

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

“Come to the Well”

John 4:1-15

Turn with me in your Bibles to John Chapter 4. We are going to look at a very familiar portion of the Scriptures for the next few studies. It is the story of the woman at the well. Let's read the first 15 verses and then see what the Lord has for us in this great passage of Scripture. Beginning at verse 1 John writes:

¹Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ²(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴But He needed to go through Samaria.

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, **“Give Me a drink.”** ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”**

¹¹The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

¹³Jesus answered and said to her, **“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”**

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¹⁵The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

Question: Do Christians think anything is coincidental?

Not really. Listen to what *Got Questions* says about the Bible and coincidences:

*The word coincidence is used only once in the New Testament, and it was by Jesus Himself in the [parable of the Good Samaritan](#). In [Luke 10:31](#), Jesus said, “And by a coincidence a certain priest was going down in that way, and having seen him, he passed over on the opposite side.” The word coincidence is translated from the Greek word *synkyrian*, which is a combination of two words: *sun* and *kurios*. *Sun* means “together with,” and *kurios* means “supreme in authority.” So a biblical definition of coincidence would be “what occurs together by God’s providential arrangement of circumstances.”*

What we have instead of what the Word calls a *coincidence*, we would call a God-incidence. Such is the passage in front of us. What might seem like a happenstance meeting between Jesus and a woman who was collecting water is really a divine appointment.

Have you ever had one of those?

I am going to share one of mine with all of you; but after I finish, if someone else has a story to share, I will make time.

Many of you know that Julia and I were missionaries in Nicaragua. Some of you also know the reason we left. One day I was taking some children from the orphanage to a farm that we had in a village a few miles away. I was driving an old Ryder rental truck that had seats in back for the kids. When I went to turn left into the farm, two men on a motorcycle tried to pass me. They clipped the front end of the truck and went endo into a concrete ditch that went along the road. One of them died immediately. The other survived the crash, but he eventually succumbed to his injuries. I was found innocent of any wrongdoing, but some of the people still wanted me to pay, and they threatened my life. So we came home. But here is the divine appointment in the whole thing:

The man that survived for a short while was the husband of a woman who went to the same church we did while there. And they had been praying for this guy’s salvation for many years. But God...

When I saw him lying there in the ditch, the Holy Spirit came upon me and prompted me to share the Gospel with him. And He gave me the words in Spanish to do so in a way

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this man could understand. I believe he got saved that day. He confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus and believed that God raised Him from the dead, just like the Bible says.

God took what was a very ugly situation and used it for His glory. It was a true God-incidence.

Does anyone else want to share an appointment the Lord made for them?

The story of the woman at the well is a God-incidence that illustrates how God moves in this world. As we shall see, the Holy Spirit took Jesus away from the work He and His disciples were doing in Judea for a particular purpose. Look at verses 1-3:

¹Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ²(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

As we talked about last time, Jesus and His disciples had set up shop in Judea and were baptizing people. Some 20 miles away John the Baptist and his disciples were doing the same thing. A dispute arose between John's people and some Jews about the way they were baptizing. There was also an issue because more people were going to see what Jesus was doing, and John's ministry was decreasing. But this was fine with John. He realized that he must decrease, and Jesus must increase.

So why did Jesus break camp?

Three reasons.

John says that Jesus did not yet want to confront the Pharisees (He will later).

It was also because there was work to be done, ostensibly in Galilee. That is where most of Jesus' ministry took place.

And lastly, Jesus was headed for a meeting with a woman at a well in Samaria.

The land of Israel is divided into three regions:

Judea, where Jesus and His disciples were doing the baptizing is in the south.

Galilee is in the north.

And a place called Samaria was in the middle.

The easiest and most direct route to get to Galilee was through this region. But good Jews would never go that way.

Why?

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Because “those people,” the Samaritans, lived there; and the Jews hated them.

In 722 BC when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, they exiled almost all the Jewish population (as was their custom). All they left behind were the people who tended the land (they didn't want to lose these resources). They then introduced other peoples into the land who co-mingled with the leftover Jews. In the eyes of the people who returned to Israel after the dispersion, these people were half-breeds. So they were not allowed to worship in the Temple. Because of this, the Samaritans, as they became to be known, built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Although they still believed in the Pentateuch (the first five books of Moses), they changed the stories. They believed the Garden of Eden was on this mountain. Noah's ark landed there. And it was at Gerizim that Abraham offered Isaac. During the revolt of the Maccabees, their temple was destroyed, but their religion remained. Of course, this did not sit well with the Jews.

