

The woman of Samaria

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[0 : 00] Gospel according to John chapter 4. While I'm not quite sure that I'm going to stay very much with any one text, I would like our thoughts tonight to center around one point.

Will you read please with me again verse 27. The Gospel according to John chapter 4 verse 27. And upon this came his disciples and marveled that he talked with the woman. Yet no man said, what seekest thou or why talkest thou with her. In this whole incident, the passage that brings us to see the Lord Jesus is to be a sinner sitting alone, tired beside that well. It is perhaps one of the most moving scenes we have in the scriptures. The church has been struck by it and poems have been made.

Perhaps you have heard the Church of England poem on him, seeking me thou sat us there we. And Dr. Johnson, the great bibliographer, said that this was one scene in scripture that he could not read without his emotions being so stirred that he wept. As he considered something of what was involved, who it was who was there, and what he was doing, sitting, waiting by a well to speak to a needy sinner.

But he went by this road, the road by Samaria, rather two roads he could have taken.

[2 : 41] But I've been quite certain that he did it purposely, and that he might have this interview for that poor woman at the well of Cyca and that there he might lead her to know him as her personal Lord and say, is not this, the Christ, the Savior of the world?

Now, as we look at the situation a little more closely, we see that the disciples, when they returned, were amazed that he should be found that Christ should be found talking to this woman.

Now, their amazement will be difficult for us to understand if we put the scene inside our modern culture.

But, you know, you have to hark back 2,000 years, more or less, in order to understand what took place when he spoke to her.

You see, they were amazed that he did. And they couldn't ask him anything about it. They couldn't say why.

[4 : 25] I wonder why they couldn't ask. I just don't know. I can understand why they were amazed. And mostly for cultural reasons, I should think.

Because at that time, you know, according to Jewish teaching, Jewish law, no rabbi or teacher must ever converse with a woman alone, part of the rabbinical law.

And then another point in their law said that the Lord Jesus being a man, at that time it was very much against the cultural modes for any man to speak in a public place to a strange woman.

And this is what he did. And then, of course, there was the other than the most evident cause for their surprise, that he was a Jew by race, and she was a Samaritan.

And it's constantly emphasized that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans, but had no dealings with the Samaritans. And so they came back.

[5 : 53] And they found them here, having bridged the gulf between the rabbinical teaching and the common people, having bridged the gulf that was social, and broke the chivalry of the people of that time, and even he bridged the racial gulf, and found they found a Jew speaking to a Samaritan.

I couldn't ask him why. Well, I wonder if we could, of all reverence, ask ourselves tonight, why Jesus spoke to that woman.

And perhaps God granted, as we think of him there, speaking to this outcast, or at least this ostracized woman, we may see something of the divine love coming to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And God grant that we understand that it's not an old story of 2,000 years ago, but it is God speaking to you and to me tonight, just as though the person beside you touched you with his elbow

and said, it's to you he's speaking.

Well, as we ask the question that the disciples didn't ask, I should think that the first most straightforward answer I would give is this, that he taught her because he loved her.

[7 : 54] Now, I know that we must be careful, particularly nowadays, to invest this word love with the dignity and the glory that it deserves.

First of all, remember who he was. This was no ordinary wayfaring man. This was Jesus Christ. This was the Son of God in his humiliation. Come to this world to be our redeemer and to take our place on the cross of shame, as we were thinking earlier today.

But think of the glory that belonged to him. He was eternally God, and he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and he took the form of a servant.

And here we see him as a servant, sitting down beside this poor woman. And who was she? Well, what a contrast.

[9 : 09] She was a poor, peasant woman, if you like, a menial servant, who had broken the laws of God, particularly the Seventh Commandment.

She had given way to passion, and was even now living in sin. She was, in our language, a harlot. Yet Jesus loved her.

Jesus looked her out, particularly. What a mystery it is in God's love. I always stand amazed for it that he loved me, the apostle said, and gave himself for me.

That's one way of saying it. But if you say it with emphasis on the pronouns, that he loved me, and that he gave himself for me, the wonder of it grows, as you repeat the very words, to think of it.

It is inexpressible grace that God is here revealing, thanks be to God, for his unspeakable gift. But the mystery of God's love, and the way it worked in the Lord himself.

[10 : 32] I said to you that part of the reason was that he loved her. And it is apparent that this exercise of turning in love and mercy to her was a joy and a refreshing.

It seemed to refresh his spirit. You remember the disciples had left him alone sitting by the well and they went away to the town to get food.

And they came back with their food. And they didn't understand what had happened in between.

And they wanted to give him something to eat.

But he is now restored. And the hidden energy of the spirit have filled him with a satisfaction.

They look for a material cause. Isn't it always the way when you see something that is of the spiritual work of God? The first thing that men and women look for normally is some material explanation of it.

[11 : 50] It was the same at Pentecost, you remember. The disciples rushed into the streets and what did they say? They were drunk. when they were filled with the power and the unction of the divine spirit.

And here he had to tell his disciples, I have food to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.

And this was the will of him that sent him, of the Father God that the Son in his humiliation should come to bring the knowledge of the love and the mercy and the grace and the peace of God to this woman.

And that is why Jesus came. And that is why we have churches and that is why we have a gospel that men and women may know that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

How often have you heard that? Oh, I wish I could say it so that if you have never really listened to it before, you listened to it tonight because the whole current of divine love is pouring down through the humanity of our Lord into the gospel and the word of his grace calling us because he loved sinners and he gave himself for them.

