

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Jesus and the Woman at the Well*

SERIES: *Jesus and Women*

SCRIPTURES: *John 4:2-11*

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**Credit to Ken Bailey*

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you today.

We are in the fifth and final week of our series called Jesus and women (**sermon graphic**). Hopefully one of the overriding themes you have picked up on in this series is the significance of Jesus inclusion of women in his ministry and his band of followers and as examples of great faith.

In addition, each week, we've also been highlighting some of the noteworthy themes related to great faith.

Great faith is marked by taking time to sit at Jesus feet as a disciple.

Great faith is marked by perseverance, costly love, suffering with those who are hurting, listening to sinners.

This morning we have one final encounter.

I. Jesus and the woman at the well.

So if you have a Bible turn with me...we are headed to John chapter 4.

The longest single recorded conversation Jesus has with an individual in all of Scripture is the Samaritan woman at the well.

Jesus is leaving Judea and heading to Galilee. Let's pick up the story in verse 4...

“Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.^[a])

Now just a little bit of background here to help you understand the significance of this story. **(MAP of Judea/Samaria - Sychar/Galilee)**

Jesus is leaving Judea and headed for Galilee and you can see that the shortest route is to pass right through Samaria. However, many pious Jews would take a path, that goes around Samaria.

First of all a little bit about Samaritans.

A. Jewish Samaritan Rivalry.

About 700 years before Jesus, the Assyrian Empire came in and took over much of the Jewish territory and deported many, but not all, of the Jews living there. And then they settled the land with “outsiders...non-Jews”.

Now this was a problem for the Jews because God had given the Jews a very specific warning. This is in **Deuteronomy 7- When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess...**³ **Do not intermarry with them...** (why?) ⁴ **for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods,**

In other words, don't intermarry or you may be persuaded to mix your faith with the pagan religions of the outsiders.

And this is exactly what happened. As the years passed, the Jews who did not get deported, began to inter-marry and mix their faith with these outsiders. This intermarrying and mixing of faiths group...became called "Samaritans." And so many pious Jews, considered the Samaritans to be "**contaminated half-breeds.**" A very derogatory sort of view.

For the next several hundred years there was fighting between Jews and Samaritans.

For example, the Samaritan's had their temple, on Mt. Gerizim (**PIC of Mt Gerizim location**) very close to Sychar, they believed this to be the place where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Isaac. So, this was their holy site. The Jews had their temple in Jerusalem. And there was all of bickering about which temple location was more sacred.

On one occasion the Jews went in and smashed the Samaritan Temple. The Samaritans responded by penetrating the Jewish Temple area (**PIC**) and scattering dead bones all throughout the Temple on the eve of the Jewish Passover...defiling the entire sacred Temple, and making it impossible for the Jews to celebrate Passover.

Back when I was in college I went to Messiah, big soccer school. And our arch-rivals were from just up the road. Elizabethtown College. Both big time soccer programs. Played each other once every year. One of the unique things about this rivalry is that

it was often referred to as the Marshmallow battle. Fans from both teams would bring...bags of marshmallows to the game and pelt each other with marshmallows. And I'm not talking about a couple marshmallows here and there, I'm talking the stadium, walkways and even out onto the field covered in marshmallows. **(PIC OF FIELD)**. When you walked back to your car after the game, your shoes would have a layer of sticky marshmallow stuck to the bottom.

Most of the time it was all in good fun. But every once in a while some fans would get out of hand. I remember some fans started sucking on the marshmallows before throwing them. And one time, a fan smuggled in a frozen fish and threw across the bleachers. For a few years, marshmallows and flying objects were banned. But fans, even good Christian Messiah fans, would smuggle marshmallows in under their clothes.

The Jewish Samaritan rivalry had a similar flavor, but even much more serious.

This is why many pious Jews took the long way around Samaria and so it's kind of surprising that, "Jesus passed through Samaria..."

And this also why the Samaritan woman is shocked that Jesus is talking to her. We are bitter enemies, rivals...we don't associate.

Second...notice the story says...

B. It was about Noon.

It was about noon. ⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water,

And the question is, why is she here at noon and why she is traveling alone? Most women traveled in groups. And often went earlier in the morning or later in the day, to fetch water, so as to avoid the heat of the day.

A Samaritan woman, alone, at mid-day is not common. Many scholars suggest, it's possible that the woman's promiscuity (which we don't learn about until later in the story) has made her an outcast among her people.

Once again, Jesus breaking down social and religious barriers.

Jesus set aside all of the bitterness of past history as he requested a simple drink from this Samaritan woman.

Jesus just had a way of setting aside hostility, bickering, grudges, hatred...the rivalry in order to reach out to hurting and marginalized people with Good News that Kingdom of God has arrived on earth.

