

The Woman at the Well

Barbara and I were in Seward a couple of months ago and it was on a Wednesday and the Safeway store in Seward gives seniors a 10% discount on Wednesdays and so we were doing our shopping.

We got to talking to the checker. We preferred her line as she was a good and fast checker. Anyway, we got to talking and I don't remember how it had come up but we were talking about Barb and I having our 50th anniversary last year.

She was probably in her late 30's and she said, *"Well, every once in a while it works for a couple but she had been married twice and each time it was really, really bad. She said she didn't need someone telling her what a loser and idiot she was."*

She said that after her last marriage she had lifted herself up and had this good job at Safeway. She said *"This might not seem like much to you but I came from a really bad place."*

I want to talk to you this morning about a woman in the Bible that had come from a really bad place and then she met Jesus.

We read about her in John the 4th chapter beginning with verse 4, Talking about Jesus the passage says, *"Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour."*

(This is a video of what it might have looked like,)

As we go through this passage today **we can learn some things about Jesus'** compassion and also some things about what His life was like.

We see that Jesus was on foot which shows His **poverty**. He didn't have a horse or donkey to ride. He was tired and needed to sit down, so we can see his **humanness**. While Jesus was God, He was still a man and was familiar with the trials and problems that we **all** face in life.

He could have anything He wanted but He choose to live just like you and me. Now, the passage says **He had to** go though Samaria. That was the most direct route to Galilee where He was going but most Jews didn't take that route.

To keep from going though the hated Samaria, Jews would cross over the **Jordan** River and go up the other side until they got past Samaria and then they would cross back over the Jordan. They would go miles out of their way to keep from going though Samaria.

Great was their prejudice and their hatred of the Samaritans who were a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles. **Jesus**, however, **was unaffected by the prejudice His day.**

This is another lesson we learn from this passage. There is **no person or race of people beyond the reach of God's grace.** **All** are sinners and **all** are in need of salvation. Jesus loves them all and we are commanded to love them as well.

If Jesus would reach out to the most hated people of His day, then **it is up to us, His children, to tear down the wall of prejudice** and reach out to people regardless of where they come from! **There is no one beyond the reach of God's Grace.**

It says that Jesus *“had to go through Samaria.”* Why? Most likely because it was to meet this very woman we are talking about today. We continue on with our passage: *“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” vs 7.*

Jesus, of course, knew she was coming. He was waiting for her; He had a wonderful gift He wanted to give her. Never in a 100 years would she have thought she would meet a Jewish Rabbi at the well, let alone meet the Son of God.

All along the way of life Jesus positions Himself directly in **our** pathway. We kind of cruise through life without giving much thought of God or His plan. Then, out of the blue, there Jesus is, right in our faces at the most **unexpected** time and place.

Jesus met this woman at the well - there is something valuable that we can glean from this meeting – **Jesus meets us where we are.** He doesn't require us to clean up our act before He comes calling.

Now, all this takes place around noon (the 6th hour) and Jacob's well is about ½ mile from town. The fact that the woman is there to draw water at this time of day is a bit **unusual.**

Normally, the women from the village would gather together early in the morning, while the day was still cool. These women would go to the well together and would catch up on the gossip of the day and spend time talking to their friends.

Because this woman is alone and is coming to the well during the **hottest time** of the day is an indication that she was a **social outcast.** It is probable that the other women of the village would have nothing to do with her. She came to the well alone to avoid the insults of the other woman.

But this woman is **no different from any other sinner** who ever walked upon the face of the earth. She, like all of us, had greater problems than just being a social outcast.

The problem she faced and that all of us face is that **we are separated from God**. But He has given us the option to reconnect with Him.

The Bible makes it crystal clear that it is our sin that stands between us and a relationship with the Lord, Isa. 59:2, *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

It isn't much fun to be a **social outcast** like she was but she had a worse problem, she was a **spiritual outcast** as well. And it is the same for all of us, until and unless, we have accepted Jesus as our personal Savior we are also spiritual outcasts.

But we don't have to **remain** spiritual outcasts. We can be reconciled to God and 1 Timothy 2:4-6 tells us how. *“God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men.”*

We are reconciled with God by establishing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. More about this later.

Okay, let's set the scene. **It's just Jesus and the woman**. All other distractions have been removed. None of her 5 ex-husbands are there and neither is the man she is currently living with.

None of the women who hate her and her lifestyle are there, it's just her and Jesus. **And ultimately, it always comes down to just you and Him.**

In the final analysis, it isn't going to matter what you did in life, who you impressed, who you offended. It isn't going to matter what you did or didn't do, what will finally be of importance is what you did with Jesus.

Matthew 22:41-42, *“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” In the end, all that will matter is what you did with Jesus when you had the opportunity.*

Let's continue on with our passage: *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.)” (Vs 9)*

She was amazed that a Jew would ask for a drink from a woman, let alone a Samaritan woman. Jewish Rabbis wouldn't speak to women in public and wouldn't speak to a Samaritan man or woman at any time unless they had to.

It was considered a great insult for a Jew to call another Jew a Samaritan. When the religious leaders wanted to insult Jesus this is what they called him in John 8:48, *"The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?"*

While other Rabbis would never have spoken to her, Jesus was not afraid of **social stigmas**, nor did He care for unloving religious practices. This is a lesson to Christians; **we are to reach beyond manmade barriers to tell about Jesus' saving grace.**

Verse 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." Jesus told her, "If only you knew the gift I can give you, **the gift I have in store for you, you would respond differently.**"*

If we, you and me, knew, really knew and **realized what God has in store of us** would we act differently? If you knew that you would meet Jesus at 12 noon tomorrow would you act differently?

