourselves we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.'*

This woman is an evangelist. For centuries these people had been told they were second class people in the eyes of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, shut out of God's mercy. But here was Jesus showing scandalous, unconditional love – and it is this group of people who come to believe in him as their Saviour – while many Jewish leaders remained stubborn and blind.

Jesus continues to reveal himself to people and fill them with his spirit. James and I were in the office on Wednesday when a young man, representing Origin Energy, came in to ask if we wanted to look at a better electricity deal. We kindly told him that our treasurer had looked at and changed providers last year. This young man, Anthony, then asked if there was a Priest around. I put up my hand, and he asked me to pray for him. We had a discussion around a few issues and then I prayed. God was drawing this young man to himself and he was responding, seeking to be filled with and follow Jesus.

The unnamed Samaritan woman and the townspeople met Jesus and their lives were changed, they put their trust in him, recognising Jesus as their Saviour and the Saviour of the world.

What about you? What is your response? Are you thirsty for Jesus?

Do you need to meet Jesus afresh, do you meet him in these words of scripture? Have you asked for his life- giving water? If not, talk to Jesus, or talk to me or someone else here today that we might pray for you. He knows all about you, just like he knew that woman at the well, and he loves you just the same and he longs to fill you with his spirit of living water.

Let us pray: Loving God, we thank you that you sent Jesus to be our Messiah, our rescuer from all that causes us to be separated from you. Where we are broken in sin and pain, where we feel dry and thirsty, Lord come heal us and fill us with your life-giving spirit. May we worship you in spirit and truth and be so excited about knowing you that we want to run and share with others the truth of who you are that they too may come to know you.

In the precious name of Jesus, the Saviour of the World, I pray. Amen.