

April 24, 2022

“Samaritan Woman Finds”
Living Water”
Lesson 2 of Unit

John 4:7-15, 21-30

Intro

Most of us have had an “aha” moment, when something suddenly became clear that wasn’t before. Those are encouraging, satisfying moments. Our text distinguishes between human “aha” moments and divine “aha” moments. The human moments involve sudden awareness of a truth that had been knowable but was unknown until something “clicked”. On the other hand, divine “aha” moments involve sudden awareness of something that was unknowable until God makes it known. Big distinction.

Today’s study deals with Jesus’ meeting with a Samaritan woman at a well in the town of Sychar, a town connected with the patriarchs (see Genesis 12 and 33). Jesus was a Jew, and the woman was a Samaritan. There was a long history of conflict and hostility between these two groups. Both groups counted themselves as part of biblical Israel and so as true people of God. Both counted Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their ancestors. Both offered sacrifices to God—the Jews at Mount Zion and the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim.

But the two groups had a long-standing dislike for the other. The Samaritans were mixed-race descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel, mixing with foreigners following the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC. The Jews were those who returned to the southern kingdom of Judah after the Babylonian exile in 539 BC, at which time they found that the Samaritans in residence opposed the Jews resettling there.

So Jews avoided traveling through Samaria. Samaritans refused hospitality to Jews traveling through their land. Jesus’s opponents tried to discredit Him by calling Him a Samaritan (John 8:48).

Additionally, it was scandalous for a man to carry on an extended conversation with a woman who wasn’t a family member.

The two hot points of race and gender conflict are important backdrops for today’s lesson.

Read John 4:7-15

1. vs. 7: Jesus asks the Samaritan woman to give Him a drink

Vs. 6 notes that it was about the 6th hour, meaning about noon

This is an unusual time to come get water at the well

Water drawing was done mostly in the morning and in the evening

This woman has come at noon

It appears she wishes to avoid others, not expected others to be there

She is certainly surprised to find a man there, as women were the water-drawers

She must also be surprised that this man is a Jew—what’s he doing there?

The biggest surprise is that Jesus asks her for a drink of water

Jews and Samaritans hate each other

2. vs. 8: This verse tells us that the disciples were not present; they'd gone to buy food
This shows that the conversation was private, just Jesus and the woman
3. vs. 9: As expected, the woman notes the division between Jews and Samaritans
In our world, she might have said, "Are you crazy? Don't you know that we don't get along?"
Jesus obviously knows everything
He knows His mission is to reach everyone (see John 12:32)
He knows social boundaries don't get to stand in His way
4. vs. 10: Jesus moves the topic in the direction He wants
He refers to himself subtly as "the gift of God"
He introduces something intriguing: "If you knew..."
There's something to be discovered here that the woman doesn't know
If Jesus can bring her to understand who He is, she will be the one to break conventions
"You would have asked him..."
5. vs. 11: The woman's response is "You have nothing to draw with..."
She's being practical here—you need a bucket to draw water up from the well
There is no other source for water
As frequently happens in the gospels, Jesus is making a spiritual point, and people are thinking from a natural / practical point
6. vs. 12: Here, the woman challenges who Jesus is
Both Jews and Samaritans claim Jacob as an ancestor
Tradition says that Jacob dug the very well the Jesus and the woman are at
Jacob is the father of Israel, the father of the 12 tribes
Does Jesus think he's greater than *that*?
The woman obviously expects Jesus to back off, to answer "no" to the question
7. vs. 13: Jesus' answer is about the water, not about Jacob
In changing her view of the kind of water he's referring to, He will also change her view of who He is
Natural water from the well is good, but one will eventually get thirsty again
The woman knows this to be true, since she comes regularly to draw water
8. vs. 14: Jesus begins explaining the difference between His water and the well's
His water is satisfying
One will never thirst if they drink it
It will produce eternal life
The well water is temporary, but Jesus' water is eternal
If Jesus can deliver this kind of water, He is indeed greater than Jacob
The woman should then definitely ask Jesus for this water (vs. 10)
9. vs. 15: The woman is still perceiving in earthly, natural terms
Water that you can drink and never be thirsty again? Magic water?
Never have to come draw water again?!?

This sounds “too good to be true” to the woman

She says, “Give me this water...”

