



#2 In the “Worth It” Series

Thirsty

Forest Park Church

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A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table that held a display of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding.

ALL BUT ONE!!!

He paused, took a deep breath, thought about what had happened, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned. He told his buddies to go on without him, asked one of them to call his wife when he arrived home and explain he'd be taking a later flight, and waved goodbye. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor.

He was glad he did. The 16-year-old girl was blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping and no one to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table, and helped organize her display. As he did this he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket.

When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$40 for the damage we did. Are you okay?"

She nodded through her tears. He continued with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly."

As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind called out to him, "Mister...." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you, Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride and wondered what she'd meant. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "Are you, Jesus?"

At first glance, you might wonder what the connection of this story has to do with the Gospel today.

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It started with:

I. A Conversation

Have you noticed how often we downplay the importance of human conversation?

- Someone says, "We were just chatting, just passing the time," with the implication that nothing of significance took place.
- Or maybe we come to think that conversing with strangers is something to be avoided.
- But the greatest proof that people downplay the importance of human interaction is the constant attention paid to our phones, even in the presence of close friends and loved ones.
- We'd rather look at a picture of someone's homemade banana split than have the conversation that could prevent a relationship split.

Conversations matter.

- It was a conversation between 17-year-old John Lennon and 15-year-old Paul McCartney that led, first to friendship, and then to the formation of the Beatles.
- A series of conversations between high school chums Bill Gates and the late Paul Allen led to joint business ventures that culminated in the creation of Microsoft, arguably the world's most influential computing company.
- And it was an all-night conversation with J. R. R. Tolkien (or most of a night, anyway) that led to the Christian conversion of Oxford atheist, Prof.

C. S. Lewis, who then went on to become the greatest Christian apologist of the 20th century.

The conversation Jesus has with 'the women at the well' is one of the longest conversations with Jesus and another in the Gospels

- This is a special moment. If you are like me, this **is** the type of conversation that you would long to have with Christ.
- A 'one on one conversation, whereby you could ask Jesus questions and he in turn would tell you what you need to hear

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John 4

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, only his disciples), he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

Let's work through some of the details of this exchange between Jesus and the woman at the well

- We have Jesus and the disciples, traveling from Judea to Galilee
- They are traveling there because - the pressure has increased, the heat has been turned up
- The Pharisees had heard of the work of Jesus have turned up the heat so they were traveling to move away from Judea to quiet back-waters Galilee

Traveling through Samaria and through Sychar is not necessarily the most direct route

However, our scripture tells us that *"He had to pass through Samaria"*

- Maybe because of the pressure of the Pharisees, they took a route that respectable Jews would not look to find them
- Maybe it was because Jesus had something more important in mind...
- So Jesus and the disciples, reach the outskirts of the city Sychar and the disciples go ahead to buy food - Jesus is left at the well of Jacob - tired in the mid-day heat and thirsty

A woman - all by herself - came to draw water

- In the desert or any hot place, you don't go out in the heat to do heavy work
- Some of you might be familiar with the term 'island time'
- I know when I was in Fiji it was called 'Fijian time' & I have heard that it is also called 'Jamaican time'
- In the heat - you move slowly and don't look for hard work - like carrying heavy water

So this woman was out of touch with the other women of the city - who would have come in the cool of the morning or evening

We don't know why she was coming at the wrong time of the day -

- it might have been because the other women didn't want her with them
- It might have been self-imposed,
- she might have not wanted to be with them

The conversation starts with Jesus asking her for water

She responds by telling us just how strange a request this is:

The Jews consider Samaritans as half-breeds

- The roots for this thought lead back to Nehemiah and Ezra leading the returning exiled Jews to build back the wall and temple in Jerusalem

- It was made clear by God that many of the people led by the leaders had chosen to disobey God and marry into the cultures around them.
- The problem with this was that they were once again opening themselves to a challenge we still face in the world today Idolatry.
- They wanted God AND the world around them.
- It doesn't work this way!
- There was a great revival and many repented and devoted themselves ONLY to GOD
- However, the people that became the Samaritans refused and from that point on were regarded by the Jews as unclean and half-breeds

Jews and Samaritans had different

- centers of worship,
- different capital cities,
- and different scriptures

Jews believed the Scripture was composed of the Law and the Prophets.
The Samaritans believed the Scripture was just composed of the Law.

In Jewish eyes, Samaritans were ethnic traitors

Then there is the fact that she is a woman and Jesus is a Rabbi

- Men and women had nothing to do with each other in public
- To give you an extreme example of this:
- One group of pious men were known as "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees" because they closed their eyes when they saw a woman coming down the street, even if it meant walking into a wall and breaking their noses.

At first glance, she has three very big strikes against her

1. She is an outsider coming in the heat of the day by herself
2. a woman in public
3. and a Samaritan

But it is to this person that Jesus has one of the longest recorded conversations of the New Testament.

