

**The Word Became Flesh
(Week 9)
John 4:1-26
“The Unthinkable Just Happened”**

Introduction

“What do you think? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘My son, go work in the vineyard today.’ He answered, ‘I don’t want to’, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the man went to the other and said the same thing. ‘I will sir.’ he answered, but he didn’t go. Which of the two did his fathers will?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.” **Matthew 21:28-31**

The Pharisees in Judea apparently wanted to stir up a rivalry between John The Baptist and Jesus. Everyone could see for themselves that a great number of those who had followed John had left him to follow Christ. While it made John happy, it stirred up a controversy for others. And the religious leaders were egging it on. They wanted both of these men to just go away. So, as a result, they were willing to do everything in their power to see that it happened. And what better way to put an end to what they saw as a threat to their corrupt system, than to cause an all out “holy war” between Jesus and John? The Son of God saw right through it and left the area altogether.

It is interesting to examine the Greek used in this text for “he left Judea”. The word “aphiemi” in the Greek is the same word used to describe a divorce in those days, when a man “left his wife”. Don’t miss out on the symbolic nature of what is occurring in this passage. Jesus turned His back on these evil religious leaders and wrote them off altogether. He knew their evil hearts from the inside out. He didn’t need anyone else’s opinion on the matter. He already knew.

Jesus, however, would not entrust Himself to them, since He knew them all and because He did not need anyone to testify about man; for He himself knew what was in a man. **John 2:24-25**

So when these wicked religious leaders tried to stir up a controversy that was nonexistent, Jesus simply let the area. He also left them to their own devices. They were well on their way to spending an eternity in hell. The wrath of God had remained upon them (**John 3:36**), because they had rejected The Son of God. Jesus knew full well that the day was coming for an all out confrontation with these phonies. But that time was not yet at hand. So He left them behind to go and offer His gift of salvation to those who would listen. His journey to do just that began in the most unlikely of places! Samaria. No self-respecting Jew would ever be caught dead in such a place! The Samaritans were considered as unclean, outcasts from the “respectable” religious Jews. But these are exactly the kind of folks that Jesus came to save.

Even His own disciples had a lot to learn about the marvelous grace of God. “**For God so loved THE WORLD...**” The full meaning of this verse had not completely “sunk in”, as it were, even for those closest to Jesus. But they were about to witness its meaning first hand. While their master sent them out on a grocery run, He revealed His grace to the most undeserving of people, a sinful Samaritan woman. A person that everyone would have thought was beyond any hope of redemption. But Jesus knew better! Let us reexamine this wonderful message of grace today and be reminded that God is willing to save those that the rest of us have forgotten. The vilest sinner can still be washed clean by the blood of Christ. This is a story about a woman at a well, who was offered living water for the cleansing of her soul. Hers is a story of The Road, The Rejected, and The Revelation.

The Road (vs. 1-6)

When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard He was making and baptizing more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea and went again to Galilee. He had to travel through Samaria, so He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from His journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon. **John 4:1-6**

There are some important truths that we should glean from these verses. The first part we have already addressed in the introduction. Jesus turned His back on the religious leaders of Judea and began the journey back to Galilee. We will not belabor this particular point any longer. But there is another key word in this passage that we need to see.

When John tells us that Jesus **“had to travel through Samaria” (vs. 4)** this is not a geographical decision, but rather, a directive from God. For you see, there was in those days more than one way to get from Judea to Galilee. While it is true, that the shortest route was through Samaria, most Jews adamantly refused to take this route. The thought of going through the villages of the Samaritans was so reprehensible that they considered the very soil of those places unclean to be upon the soles of their shoes!

This prejudice goes all the way back to *The Old Testament*. After the reign of Solomon, the northern part of Israel split off from the southern portion. The country became divided, and this split resulted in chaos, the worship of false gods, and the overall weakness in the once mighty nation of Israel. The Northern Kingdom, as a punishment for its sins and rebellion against her God, was later conquered by the Assyrians, and the Southern Kingdom would be conquered by the king of Babylon for the same exact reasons.

When the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom around 721BC (**2 Kings 17**), they left only the poorest Jews behind. The Assyrians believed that the nations that they conquered could be best “managed” if the peoples were assimilated into a more Assyrian friendly culture. Therefore, they transplanted foreigners into the land, and as a result, the people living in this region became a mix of the poorest Jews blended with an eclectic mix of other nations. The result was a cross breed of both people and religion. Although the Samaritans held on to many of the religious observances of the Jews, the religion that came out from this mingling of peoples was very different from traditional Judaism.