But perhaps most important, and what I would really like for us to notice is "the way" in which Jesus reaches out to this woman. His method. We might call this the

C. Way of Vulnerability

Jesus establishes his relationship with the woman...not through his superior intellect or great piety, not by control or power but...**through vulnerability.**

Check this out...In order to reach out to this woman...**Jesus first of all chooses to enter her world.** He goes right into enemy territory, Samaria, to meet her and speak with her; he allows her "home-court advantage."

But there's more here related to the vulnerability of Jesus. Did you pick on this?

...Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

Jesus comes to the well...in the heat of the day, worn out, thirsty, hungry, weak...vulnerable.

In John's Gospel, we see this all over the place...Jesus weeps, falls asleep, get's tired and hungry. Jesus comes into our world, fully human.

One of the reasons we relate to Jesus, is that though fully divine, he was fully human. Jesus enters our world and even becomes dependent on us. **A babe in a manger is the ultimate example of one who comes in need of those for whom He comes.**

Jesus does not establish his relationship with the woman, first by explaining how she needs him and his message. Instead his opening line to her is: “I am weak and need help. Can you help me?”

Jesus request is genuine. He is thirsty and he has no bucket. She is the person who can help. She has something important to give. He elevates her status, he ascribes value and worth to the woman.

This vulnerability that we see and experience in Jesus becomes a vital tool in developing trusting, meaningful relationships with others.

Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful human experiences. (Brene Brown)

One of the times in my life I remember really feeling vulnerable and weak was the first time I started thinking about holding a girls hand. Because there is no instruction manual for how it's supposed to work, what you are supposed to say or

do. Back when Jenny and I were in 9th grade we went on our first date. It was just the two of us. There was a group from school going to a movie and so we went together, but with the group. And we went to the movie theater in Waynesboro to see the new Star Wars movie...and I remember I was so nervous and I had those “butterflies” in my stomach.

Anyway, as we were sitting there watching the movie I noticed Jenny had her hand out on the arm of her seat...like this. I was already feeling a little vulnerable as it was and I had never held a girls hand before. And maybe some of you guys can relate with me on this...I didn't really know what you were supposed to do or how it worked. Like do you just grab her hand or do you wait for her to make it obvious. What if she pulls her hand away? What if I get rejected? What if my hands feel funny to her? What if I start to sweat? Holding someone's hand like that the first time, is incredibly vulnerable. But I remember sitting there the entire movie thinking, “just grab her hand” and my palms were sweaty. And we went through the entire evening and I never held her hand. It wasn't until about a month later, that I finally built up the courage, became vulnerable enough to reach out and take her hand in mine. But that vulnerability is what opens the door for deep and meaningful relationship.

The people with whom you are closest, are also the ones with whom you have been most vulnerable, open, authentic? They are the ones who know you snore when you sleep, what your morning breath smells like and sing off key in the shower.

And when you feel like someone is not being vulnerable with you, it's hard to trust them isn't it? You're unsure of what their motives are? You wonder if they have some agenda.

Theologian, Daniel T. Niles, writes...Jesus:

He was a true servant because He was at the mercy of those whom He came to serve...This weakness of Jesus, we His disciples must share...The only way to build love between two people or two groups of people is to be so related to each other as to stand in need of each other. The glory of the Lion is the glory of the Lamb.”

Vulnerability becomes the mode in which we communicate and share the life of Jesus with others.

It's a matter of our approach, our posture. We don't go to the un-churched, as if they need what we have. I have answers you need me. Instead we approach conversations about life and faith from this posture of humility and vulnerability. This fosters an openness and relationship building that develops trust.

There was a time where unchurched people came to the church or a service in order to meet Jesus and hear about Jesus and consider the Jesus way of life. But it seems to me that in today's world, many un-churched people are suspicious of the church, the building, the service and the institutional nature of the religion and it makes them uncomfortable it puts them on edge.

And I just wonder if many un-churched people are more likely to consider Jesus and his way of life in circumstances outside of the building and the worship service.

All too often, I think we have fallen in the mode of thinking that we need to get people into our building so they can meet Jesus on our terms. I wonder if Jesus might say, perhaps...first, enter their world. Find a way to meet people on their home turf. And, perhaps as they see Jesus at work in your life, outside of here, perhaps they would be a little more willing, then to consider Jesus.

The first mission trip in Christian History is found in **Mark 6:7-13**, where Jesus sends out his 12 disciples...and they were instructed to **“take nothing with you.”** They were to go in need of the people to whom they went.

Folks, this is the nature of the upside down Kingdom of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 12 - ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”...¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I would just encourage, if you are wondering, how you can begin meaningful conversations about your spirituality and following Jesus...the best way to begin is talking about your own life story, in all of it’s messiness, good and bad and how Jesus showed up along the way to love you.

It is within that context, his own vulnerability, that Jesus opens the door to have a profound conversation with this woman about

II. Water of Eternal life.

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks 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.”

15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Let’s just look at the water welling up to eternal life.