Visiting with Jesus demands:

II. Changing the Focus

This conversation begins on two levels - the physical and the spiritual

- Jesus wanted to address the deep spiritual need within her.
- She was completely focused on herself, and what might be at stake for her.
- He had to patiently wade through aggressive rhetoric and spiritual numbness and wait for the moment of truth.

John 4:9

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.) 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." 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? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

***Vs 16** Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.*

Jesus' request for water is meant with a seemingly cynical response

- Here is another man talking to her even though he shouldn't and she might be assuming he is like all the rest of the men she has come across

Jesus counters that with a subtle messianic claim and a counter-offer of **'living waters'**

- The woman's understanding remains on the physical - questioning how Jesus could offer water without anything to draw water with

Again Jesus brings her back to the spiritual providing her with the offer of water springing up, coming up from the ground - so much that she would never be thirsty again, **that it is the water of eternal life**

- Again the woman misses the true offer and again cynicism enters the conversation
- She would like THIS water so that she might never be thirsty or work for water again

Seeing that she is not understanding what He is offering or especially who He is - Jesus tries another approach - "*Go and get your husband!*"

- This question catches her off guard & she is forced to answer that she is without a husband
- Jesus acknowledges that she has finally let down her guard and spoken truthfully to Him
- He presses the point further **and more personally** - tells her details about her life that no stranger would know
- That she has had five husbands and is presumable living an adulterous relationship

This is too personal for her and she changes the subject - asks him a theological question about the differences between their ethnic worship practices

This however has NOW achieved what Jesus was trying to do - they are now both speaking on the spiritual level and Jesus teaches her some important truths

- where one worships is not important, **but how** - in spirit and truth
- God **seeks** true worshippers of spirit and truth
- Salvation will come through the Jews

This point may seem a little vague and possibly harsh to this Samaritan woman, but what He is saying is

- That the Jewish people are right in their theology
- They made the right decision generations before to completely surrender to God's plan for their lives.
- And that **in Jesus** there is the fulfillment of the prophets
- remember that the Samaritan's scripture does not include the prophets!

But most importantly Jesus has set the stage for this woman to recognize that by God's grace, they stood on common ground!

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John 4:23

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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 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." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

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III. Common Ground

At last - she is connecting spiritually and declares that she knows that the messiah is coming and He will declare all things

- To which Jesus simply says to her “*I, who speak to you - am He*”

Jesus has declared for the first time to anyone in John's gospel that He is the Messiah - and it is to an outcast... Samaritan... woman in public...

The disciples return and she abandons her original water-gathering purpose and goes back to the city to share the good news that the messiah is here

- And a miracle occurs - the people believe her
- This ‘woman of questionable background’ and mix-race heritage has become God’s evangelist

It is in the hated Samaritan land that Jesus declares to His disciples

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John 4:35

*Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, **lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.***

Jesus the Christ left the proud Pharisees,

- And communicates the treasures of everlasting life with a poor sinful woman and stranger. Which was delivered to the Jews,
- **But delivers the news in such a way that He here calls both Samaritans and Jews back to Himself**

In this powerful story, the woman is transformed and many come to believe

We’ve probably all heard of the WWJD approach - What would Jesus Do?

- I would like to suggest that instead of guessing at what Jesus might do - like we can somehow enter our Lord’s mind

- **Let's change that to - WDJJ - What DID Jesus doand act like it**

We are Christ's ambassadors

- We are citizens of heaven
- We have a purpose so much bigger than this world
- We have been entrusted with a message
- God has placed the Plan that was established before this world was into my hands and yours!

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2 Corinthians 5:20

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God.

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John 4:28

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?" They went out of town and were coming to him.

*Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." **But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."***

This was his purpose from before the foundations of the world!

When you fulfill your God-given purpose you are truly satisfied!!

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Jesus was bringing:

IV. Transformation

BE transformed - being Jesus' agent in this world

And maybe, just maybe... one day someone that is 'blind in worldly ways' will ask you the question

Are you Jesus?

That's our mission - to be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life, and grace.

If we claim to know Him, might I suggest that we live, walk and act as He would?

- Even if in some ways we might think that we are not worthy of the task
- Remember who Jesus first declared who he was – an outcast, Samaritan, woman in public
- One with three strikes against her
- This is whom Jesus used to be His evangelist to her community

Knowing Christ is living the ‘**Word**’ as life unfolds day to day.

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Romans 5:10-11

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Conclusion:

Lessons we can learn from this text

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1. The biggest opportunities you may ever have will probably happen while you're waiting for something else.

1 Peter 3:15

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

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2. If you with people you're surrounded by the harvest!

John 4:35

*Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, **lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.***

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3. An Ambassador must be patient

The true test God has given you is being patient with those whom you find challenging.

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4. Start the conversation

- Be Humble – “Can I have a drink”
- Be Gentle – “How is it that you ask me for a drink”
- BE a place of Rest - “whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again”

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Matthew 11:28-30

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

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Maybe today God wants to start a conversation with you!

Maybe today it's time for you to start that conversation with someone who is lost and blind to the trust you know.

Go... Go as the woman at the well did – singing God's praises for the joy that is in you!