So Jesus, the Jewish Rabbi, had a choice to make — or did He?

Look at verse 4:

But He needed to go through Samaria.

Does anyone have a KJV Bible?

How does verse 4 read in that translation?

And he must needs go through Samaria.

Like in chapter 3, John writes that something “**must**” happen.

Jesus does not go around Samaria. He heads straight through the middle, headed not just for Galilee, but for an appointment the Father made for Him. What John is going to share with us is a classic illustration of how to witness and share our faith. If you contrast this account with what John wrote in chapter 3 about Jesus witnessing to Nicodemus, you can learn much.

Nicodemus was a religious man and a leader of his people. The woman at the well is nameless and as we shall see, immoral.

Nicodemus calmly contemplated what Jesus said. The woman will be a fiery debater.

Jesus speaks with Nicodemus in the cool of the night. He meets this woman in the heat of the day.

In John 3 Nicodemus seeks out Jesus and initiates the conversation. In John 4 Jesus heads straight to this divine appointment, and He begins the conversation.

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Nicodemus seemingly does not come to know Jesus on that day they met. The woman at the well does, and she then becomes His witness.

This tells us a few things when it comes to evangelism:

- There is no recipe for success — no pattern or best way to do it.
- There is no best time to evangelize.
- And, we are to share with everyone, anywhere, any time.

The Apostle Peter put it this way in 1 Peter 3:15:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Jesus obeyed the urging of the Holy Spirit to go through Samaria, and He found there at the well a woman in need. Let's take a look at the well that He came to (verses 5-6):

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The sixth hour in Hebrew time would be high noon; in Roman time it would be 6:00 pm. There is some debate as to which John was using. I believe it was Jewish time; because at 6:00 many women would have been there to collect water. They typically did so in the morning and evening. Hanging out at the water well was a social thing for the women of Jesus' time.

But this woman was alone. I believe that she wanted to avoid the other women because, as we shall see, she was living in sin. So she not only was one of "those people," the Samaritans, who the Jews despised, she was also a social outcast among these same people. Later we will meet the Good Samaritan. This woman was the bad one. The women of her city most likely looked down their noses at her. But not the LORD.

Jesus and His disciples had hiked steep terrain for hours to get to the outskirts of this city in the mountains of Samaria. He is willing to do whatever it takes to reach out to the least, the last, and the lost. We should be willing to do this as well. We have talked about this before, but what is the difference between us and the lost?

We are forgiven.

The church is a sickbed for sinners and not a sanctuary for saints.

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Every one of us had one thing in common before we came to trust Jesus for salvation. We were hopelessly lost in our sin and headed for an eternity without Him. So we must have compassion for those who don't know Him, especially now, because time is short. But for the grace of God we would be just as lost and without hope as they are.

So Jesus, very man as well as very God, sat by the well. [By the way, Jacob's well still stands. It is one of the few verifiably authentic biblical sites that we have (although some debate it). Unfortunately, it is now located in the West Bank which is a dangerous place to visit.] There are two reasons why Jesus sat there.

First, He was tired. Hebrews 2:11 tells us that Jesus was made just like us, fully human. He knows what it feels like to be bone tired and experience hunger and thirst. He also knows that He is the only well that can truly quench our spiritual weariness and thirst. Later in His ministry Jesus is going to cry out to His people saying this (Matthew 11:28-29):

²⁸Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

The second reason that Jesus sat there is because He was waiting for someone who was heavy-laden and needed the rest He has to offer. Look at verses 7-8:

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Jesus wasn't the only one who was looking for refreshment. His disciples headed into town to buy some fast food, maybe McDonald's or Wendy's. One must wonder if they passed by this woman on the way.

Did they step aside and let her pass?

Did they notice her at all?

We don't know, but it is interesting to me that John calls her a "**woman of Samaria.**" It is kind of like he is saying she is a "*woman of the world.*" Maybe I'm reading too much into this; but as we shall see, they will be amazed that the Lord is speaking with her. And speak with her He does.

He asks her to draw Him a drink. This is mind blowing when you realize that a Jewish rabbi would not speak to any woman in public, not even his own wife. It is also unusual that a Jew would want to drink from the cup of a Samaritan. So what we have here is at

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the least odd, but more likely unprecedented; and it catches this woman somewhat off guard. Look how she responds (verse 9):

Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Why wasn't Jesus a gentleman here?

