

## **“Jesus and the Woman at the Well”**

Date: March 27, 2011

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: John 4:5-42

Theme:

Occasion: Lent 3, Year A

There are stories in the Bible of people who met Jesus, and then changed their ways. Such is the story of the woman at the well. When they first meet, at Jacob’s well, the woman is shocked that Jesus would even speak to her. “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman,” she says. “How can you ask me for a drink?”

There was such bitter prejudice between the Jews of the north country living in Samaria and the Jews of the southern country, who worshiped in Jerusalem. Jews hated Samaritans. They thought they were half-breeds, having married foreigners who weren’t Jewish. They worshiped in the wrong place. They were racially inferior. They would not even talk to a Samaritan. But Jesus did.

Not only were there rules about Jews and Samaritans not talking to each other, there were also rules about men and women conversing. If she wasn’t your wife, men, you weren’t supposed to talk to another woman in public. It was scandalous. But Jesus did. It was not that he enjoyed flagrantly breaking the rules.

But rather his love compelled him to talk to the people who needed Him. Jesus didn’t let the usual social barriers get in the way of talking to the people who needed God’s love. How quick we are, today, to prejudge people, and decide whether or not we’re going to talk to them.

Its an *us against them* mentality. If they’re not in our group, then we don’t want to associate with them. You know how it goes, black and white, Anglo and Latino, gay and straight, rich and poor. We put people into groups and then decide if we can be their friends or not. Not so with Jesus. He loved all people, and calls us

to do the same.

The second amazing thing about this story is what Jesus knew about her. Having never met her, revealing His divine wisdom, Jesus told her to go get her husband, knowing full well that they weren't married. And also knowing that this wasn't her first man, but she had been married five times before.

She was a spoiled woman, her reputation tainted. That's why she came to the well at noon. All of the town's women would have come at early dawn in the cool of the day. But she comes at noon - to avoid the crowds. She can't stand the way they look at her, the way they talk about her. It makes her feel dirty and full of shame.

But Jesus treats her with respect, and he knows all about her. He knows about her failed marriages. He knows about this new fella. He probably knows about the ones in between, too. But he treats her with dignity. "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet."

He was a prophet all right, but he was different than any other prophet she would ever encounter. He was breaking all of the cultural taboos. He was reaching out to a woman, to a Samaritan woman, to a Samaritan woman who had been married five times and who was now living with a man who was not her husband. And he offers her grace.

That's what this story tells us about Jesus. He came for those whose lives are filled with shame. He came for all of us, for you and for me. Jesus came for the ones who are addicted to alcohol or pornography. He came for the one who abuses children and for the murderer.

He also came for the one who never feels good enough about herself, or himself, always feeling they are wrong at the core of who they are. He came for the

damaged ones, the unlovable ones. The selfish ones and the troublemakers. He came for the good ones, too, who are always doubting themselves.

That's the gospel, friends. That's the good news. God's grace is available to all.

To the immoral and the amoral, to the Arab and the Jew, to the native and the illegal immigrant, to the gay and straight, to the black and brown and yellow and white. He came to set us all free, free from the things that bind us and keep us from living the abundant life. Jesus came to us, knowing our story - the one we don't want anyone else to know about - and he wants to bring us peace.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, flowing from the cross of Calvary, is the Living Water that will quench our spiritual thirst. I don't know what gets you tied up in knots inside, but I know the one who undo that knot and give you peace. His name is Jesus. Drink from the well of His grace and be satisfied. His love and His mercy are from everlasting to everlasting. It is a well that will never go dry. Taste and see.

But the story does not end here, with Jesus offering her love and acceptance. This is a story of a changed life. You may remember how the story ends. His disciples return from town, and they're surprised to see Jesus talking with a woman. But no one questions, why?

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman goes back to the town and says to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The Gospel of John tells us, that the people of the town come out to see Jesus.

John concludes this story of the Samaritan woman like this: Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of her testimony, "he told me

everything I ever did.” The Samaritans came to Jesus and urged him to stay with them. He did. He stayed two days. And because of his words, many more become believers.

They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” Wow! What a witness. A Samaritan woman with a questionable lifestyle becomes a recipient of God’s grace. And now she is a vehicle of grace to guide others to the Master.

Some time ago, a Mercedes-Benz TV commercial showed one of their cars colliding with a concrete wall during a safety test. Someone then asks a Mercedes engineer why their company does not enforce the patent on their car’s energy-absorbing car-body. You see, the Mercedes design has been copied by almost every other car maker in the world, in spite of the fact that they have an exclusive patent.

The engineer replies in a clipped German accent, “Because in life, some things are just too important not to share.”

What a great statement! Some things are just too important not to share. As Christians we believe that the good news of God’s love in Jesus Christ is one of those things that is just too important not to share. No! That is an understatement.

We believe that Jesus Christ **MUST** be shared - with our friends, our neighbors, the world. The work of sharing the news of Jesus Christ we call evangelism. It’s not something that we ask a committee to do for us. It’s something that each and every Christian is called to do. To share what God has done in our lives, and bring others to the place where they can experience God’s grace for themselves. Another story.

One day, a lady criticized Dwight L. Moody, the famous evangelist, for his methods in winning souls to the Lord. Moody's response was fantastic. He said, "I agree with you. I don't like the way I do it either. Tell me, how do you do it?" The lady replied, "I don't do that." Moody shot back, "Well then, I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."

My dear friends, I pray: 1. That you will not let social barriers keep you from talking to people who need God's love. 2. I pray that you yourself have experienced this life-changing grace of Jesus Christ. 3. I pray that you will share your faith, like the woman at the well, so that others can taste the Living Water as well. The Living Water of eternal life. Amen? Amen!