

## Light, Water, Love and Life

### John 4

Last week Daniel pointed out that John 1:3-4 teaches us that Jesus is the light of the world (8:12). But Jesus, as Daniel reminded us, is not light like a light in this building. We know this because 1:5 tells us that the darkness has not ‘overcome/comprehended’ the light. John uses the rest of his gospel to show us how that light spread throughout Israel how some people did comprehend it and others did not. But either way, the light continued to spread, and the darkness did not overcome it.

In John 2, the light shined on the disciples.

In John 3, Nicodemus left the darkness for the light

In John 4, the light shines on a Samaritan woman and that’s the topic of our discussion today

#### First: The Context. 1-6

2:13 tells us that he went to Jerusalem for the Passover, and this is where he met Nicodemus.

In verse 4:1, the light has shined on the darkened Pharisees, but it is too early in Jesus’s ministry for open conflict with them so in verse 3, he left Judea for Galilee.

**MAP:** Judea is where Jerusalem is and it’s the center of Judaism. Moving north, Jesus was out of the Pharisees’s power center.

Jesus isn’t afraid. It’s a matter of timing –

*John 7:30 - So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.*

His omniscience takes him to Jacob’s well at Sychar in Samaria precisely at noon (4:6/sixth hour).

#### Second: The Samaritan Woman. 7a

a) Strike One. 4:7-9

*Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”<sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)*

Jewish women and men did not speak to each other in public without an escort, but John, as the narrator of the story, draws our attention to something else and tells us there is a bigger issue that makes Jesus’s conversation with this woman so amazing.

This is the only time Sychar is mentioned in the New Testament. (It's the modern 'Askar.'). Its other name is "Shechem" but the Jews called it Sychar as a slur =

- shikkor = drunken
- sheqer = falsehood

After the Assyrians captured Samaria [the capital of the Northern kingdom of Israel] in 722–21 BC, they deported all the Israelites of substance and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites and adhered to some form of their ancient religion (2 Kings 17–18). After the exile [of the Southern kingdom in Babylon], Jews, returning to their homeland . . . viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels, but as racial half-breeds whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements. . . . About 400 BC the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. (Don Carson in *The Gospel According to John*, 216)

The ethnic, racial, and religious issues made Jews feel disdain for Samaritans. They were ceremonially unclean. They were racially impure. They were religiously heretical. And therefore, they were avoided.

Let's put it in our colloquialism - There was only one water fountain in Sychar. And the sign over it said, "Samaritan."

If you want to know Jesus's heart, watch his feet.

#### b) Strike Two. 4:16-18

*Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."<sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';<sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."*

It was traditional for women to draw water early in the morning and not during the heat of the day. But this is why the woman finds herself at Jacob's well, alone, in the middle of the afternoon.

This woman is alienated from Israel – John 1:11 – *"He came unto his own..."*

And from Samaritans. When Jesus said, *"Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you."* (Matt 21:31), he used the people – tax collectors and prostitutes - the Pharisees thought to be at the bottom of the barrel.

And yet.... like a dawn breaking in the early morning, the light is making its way into Sychar.

Note: I can see her, day after day, making her way only 250 feet out of the city to the well. Everyone can see her, and she knows everyone is looking. It's her penance, her penalty – it's

not a well but Hell, for being the woman she is. No one will associate with her. Someone, some leadership in the town is punishing her and no one is strong enough, whole enough, independent enough to make the trek with her or join her at the well. And so, some in judgement and others in pity, watch her make that daily trek. How hard has her heart grown? How long ago did she lose hope?

(Today, Jacob's Well in Samaria lies within the monastery complex of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Nablus, a part of the Palestinian West Bank. Jacob's Well is also about 250 feet from the archaeological ruins of ancient Shechem.)

### Third: The Conversation. 7-26

Once again, John gives us insight in verse 7 and tells us that Jesus sent the disciples into Sychar to buy food

This gives us insight into Jesus's heart. If he had approached her with his 12 disciples, she would have immediately thought they were going to ridicule her or abuse her. But approaching her alone, one-on-one, a man to a woman - a Jew to a Samaritan - in full sight of everyone who daily watched her go to that well, let the woman know something unusual was going on.

a) 7 - "Give me a drink."

V 6 – "...so Jesus wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well..."

- Jesus is there first. He is waiting for her.

He enters her world. He starts where she is. He begins the conversation in her world, about the things of interest to her.

b) 9 - "How is that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

It's astonishing that he asked her for a drink since he is, 10 - "living water" but he is weary from his journey.

**Note:** Christ is not separate from us or our sorrow. And he has not only entered into it but endured it.

Isaiah 53:3-5a - He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities...

For now, Jesus has sent his disciples into Sychar where they are undoubtedly enjoying shade, food, drink, and the laughter of rest. But he has gone outside the city.

Hebrews 13:11-14 - *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. <sup>14</sup> For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*

**APP:** I am rebuked by this. I would have been glad to go in the city to rest. Who wants to be on the 'outside, excluded from the group?

- But, we should not trade the pleasures of a momentary city for fellowship with Jesus.
  - Are we ever more Christ-like than when we leave the group – as Jesus left Heaven – and go outside of our comfort and security, to meet the one? Jesus does it 27 times in John.
- c) *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."*

If you wonder where John got the idea to use metaphors and word pictures to describe Jesus, he learned it from Jesus. Jesus began with the physical but has now turned the conversation to the spiritual. He's not talking about literal water any more than John is talking about Jesus as literal light.