Why doesn't He offer to draw a drink for her?

Two reasons, I think.

First, He wants her to give something to Him. He really doesn't want the water. He wants her heart. He wants her to get saved.

Second, He doesn't want to give her natural water. He wants her to taste from the well of life — Living Water.

That is the way salvation works. All we have to offer Jesus is ourselves. We give Him our heart, and He makes it new. Look at verse 10:

Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

What did Paul tell us about the gift of God?

Romans 6:23, right!

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Lord wasn't offering this woman water. He was offering her a new life. Jesus had a wonderful way of reaching the people He shared with.

To an aging man named Nicodemus, He talked about being born again.

To a blind man, He identified Himself as the **“Light of the world.”**

To two sisters who were grieving the death of their brother, He was the **“Resurrection and the Life.”**

To some fishermen by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He issued an invitation to become **“fishers of men.”**

To us He will become whatever it is that we need in order to come to Him.

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For this woman who had come to the well, she needed **“living water.”** What she needed was to be born from above, just like Nicodemus and all the rest of us.

But there was a problem in her thinking. She did not know who Jesus was. She had no idea what He had to offer her. And she did not understand how she could receive it. But she was interested to find out, thus she continued the conversation. Look at verses 11-12:

¹¹The woman said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?”

Much like Nicodemus, when he asked Jesus if he needed to crawl back into the womb, this woman confused the spiritual with the natural. Instead of looking inward to see how bankrupt she was spiritually, she points to Jesus. Rather than simply asking Him to give her a drink of the **living water**, she focuses on how He would obtain it. He had no instrument with which to draw it.

The well was deep, so how was Jesus going to dip from it?

And, by the way, who does He think He is?

Is He better than Jacob who drank from this same water?

At this point the woman is not looking for an answer. She is trying to get into a debate. This is often how it goes when we share with people. They look for an argument rather than listen to what you have to say about Jesus. But the Lord does not get thrown off track. He doesn't engage in some debate over who is greater. The woman will figure that out in a moment. He just drills down on the fact that He alone has what SHE needs. Look what He says to her (verse 13):

Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,

Later in the chapter we are going to talk about the well she had been drawing and drinking from. But all that water did was make her more thirsty. Unfortunately, she kept returning to that well (six times). That is what sin does to us.

This so makes me think of Samuel my son's birth mother, Kim. She very much loved Sam. But she loved crack cocaine more. So she would come into his life for a while and try to be his mother. But then she would return to the well, that deep well of sin, and draw from it again. Jail didn't stop her. AIDS didn't stop her. Even the possibility of losing her son didn't stop her. She knew where to get **“Living Water.”** Many people, including Julia and me, had witnessed to her over the years. But instead of drinking

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freely, she just kept going back to the well like a dog returning to its vomit. Most likely she died in her sin. She probably never did what Jesus says next (verse 14):

but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The bottom line here is that physical stuff can never satisfy a spiritual need. No matter what you do, it can never satisfy what you truly need — everlasting life.

That is the water that Jesus has to offer. When we drink it, our lives become like an artesian well, bubbling up with joy. Later in chapter 7 of John’s Gospel, Jesus is going to build on this concept of **living water**. In verses 37-38 He says this:

³⁷On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

To drink of the **living water** means to believe on Jesus. When we do, that stagnant pool that was our life becomes new and refreshing. We literally become a new creation. Paul tells us this in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

And, hopefully, this newness of life affects us in a way that touches others. Jesus’ desire is that this water will flow like a river from our heart.

Is that what happens with the woman at the well?

We’ll find out next time. But for now, she makes a choice. Look how she responds to Jesus’ gracious offer (verse 15):

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

I think this is a turning point in the conversation. The woman realizes that she is thirsty for something that Jacob’s well could not provide. So she stops debating and begins to listen to Jesus. But she has to take it one step further.

She needs to repent. We all have sin in our life that blinds us to the truth of the Gospel. Next time we will pick up as Jesus explains to this woman what that means in her context.

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But for us, we need to realize that there are people all around us who have this same kind of thirst. They are coming to the well that the world has to offer, and they only come away more thirsty. So what we have to do is bring them to the One who has the **living water** that they so desperately need.

Pay careful attention as you read ahead and see how Jesus' disciples react when they see who He is talking to. It is to people like her that we are to witness.

Let's pray.

SING THE REVELATION SONG