After the end of the Babylonian exile, when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom in order to re-establish traditional Judaism by rebuilding the Temple of The LORD, many came from the Northern Kingdom and offered to help. But this offer was rejected by Nehemiah, for he was not willing to compromise the doctrines of The Law of Moses with the cultic worship of the Samaritans. This was the beginning of a fierce rivalry that endured for centuries and into the time of Christ. And the hatred between these two groups of related peoples is hard for us to completely understand, even in our world today that is rife with all types of prejudice.

But Christ refused to write these people off, as the religious Jews had. He had come to save that which was lost, not to condemn. His disciples were about to learn for themselves that the **“whosoever”** of **John 3:16** meant exactly that! And it would come as a complete shock to them! So Jesus did not take the road to Samaria because it was the only way that He could go. He took it because it was the only way for the people there to receive the gift of God. He chose the road less traveled so that He could bring salvation to those whom others had deemed unfit to receive it. By the way, this is why us lowly Gentiles are saved today as well! Aren't you glad that Jesus thought we were worth saving? How thankful are you, that Christ knew the way to your house, and not only did He know just the right road to get to you, but He was also willing to take it?

The Rejected (vs. 7-9)

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give Me a drink." Jesus said to her, because His disciples had gone into town to buy food.

'How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' she asked Him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. John 7:7-9

Jesus had sent His disciples into town to buy provisions from the Samaritans. A chore which I am fairly certain, they weren't that thrilled in performing. For once again, this would force them not only to advance further into "enemy" territory, but now they would be further "defiling themselves" by actual business dealings with these "unclean" people. If you are going to be a disciple of Christ, don't be surprised, when He calls you to get out of your comfort zone in order to reach those that He died for!

Enter the Samaritan woman. I wonder if she actually passed by these disciples as she came out of town and headed toward the well as they were going in? I wonder if they crossed to the other side of the road in order to keep their distance from her. For with but a casual glance it would have been obvious just what kind of woman she was. No one takes their water jar to fill it in the hottest part of the day, unless they are trying to avoid all those other women who would do it in the cool of the evening.

For you see, not only was this woman an outcast by the Jews, she was an outcast among her own people. Her lifestyle wasn't even acceptable among the people that the Jews considered unclean. She was an outcast from among the outcasts. How shocked she must have been, when this Jewish man asked her for water. For Jewish men were not allowed to converse with strange women of their own country, much less this unclean foreigner. She must have wondered what He could have possibly wanted from her.

I am thankful that God so loved the world, that He wasn't afraid to reach out to the most wretched of us! I am reminded here of the amazing grace of God.

But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

The Bible often shows us stark contrasts in order to prove a point. Just look at the comparisons between Nicodemus the Pharisee and this sinful Samaritan woman. They are astounding to consider. He was a Jewish man. She was a Samaritan woman. These back to back encounters with Christ are astoundingly different, and yet, entirely similar. Nicodemus was devoutly religious. She was pagan. He came to Jesus at night, and she met with Him in the heat of the noonday sun. These two were as different, quite literally, as night and day, but they had one thing in common. They were both lost and in desperate need of a Savior. **"For God so loved... The WORLD."**

The Revelation (vs. 10-26)

Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would ask Him, and He would give you living water."

"Sir," said the woman, "You don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'? You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are You? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life."

“Sir,” the woman said to Him. “give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and come here to draw water.”

“Go call your husband”. He told her. “and come back here.”

“I don’t have a husband.” she answered.

“You have correctly said. ‘I don’t have a husband.’” Jesus said. “For you’ve had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

“Sir” the woman replied. “I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place of worship is in Jerusalem.”

Jesus told her. “Believe Me, woman, an hour 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, because salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and is now here, where the true worshippers will worship The Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, The Father wants such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth.”

The woman said to Him, “I know that the Messiah is coming.” (Who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will explain everything to us.”

Jesus told her, “I, The One speaking to you, AM He.”
John 4:10-26

And now we come to the “meat” of this beloved story. Jesus asks her to draw a drink for Him, because in His humanity, He was hot, tired, and thirsty. It is important to interject here that it was He Who created this water to begin with, and therefore, could have miraculously raised the water level to the top of the well with just a word. But Jesus never performed a miracle for Himself, but instead lived life as we live it. So he asked her to draw Him some water. Her response was one of shock and uneasiness.

