

Message: They Marveled...
Sermon Series: Helping Others Follow Jesus
By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison
John 4:27-42

The “Woman at the Well” was an unbelievable story to people in the days of Jesus. It freaked out His disciples. In fact, they marveled that He would talk to this woman (but no one questioned Him about it). It was wrong on numerous levels. She is a Samaritan and the Jews hated Samaritans. “The Good Samaritan” is an oxymoron—the only “good” Samaritan would have been a dead Samaritan according to the conventional wisdom of the day. The Samaritans were Jews who fell away from following the true God and worshipped false gods when the Assyrians conquered and intermarried with several of their tribes (in 722 BC). Jews often refused to travel through Samaria (north of Jerusalem). Jesus was crossing another taboo when He spoke to a woman. To have a public conversation with a woman would have been improper then. Furthermore, she was a woman with a sexual history. That is why she was drawing water in the heat of the day—NOBODY would want to be seen with her. She was despised. Her reputation was loathsome.

Jesus spoke to the “wrong” people. He ate and drank with them, too. He didn’t kiss up to the proper folks. He boldly took risks. **He believed that every person had sacred worth and was worthy of being loved, accepted and forgiven. He never compromised His message. He said certain things were right and certain things were wrong. While Jesus used judgment, He didn’t condemn people. He told them the truth and invited them to follow Him, regardless of their past. He invited them to be freed from sin.**

APPLICATION: Consider Jesus’ inclusive nature after reading all of John 4 this week. How are you doing with people outside the faith? How easily are you shocked or offended by what people do or have done? As a recipient of God’s kindness, are you stingy with it or do you relish sharing it with abundance? Are you able to include others in God’s love despite their behavior? For whom have you prayed to receive God’s love and grace? Who have you made smile today?

Jesus didn’t always multiply loaves and fish, so He sent His disciples to the grocery store. He always did the unexpected. He shocked them when He spoke to a Samaritan woman. To Jews then, all Samaritans were outcasts. Though they were

of the same family (Abraham), they were up north and felt it was too far to travel to go to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple and so they built their own place of worship. The Jews felt the Jerusalem Temple was divinely inspired and this was terribly wrong to worship elsewhere. His message of inclusivity extended to their whole race, to this town and even to her. She didn't start the religious quarrel but was brought into it.

John 4:27-42

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"

²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

³¹ **Meanwhile** the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, **lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.** ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that 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 And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

"Just then..." She not only was a Samaritan, but her 2nd strike = a woman living in a male-dominated culture. 3rd strike = her sexual history – she had been in several relationships and was living with someone she wasn't married to. Jesus often knocked down barriers and built bridges, especially with people who were marginalized. She bonded with Jesus and received His grace. It was life-changing for her inclusion. She became an evangelist and went back into town to tell that Jesus was the Christ and He was right there in Samaria. This is another Mary Magdalene, "go tell the disciples" moment. An outcast, a woman of Samaria, became the bearer of good news.

“Meanwhile” – Jesus has thoroughly confounded and perplexed His disciples. They are shocked about a woman of Samaria (and they don’t know about her 3rd strike) but they don’t push the envelope. They are also confused when He says He has food they didn’t know about. He said His food is to do God’s will.

Jesus’ message:

1.) He believed everyone had sacred worth and was worth love, acceptance and forgiveness. Jesus was inclusive of **ALL** people. Jew, Gentile, rich, poor, sick, well, religious, pagan, reputable He didn’t shun her – He talked to her. He treated her like a person. Jesus was on a mission – “to seek and save the lost.” This was confusing to the disciples – how could Samaritans be included in this? Jonah had struggled with this earlier in the Bible when he didn’t want to preach to the Assyrians. The early church wrestled with this in Acts when they had to determine if a person must become a Jew before can becoming a Christian.

2.) Jesus would not **COMPROMISE** His mission and message. He was **INCLUSIVE** of people, but **EXCLUSIVE** about behavior She knew right from wrong. “Love the person – hate the sin.” In Romans 1, Paul describes sinful behavior. However, he pivots in chapter 2 and describes the hypocritical attitude of the religious. His 2-fold conclusion: ALL have sinned + need a Savior. Rom 5:8 God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 6:23 for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3.) Jesus gave an **INVITATION** (not condemnation). *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

*“Look at me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call & open the door, I’ll come right in and sit down to supper with you.” **Revelation 3:20** (The Message)*

A Lauren Daigle song, **“You Say,”** describes “identity” I think this speaks to the Samaritan’s woman life. Before it is sung, let me read the words to you:

I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough

Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up

Am I more than just a song of every high and every low

Remind me once again just who I am because I need to know

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing You say I am strong when I think I am

weak And you say I am held when I am falling short And when I don't belong, oh

You say I am Yours And I believe. Oh I believe What You say of me. I believe The

only thing that matters now is everything You think of me In You I find my worth,

in You I find my identity Jesus didn’t just tolerate her – he talked to her and let

her know she belonged, too. She found someone who loved her, forgave her and

invited her to drink from His supply of water that never would run dry. His inclusion of her as a person helped lead to her new identity. To everyone else, she was a reject. To J, she was of sacred worth.

Maybe you feel like a reject – like this woman. Did you know Jesus offers you a new identity in Him, too?

APPLICATION: There's a second level of application here. *lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.* Jesus said, "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes..." Could He have been gesturing toward the people of the town who were coming to see if the Christ was among them. If so, the "harvest" would have literally walking toward them.

Suppose the QB on football team calls a play in the huddle. The players applaud and slap him on the back and then run to the bench and start drinking Gatorade and eating snacks. A few minutes later they run back onto the field and tell the QB to call another play. They tell him he's a great play-caller, ask him to call another play and when he does, they again applaud, slap him on the back and run back to the bench for more Gatorade and snacks. At some point you say, "The point is not listening to the QB CALL the play – the point is to RUN the play. And for the play to work, everyone on the team needs to do their part."

My role is to call the play. I didn't invent the playbook – I got it from the head coach. I can be good at play calling (or not), but the bottom line is that we are to live up to our mission: "Helping Others Follow Jesus." Jesus is our model. He broke down cultural and religious barriers by treating a person with sacred worth, by asking questions, listening to her and then inviting her to drink from a greater source than she had ever known. THAT is our message, too.

I'm all for Bible Studies and classes. I want you to come to worship and invite others to be here, too. I want people to grow deep in their faith. That's very important. But I also want us to grow wide in our outreach and ministry. Jesus was on a mission – He came to reach the lost. He invites us to join Him on that mission, too.

Be a Friend. Ask Good Questions.

Offer Something Relevant. Offer Good News. Offer them Christ.