A few months ago, Jenny and I were away on a trip, without our children. And we went to visit the legendary **fountain of youth (PIC)**. The legend is...if you drink this water, you will never grow old. Ponce De Leon was supposedly in search of this fountain of youth in the 1500’s and that’s when he discovered Florida...which is now home to one of the biggest retirement communities in our country. Makes you wonder if towards the end of life, everyone is still searching for the waters of eternal youth. Anyway, Jenny and I visited. And you can drink from the fountain of youth.

And as any good parent would, we thought it would be kind of neat to mess with our kids. And so we found a filter on our phones that makes you look younger than what you actually...and we took these images and sent them back to our kids. We said look what this water did to us...Keagan was a little nervous about having a father who looked as young him.

(PIC OF JENNY AND SHAUN YOUNGER)

Obviously such a fountain of eternal youth does not exist. But oh for a water that would well up in eternal life and that’s what Jesus offers.

Just highlight two aspects of Jesus’ living water that wells up to eternal life...

First of all,

A. Eternal nature of Jesus' water.

We live in a world today with still much confusion and uncertainty and speculation related to the afterlife. There is much we don't know about the afterlife and about eternity and what heaven will be like.

Woody Allen wrote that he didn't mind the thought of dying; he just didn't want to be there when it happened.

There are two tombstones that kind of highlight this. One marks the resting place of Mel Blanc, the famous voice of countless characters Looney Toons cartoons. In accordance with his instructions his the words on his tombstone are the same words he said to end a thousand cartoons: **"That's all folks."**

Then there's another described by Philip Yancey. It marks the grave of a friend's grandmother and her tombstone simply reads... **"Waiting."** Waiting to be welcomed into my eternal home. In other words, it's not over yet, death isn't the end.

Even in the ancient Jewish world there were varying perspectives on the afterlife.

Maybe you've heard this before one differences between the **Sadducees** and the **Pharisees**...is that the Pharisees believed in an afterlife and the Sadduccess did not...that is why they were so **sad-u-see**.

But the real question, is there more than this life? Are you living for more than just what takes place here or is this all there is? And what you believe about the answer to that question impacts how you choose live your life here and now.

In this world, death robs us of those we love. Children still go hungry. Refugees still have no place to live. Young girls sold into sex trafficking. We lose our jobs or our

dreams or our loved ones. Our bodies age and decay. Every time I skip a day shaving those little white hairs that didn't used to show up begin to show up. And the hair on the top of my head keep moving further back. It's these little reminders that my body is headed for decay. Is that all there is?

Jesus said no. Jesus came offering hope about the afterlife.

He claims to offer water welling up to "eternal life."

He says things like, **"In my father's house are many rooms, and I will take you to be with me."**

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;

And so, I do think that part of what Jesus is getting at here, with "water welling up to eternal life" is a certain sense of peace and hope that one day God's absolute best for this world will be fully realized.

We often refer to it as heaven. And there's a lot of confusion about heaven, but simply put heaven is life with God...where God's will is always done...where things are set right once and for all.

It's perspective about life, that there is more than just what we are able to see and comprehend and understand.

And it is sometimes hard to explain...but we trust Jesus. We trust the words of the one who died and came back to life. This eternal perspective is sometimes what gives us hope, peace, joy...it's part of the water welling up to eternal life that we experience as we give our lives to Jesus.

B. Eternal life...today.

And then, second, Jesus seems to be offering the eternal life water to the woman, right here and right now. It's not just an afterlife, future, when this life comes to an end that you begin to taste the eternal water.

Jesus was telling the woman, you can taste it now. It's not about you getting to heaven some day when you die, but it's also about getting heaven into you right now.

Jesus prayed, "Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

In fact, when the New Testament writers talk about eternity and heaven it's usually not about a place you'll get to in the future some time...but a way of living you can begin to experience here and now and then it just never ends.

The one time Jesus define eternal life he said (John 17), **Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**

The way you begin to taste the water of eternal life here and now, is to make your life about knowing, loving and following Jesus.

"In the midst of our groaning, eternal life has slipped into our temporal world now through the carpenter of Nazareth." (Ortberg)

I was kind of thinking that so many of us settle for the temporary water that this world has to offer us here and now...in hopes that the water will quench our thirst. And it comes all kinds of flavors...

It appears that for the woman in this story...she thought men, multiple men would be the thing to quench her thirst.

For some the water is wealth.

For some it's success.

For some it's family.

It's a hobby.

And in many cases there's nothing wrong with these waters and they do satisfy us for a certain amount of time. But it seems that this kind of water usually never fully quenches. The wealth is never quite enough. The success is never quite enough. The family never fully fulfills.

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” (Lewis)

Jesus says, trade your mud pies for a holiday at the sea; trade your temporary water for my eternal water; trade your decaying life for my abundant life. Start right here, right now, today.

One author writes...

“No one yet knows how deeply humanity in this world can enter into the peace and love of eternity. You can make your life a great experiment in this adventure.”