If at 12 noon tomorrow your heart would stop beating would you live differently? If you found out things that are different than you've been told your whole life would you see God differently?

That is what happened to the Woman at the Well. She found out what she and the average church member today doesn't know anything about:

Vss 11-14, *"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

She didn't know about **"water"** that really satisfies. Jesus told the woman about **"water"** that would quench her thirst for all time. Water that satisfies permanently.

She didn't understand. She told Jesus, that Jacob himself gave them this well and drank from it himself. **Was He greater than Jacob?** Yes, Jesus is greater than Jacob; Jacob's well provided water that would quench her thirst for a little while. What Jesus was offering was living water that leads to eternal life.

She knew a lot about whose well this was. She knew the history surrounding her heritage. She was knowledgeable in the ways of culture and its limits.

And **maybe you're pretty knowledgeable**. Maybe you have read the Bible and can quote many verses but if you don't have a personal relationship with the Giver of the living water - and you are still thirsty.

You could follow in the traditions of your family but tradition will leave you thirsty. You could say that you are a victim of your culture and surroundings, but if you let that keep you from Jesus it will leave you thirsty.

Don't let past limitations and past mistakes and sin keep you from this most satisfying of water.

Vs 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."*

Like us, she was thinking about her physical comfort more than her spiritual health.

Vss 16-18, *"He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."*

This woman had a shady past, especially for the time, she was living in outright open sin. For her to have had five husbands yet be young enough to draw water from a well that was described as deep means **she had crammed a lot of living into a short time.**

She had a lot of miles on her but before you judge her too harshly consider some things. In that time a single woman would have a very difficult time trying to make it on her own. If she had no relatives to help her she would be destitute.

As a matter of fact even a queen who was proud and boastful would say, *"I'm no widow. I have a husband."* Revelation 18:7, *"In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'"*

What was she doing having 5 husbands and living with a 6th guy? Most probably, she was fighting for **survival**. Could she have made it without a man? Maybe, but in that day it would have been hard, very hard, I'm talking about **getting on your knees and begging hard.**

Let's shoot this ahead 2,000 years and look at a **modern version of the woman at the well**. She also doesn't have a husband, although she did at one time and that marriage left her with three children.

He's not paying child support and she's struggling to support herself and the kids. She meets this guy at work and they start dating and he's a really nice guy, he treats her well and with respect and the kids love him. The youngest already calls him "daddy."

He suggests that he moves in with her. He says he'll pay the rent and help with the groceries. Okay, now she knows this is wrong but he's such a nice guy and she is afraid of losing him. *"If I say "no" will he bolt? This may be my only chance at a decent life."*

And, she tells herself, it's not like she's a **blushing teenage virgin**, she has had 3 kids for goodness sake. And she thinks, what difference would it make – I'm hoping we get married anyway and oh, what a difference it would make to have someone help with the bills and the kids.

The difference would be night and day, and the **stress taken off her shoulders would be immense**. Put yourself in her shoes for a minute, it would be wrong for her to say "yes" and she would have to have great faith in God to say no, but are you willing to throw the first stone?

You say you would never do that – have you ever been in her shoes? Maybe you just need to drop that stone. Notice that **Jesus tells her her sin but He still treats her with respect and compassion**.

I read about a prostitute that had been arrested in a police raid. As they brought her into the station, took her picture, and fingerprinted her... she kept protesting: *"I'm really not like this! This isn't who I am!"*

There's something inside even the most fallen of our race that recognizes they were created for something better than a sin darkened life.

Vs 19, "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

Now, maybe she's thinking *"Oh, He's a religious guy, and all He wants to do is **pass judgment on me**."* So she changes the subject, maybe she can get this guy sidetracked by bringing up a contentious doctrinal argument.

Now, I have experienced this kind of dodge before. A fellow called up the church asking for money and I asked him if his own church has helped him? And he said he didn't go to church. I told him maybe that was part of the problem. And he yelled **"Don't judge, so you will not be judged!"** And slammed down the phone.

Or what about the people who say they don't go to church because they can worship God as easily in the woods as in church, bla, bla, bla. Maybe they can but we all know they don't.

Then Jesus tells her plainly the answer to her question. And when He does we also learn a great truth.

Vss 21-24, *"Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

Jesus tells her that worship is not a matter of location. It is a matter of a person's heart condition. It isn't just going through the motions.

The day before Jesus met in the home of a Jewish religious leader but we learn more from Jesus meeting with the Woman at the Well than His meeting with the Pharisee. **We learn positively that God is spirit.**

There are people who are like the woman at the well.

Their lives are a mess.

They've made some really bad decisions.

Their marriages are a disaster.

Their families are in flames.

They spend their time and money on alcohol or drugs.

And they always seem to be trouble of one kind or another.

If you know someone like that you need to treat them as Jesus treated this woman, with **respect** as you witness to them, not judging them but telling them about a better life that is available to them.

Easter is next week; it would be a fantastic time to invite them to church.

Or maybe that person is you, like the woman at the well you have a **"lot of miles on you"** if Jesus were to appear at your dining table tonight with the knowledge of everything you are and are not, and knew every skeleton hidden in your closet.

And if He laid out your present state of sin and hidden agendas and mixed motives and your deepest darkest desires, like the woman at the well, **you would still feel His acceptance and forgiveness.**

Revelation 22:17 says, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." "And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."*

Next Week is Easter when we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the very reason for our hope for eternal life.

Why do I believe in the Resurrection?

I believe in the Resurrection because I have experienced it and it has stood the test of time.

But it all started when someone told me about it. This is your chance to start the process for someone else. Take the "Invest & Invite" card you found on the chair when you sat down...