

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

"Give me this water!"

Old Testament Lesson

John 4:1-30 (NRSV)

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" ²—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— ³he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

Bible/Sermon Focus

The Gospel of John is a Gospel of metaphor. For centuries scholars, pastors and priests have explained that John's Gospel uses comparing and contrasting examples to make its point. Those who are "in the dark" don't know that Jesus is the messiah. Those who have, "come into the light" are aware that Jesus is the Messiah. For centuries we have been told to read John 4 in conjunction with John 3. The contrast of these two stories is stark.

In John 3, Nicodemus, a person of power and stature visits Jesus "under the cover of darkness." In John 4, a Samaritan woman, a person lacking all kinds of power stature visits with Jesus in the "noon" daylight. It is the Samaritan woman who understands that Jesus is the messiah. Once she realizes who he is, she cannot help but to go spread the good news in her community. Whereas Nicodemus seems to leave Jesus unsatisfied.

In this sermon series we will be looking at people in the Bible who were audacious enough to ask of Jesus what they needed. People who lived into their authenticity even when it seemed like there was no point. The Samaritan woman, in one conversation, began to bridge a cultural divide between two communities. In her audacity she is not only received affirmation about herself as a person of worth, she also received affirmation of Jesus as the messiah, and God as a God for all peoples.

Discussion Questions

1. How are the acts of Jesus audacious in this story?
2. Reflect on this quote from Dr. Sandra Schneiders, *"The reader cannot fail to be affected by the fact that the recipient of Jesus' universal invitation to inclusion is a woman, universal representative of the despised and excluded 'other' not only in ancient Israel but throughout history and all over the world. Not only is she included, but she is engaged with respect, even asked for a gift (water) that she might receive a greater gift (living water). Her legitimate inquiries, even her objections, are met and responded to with integrity."*
3. Why is it easier for the Samaritan woman to be "saved" by Jesus, than it is for Nicodemus? Where is the grace for Nicodemus?
4. Share as many examples as you can where Jesus' message is received or is about the marginalized and not those "already in the fold."

Prayer

God of audacious love and grace, we thank you for your presence with us. Help us to be your bold people, asking the right questions, seeking relationship with you in all places and with all people. Keep company with us as we learn to better keep company with each other. Amen.

"...living water bubbles into her life, and she goes back to her village leaving her water jug behind but not unchanged. She now has the living water and becomes a disciple preaching the word... How often have churches judged women like the Samaritan woman harshly, never following the example of Jesus who does not judge her harshly but extends a gracious invitation to become a disciple." - Robert E. Goss