- d) *11 - The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."*

But the woman is struggling to see beyond her immediate, physical need. We are all like this. Those you love, with whom you talk about Christ, are like this.

Seven chapters from now Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the dead and Mary and Martha will be so happy. But was Lazarus already in Paradise? Does he spend the rest of his life longing for Heaven? And are Mary and Martha sad again when he dies again? And Lazarus isn't the only one. Jesus raised many people from the dead and a multitude of dead people 'got up' when he was crucified (Mt 27:50-53). But the physical is so immediate. It's hard to think of Heaven as the ultimate healing when we so long for loved ones to be well now. And yet, Jesus is constantly turning our hearts from now to forever, just as he does with this woman.

- e) 13-14 - *Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*
- f) 15 - *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."*

Her answer demonstrates that she's still only thinking about the physical. She wants relief from her embarrassment, her harassment, her torment, and her tormenters.

- g) 16 - *Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."*

Why doesn't Jesus just give her his living water? The new focus on her husband and marital status seems abrupt – out of place. It's raised suddenly with no connection to what precedes it. Nothing in the conversation would seem to suggest that Jesus should be concerned with her marital status. And just as quickly as it's raised, it's dropped. Why does Jesus want the Samaritan woman to go and call her husband?

This is not really a change in topics. It's not as abrupt as it appears. This woman is looking for physical water when Jesus is offering her spiritual water. She doesn't understand that. So, he uses something she will understand, something more to the point; the reason she's at the well alone in the middle of the day. Just like she's looking for physical water to satisfy her, she's also looking for love in physical relationships. This is evidenced by her five marriages and her live-in relationship. But Jesus is offering her something else, someone more. Water and love that exceed the physical and do what we are really longing for.

Let me illustrate it this way –

- Jesus is the true bridegroom – John 3:28-30
- Proposals happened at wells in the OT –
  - Gen 24 – Isaac and Rebekah
  - Gen 29 – Jacob and Rachel
  - Ex 2 – Moses and Zaphora

This encounter is much like a marriage proposal:

- The future bridegroom (or surrogate) journeys to a foreign land (vv. 1-6)
- There he meets a girl at a well (vv. 6-7)
- Someone, the man or maiden, draws water from the well (vv. 7-15)
- The maiden rushes home to bring news of the stranger (vv. 28-30, 39-42)
- a betrothal is arranged, usually after the prospective groom has been invited to a betrothal meal (vv. 31-38).

Jesus is the true Water. Jesus is the true Lover.

One more important Note: There's something I haven't told you about Jacob's well. It is where Dinah, Jacob's daughter, was raped by.....Shechem (the son of Hamor the Hivite) and two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, murdered an entire family, an entire family, in revenge – Gen 33:18-34:4. No wonder the Samaritans and Jews hate each other.

When this Samaritan woman comes out of town and finds a Jewish man sitting by the well, we all hold our breath and cross our fingers, hoping the story will end differently this time around. And it does!

- h) 17 - *The woman answered him, "I have no husband."*
- i) 18 - *Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';<sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."*
- j) 19 - *The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."*

The light is shining. But it's not yet bright enough. It's on but not fully. It's not enough to think that Jesus is a good teacher. And, once again, the woman turns the conversation to the material, physical and temporal.

- k) 20 – *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."*
- l) 21-24 - *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.<sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.<sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

**APP:** Water, husbands and mountains are false gods who cannot save! What are yours?

- m) 25 - *The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."*
- n) 26 - *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."*
- o) 27 - *Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"*
- p) 28-30 - *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"<sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him.*
- q) 39-42 - *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.<sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word.<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of*

*what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.*

*John 1:4-5 - In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....*

- a) The Pharisees didn't grasp the light of Jesus*
- b) But the Pharisees couldn't stop the light of Jesus*

*8-14– [Jesus is] The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, [like who believed in his name, [the people of Shechem] he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, [like Jews and Samaritans] but of God.*

John said it and he uses the rest of his Gospel to illustrate it. Don't miss that as you read the rest of this book because the rest of the book is just an exposition of those verses.

**Conclusion/Application:** And now comes the ultimate question.

Do you 'see Him'? Do you 'grasp,' 'understand,' 'comprehend' it? Has the 'light' turned on?

That Jesus is God, come in human form, to save you from your false gods that only torment you – like a woman standing alone in the heat of the day at a well that only leaves her thirsting for Something else and Someone more?

Community Groups:

- 1 – In what city does this text begin?
- 2 – Why does Jesus leave for Galilee?
- 3 – What is so startling about Jews going through Samaria?
- 4 – What people groups might be considered untouchables in our world?
- 5 – What is so amazing about Jesus approaching this woman?
- 6 – What strikes does the Samaritan woman have against her?
- 7 – Read Isaiah 53:3-5a. What words that demonstrate Christ's entering into our suffering?
- 8 – Read Hebrews 13:11-14. What is the writer encouraging his readers to do?
- 9 – Why is the conversation about the woman's husband really not out of synch?
- 10 – How can water, husbands and mountains be viewed as false idols/
- 11 – What 'light' turned on for you as you read this passage and heard it preached?