[13 : 26] Can you not say he loved me and he gave himself for me? Now, this love that I am speaking about, it sought her salvation and this woman, she was lost and she knew it and perhaps that was a step in the right direction.

There are so many people, particularly in our everyday culture, the great masses of the complacently lost, they are away from God and they're quite happy about it.

Dead in trespasses and sins and it doesn't move them one little bit. I know that everything is stacked against you to think seriously.

There's nothing, there's nothing in the general talk of the world, in the papers you read, out on the TV, that makes you think much about God, but much to the contrary.

It's like a kind of veil that's coming down over our eyes all the time to make us think that there is no God, to make us forget God. That is one of the awful things that's happening, that are happening in our culture today.

[15:00] You see, there seems to be an organized type of anesthetic being poured over the human soul so that men want to forget God, want to forget sin if they can use that word, and certainly want to forget death.

If you speak about death in a social conversation nowadays, you may well find yourself ostracized. Nobody wants to hear about religion.

Nobody wants to hear about the malaise that has taken the whole world and has brought such havoc and death among us, and nobody wants to hear about death.

Put it away from me. All thought about that, and you know what's so sad, because there's no other place you can turn to.

There's not hope coming from the east or the west or the north or the south. Christ and Christ alone has the word, and his love does come to speak to us and to tell us that he has dealt with the sin question, and that he has dealt with our estrangement from God, and he has dealt with the question of death, taking away its sting and making it for those his people, not the fearsome, gruesome thing that it is to those who live without God and without hope, but a quiet, resting place that grave is to be come.

[16:42] Oh, my friend, Christ came to this woman, and he showed her her need. I wonder if we really have taken that first step.

do we know our need? You know, that's where we begin, to know our need. I'm delighted tonight to see so many children in the meeting, and you will excuse an old man if I speak for a minute to the children, and the older people can switch off.

I, you know children, in the part of the country that I come from, there was a godly old minister years ago, in the next parish really, and his name was Mr.

McPhail. Mr. McPhail was a very kind and good man, and in those days there were no cars, so he got about, how do you think, riding on his horse.

I won't tell you about the horse tonight, but I tell you that one day he went to Edinburgh, set off to go to Edinburgh to the Assembly. Have you ever heard of that? It's a meeting with ministers and elders and some people have, once a year in Edinburgh.

[18:02] We've had it for years and years. Well, he set off to Edinburgh, and of course he couldn't go in one or two days, so the first night he came to a little hotel, a little inn, in the Badenoch Hills, and he went in there to pass the night.

Now, before they went to bed, he said, well now, we'll have worship, and he said, is everybody here? And a good lady of the house said, yes, we're all here, except a little girl who works in the kitchen, and she's a bit messy, so we thought we'd just leave her out there, she did.

oh no, he said, we must all come in, we must all be together at God's worship, so they sent for her, and after the worship, Mr. McPhail asked her if she had a soul, she didn't know very well, he said, do you pray?

And she said, no, I don't pray. Well, he said, I'll teach you a little prayer, and if you say it, I'll bring you back a piece of ribbon, all it together is like ribbon, don't you?

I'll bring you back a piece of ribbon from Edinburgh, and the prayer is very short, and I'm going to teach it to you, and I hope you'll all remember it, probably you've heard the story before, but I want you to learn the prayer tonight, and forget me, and forget the story, but here's the prayer, Lord, show me myself.

[19:43] That's very small, isn't it? Lord, show me myself. You can remember that voice, can't you? Lord, show me myself.

And then I could go on to tell you how when he came back, poor girl was very upset, and he went to see her, and he taught her another prayer, the same thing, Lord, show me thyself.

prayer, and that prayer was answered too, and she was a woman that God used greatly in her own part of Bagenau.

Anyway, the first thing is the prayer, remember it, Lord, show me myself. And it's not the children alone, you know, that could be using a prayer like that.

we're all so ignorant of ourselves about that heart of sin that's in you and me that we try to cover up and forget.

[20 : 50] Oh, let us not deal with it that way, because that is not what Jesus came to teach this poor woman, but to bring it before her that with a sense of her need, she might turn to the Savior who gave her life and peace.

She got a sense of her need and he gave her this liberty from the grip of sin that gave her the joy of his presence and his power.

He talked with her because he loved her. Without extending our thinking further in that connection, I want to think that in talking with her, how she met his love.

And I just want to take two or three points quickly. The way in which she responded to the Savior's approach. And as he sat there at the well, his first question was give me to drink.

And probably she had drawn the water. It was six o'clock in the afternoon, the time that, or the evening, the time that everybody would be coming to draw the water.

[22 : 12] She had drawn her water and it was there. And he said, give me to drink. That was a wonderful, that was a wonderful thing. The psychology of our Lord.

one of the best ways, you know, of getting someone to respond to you is to ask them to do something for you. And this is what he did.

And the woman said, how is it that thou a Samaritan, I'm sorry, how is it that thou being a Jew, askest to drink of me, which I'm a woman of Samaria, for the Jews, I'm not dealing with the Samaritans.

Will you notice that the first thing she turned to when Jesus asked for something was an excuse.

Now listen a little longer. And Jesus said, if you knew the gift of God, and who is it speaking to you, you would ask of me, and I would give you living water.

And the woman said, how is it possible? You can't, the word living here means, it has a double meaning, it means water bubbling from a stream, or from a source.

[23 : 33] That would be called living water in the original language. Also, our Lord, I'm sure, intended to convey the fact that this was the beginning here, that what he was offering her was the water of life.