When she asked Him why He would even speak to her, His answer must have confused her all the more.

“If you knew the gift of God... ”

There it is again. For God so loved that He GAVE. Do you know the gift today? She didn’t, but she was about to get acquainted. For He was about to reveal Himself to her. He speaks to her of the “living water” that can only be received from Him. Now, we know from studying The Word that He is referring to the filling of The Holy Spirit that every true believer understands full well. But she was much like Nicodemus, seeing only the physical realm and not the spiritual one. Just as Nic didn’t understand the concept of spiritual rebirth, as opposed to natural birth, she couldn’t distinguish between actual physical water from the spiritual “living water”. This just goes to show that no matter how “religious” or “irreligious” a lost person is, no one can grasp the spiritual without assistance from The Spirit Himself.

She doesn’t even understand how He can provide her with any kind of water at all, when He doesn’t even have a bucket (**vs. 11**)! I love that verse! But now she begins to inquire further. She asks:

“Are you greater than our father Jacob...”? (vs 12)

Now don’t miss the implication here. She went from calling Him a Jew, to Sir, and now finally she speaks as if they are related! Indeed, both Jews and Samaritans were descended from Jacob. I doubt that she

even understands it at this point, but she is being drawn to Jesus by The Spirit of God. She wants to be identified with Him, but she isn't quite there yet. She asks Him to give her some of this "living water" that He is speaking of. But there is something that is standing in the way. And Jesus gets right to the point.

"Go call your husband..."

Ah, there it is. The sin that is separating her from a Holy and Righteous God. No one will ever come to Jesus apart from repentance. If you long for the living water that He offers, you need to be ready to deal with your sin! Notice how chatty she had become up to this point in the conversation. And when Jesus puts His finger right on the problem, her answer becomes so vague.

"I don't have a husband." (vs 17)

No indeed. Her life was filled with one adulterous act after another. Five different husbands, and now she didn't even bother to have another ceremony. She was living in open sin and rebellion against God. And Jesus called her on it. She changes the subject as quickly as she can and starts talking religion. I am amazed at when you start talking with someone about their sin, they want to talk religion instead of repentance. I encountered this reality just yesterday with someone that I was trying to witness to!

The Samaritans had built their own temple after Nehemiah refused to allow them to help rebuild the one in Jerusalem. The Jews from the southern kingdom of Judah actually invaded Samaria and destroyed the temple built by the Samaritans, for they considered it an affront to the One True God, thus furthering the division between the two nations. The woman at the well decided to use this as a topic of distraction. Jesus does not go for it. He simply told her that salvation is of the Jews. God gave them the Law and the promise of a Messiah. And one day, because of the finished work of the Messiah, God would be worshipped from all around the globe in truth and in Spirit! (That phrase simply means though a real relationship, rather than just empty religion by the way.) And He also knew that the Temple that stood in Jerusalem was going to be destroyed, just as the one in Samaria had been. She had no idea what she was even talking about, but Jesus knows all things.

Notice the progression of her perception of Him once more. He has gone from a Jew, to sir, and now to a prophet. She is getting warmer! The Spirit of God is peeling back the layers one at a time in order for her to see the truth. Then she brings up The Messiah. He is the one that even the Samaritans knew would come into the world and reveal the truth of God. When she asked Jesus about Him, something wondrous occurs!

"Jesus told her, 'I, the one speaking to you, am He.'"

John 4:26

The literal translation of the Greek text in this sentence is, "*I, that speak to you, I AM*". Oh what a great verse! Jesus just revealed Himself completely to her as not only the Messiah, but The Great I Am, the One that is to be worshipped not by ceremony and religious ritual, but in Spirit and in truth! The Samaritan woman believed in Him and was saved! I find it so amazing that the first time that Jesus completely reveals His true identity to someone in Scripture, it is to a person that no one else would have even bothered talking to! And **that**, my friends, is a most perfect example of the matchless grace of God! No matter what everyone else thinks about you today, Christ died... for YOU. So I have but just these two questions remaining this morning: Has Jesus ever revealed Who He truly is to you? Have you tasted the living water that only He can give? Come to the well this morning. Come to Jesus... and live.

Any let all those who have tasted the living water say... **TRUTH!!**