Essentially, she’s telling Jesus to prove it; “if you’ve got it, show me”

Read John 4:21-30

10. vs. 21: In vs. 16-20, Jesus reveals that He knows about this woman’s personal life and choices

This seems to make her uncomfortable, so she brings up a religious controversy:

The dispute between Jews and Samaritans over the right place to worship

She’s trying to shift the topic, and maybe get Jesus off track

Jesus’ answer (which will go thru vs. 24) is about a coming time

He is referring to the pivotal moment of His death and resurrection

This time will change where and how people worship God

He is expanding the concept of what the “temple” is

11. vs. 22: Jesus does address part of the woman’s point about Jewish and Samaritan worship

The two groups are not equal in their worship, says Jesus

“You Samaritans worship what you do not know”

Jesus says their worship is based in ignorance

They may be worshipping, or attempting to, but their knowledge is weak

Jesus says “We worship what we do know”

Jewish worship is based on knowledge

This knowledge has come from God’s revelation to the Jews

The Jews themselves aren’t superior intellectually

12. vs. 23: Jesus says that the time He mentioned in vs. 21 is not only coming, it “has now come”

John’s gospel makes it clear that the time has come because Jesus has come

Salvation has been brought because of and through Jesus

The concept of where to worship becomes a point of no importance

“True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth”

Genuine worship does not need to be done at a particular place

It is done as a matter of inner devotion to God wherever one is

God promised salvation

Through a particular nation (Israel)

Through a particular part of that nation (Jews, not Samaritans)

Connected to a particular place (the temple)

God is now fulfilling the promise in a way that makes salvation universal, not particular

God will be wherever there are people who worship Him in spirit and in truth

13. vs. 24: God is spirit

Therefore, true and proper worship of Him must also be in spirit

As Spirit, He has previous been both invisible and mysterious to humanity

Now He is revealing Himself in Jesus

People are now being called to worship God in spirit and in truth as revealed in Christ

14. vs. 25: The woman's response shows she is following the truth of what Jesus has said
The Samaritans share the Jews' belief that God will send a Redeemer, the Messiah
He will fulfill God's promises and also bless His people
The woman knows this Messiah will "explain everything to us"
She knows Jesus has just told her things about herself that He shouldn't know
He has also told her about what is coming
She has been primed for what Jesus is about to say
15. vs. 26: Jesus tells her plainly and straightforwardly, "I who speak to you am He."
He tells her He is that promised Messiah, who will explain everything
He has already been doing that with this woman
His phrase "I...am He" is literally just "I am"
This is the phrase God used to identify himself with Moses
John's gospel is constantly making this point
Jesus isn't just the one that God sent; He is God Himself
16. vs. 27: The disciples come back to find him talking with a Samaritan woman
They are surprised, amazed
This breaks two social conventions
But we note that they don't ask Jesus about what he's doing or why
He has established Himself as their Master
They may not understand, but they don't presume to question Him (here, at least)
What the disciples don't know is that what He said to the woman is more remarkable than
to whom He said it!
17. vs. 28: The woman's response to Jesus is to go tell others about her encounter with Him
She leaves her water jar—work can wait for the moment
She goes to talk to people who probably treat her poorly for her lifestyle
18. vs. 29: The two things the woman tells people are very significant
She notes that Jesus told her "everything I ever did"
That includes her several husbands and the man she lives with now
For an outsider to know these things indicates they are God-revealed
She asks, "Could this be the Christ?"
Jesus has promised what only God can promise
A faith that depends on God and not on works
A worship that comes from the heart and not on sacrifices
The very presence of God coming to humanity
The way she asks the question is really a statement in question form
She's really saying, "This is the Christ!"
19. vs. 30: Many people come from the town to the well to meet and listen to Jesus
Jewish teacher and Samaritan audience have been brought together by an immoral woman
They will talk with him for two days
Many of them will come to believe in Jesus as the Christ

Application: Jesus breaks social conventions when they get in the way of the bigger picture: coming into a truer and deeper relationship with God through Him. Because Jesus talked to a woman, who was a Samaritan, she and others in the town were drawn into a stronger, deeper relationship with God.

We can be like the woman at the well. We can have set ideas about God, set routines about what we need to be doing and when. But Jesus offers an everlasting, spirit-and-truth relationship with God. That is what we both truly want and truly need.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for giving us all that we need, and more than we deserve or could imagine. Help us continually strive to be people who worship You always, genuinely, and truly, in the ways that You desire. In Jesus' name, Amen.