



A Bible Study from the LCMS Northern Illinois District

Incarnate Community Bible Study Sermon Series

Session II Community Around Christ



Helping congregations be more centered on a rich life of Word and Sacrament,
with congregational support in transitions as well as time of joys and sorrows.



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Incarnate Community
Northern Illinois District Bible Study and Sermon Series
Week II Community Around Christ – Sermon Notes
Pastor Bill Yonker

“The Woman at the Well”
John 4:1-30, 39-42

Textual Considerations

1. It is somewhat common knowledge that because Jews and Samaritans seldom associated with each other, except when extremely necessary, Jesus traveling through Samaria, particularly through central Samaria, should initially “raise the eyebrows” of the reader. When going from north to south Jews would hurriedly pass through Samaria from Galilee to Judea along the eastern edge of the Jordan River but seldom through the heart of the interior when traveling from south to north.

Samaritans were “the untouchables” to the Jews. It was said that even the sandals should not have the dust of Samaria on them. Jesus purposely went through Samaria to intentionally associate with the Samaritans. (Note Bene: in John 8:48-49 the Jewish authorities accuse Jesus of being “a Samaritan and demon-possessed.” Jesus answers: “*I am not possessed by a demon, but I honor My Father and you dishonor Me.*” It’s interesting that although Jesus was a Jew and recognized openly as such, Jesus does not decry this “name-calling” of being a Samaritan and does not dismiss the Samaritans as part of His people.)

2. Jesus is alone at the well, tired and thirsty. (He didn’t have anything to draw water and this is dry, arid land.) The Samaritan woman comes to the well – alone, tired, and thirsty. John says it’s the “sixth hour” which scholars understand to be 12 noon on John’s timing. This should be a second raising of the eyebrows for the reader. Drawing water was normally done by the women of the family, but it was hardly ever done by a lone woman (the well is outside the protection of the village where bandits or ne’er-do-wells hid to prey on the weak and vulnerable) and it was almost never done at noon – in the heat of the day. Usually a group of women would go to the well at sundown for the following day or before sunup on the day they needed water. This woman was not only a Samaritan, an outcast, but even the other outcast women wouldn’t be with her. She was *an outcast of the outcasts!*

Note Bene: Jesus died on the cross outside the protection of the city, exhausted, thirsty, and scorned by even those who were crucified *with* Him. Here Jesus is truly the Outcast of the outcasts! No one knows better than Jesus the intensity of being alienated, isolated, and separated from all others!

3. Notice Jesus speaks first. Certainly, she was expecting some sort of abuse as Jesus would be recognized as a Jew (and probably a rabbi) by His dress and prayer shawl with tassels.



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Jesus' words are both kind (His question showed He was willing to be ceremonially unclean in order to converse with this woman – the people who God delighted in serving mattered more than principles that were offered to serve them) and alarming – Jesus was again causing an “eyebrow raise” to the reader who would know Jesus was upsetting the order of social strata: a Jew talking to a Samaritan, a Jew willing to touch what a Samaritan touches, a Man talking to a woman, both the man and woman were alone.

4. A series of questions from the woman to Jesus next takes place. She addresses “the elephant in the room.” Knowing who she is and knowing what Jesus probably is, she knows the rules, so she basically asks: “why is all of this happening?” Jesus doesn't answer her direct question but tells her about our “Gift-giving God” who happens to be right in front of her! Jesus even talks about the “gift” of God. The Greek word here is δωρεαν (doe-ree-`ahn) and is only used in this Gospel meaning an absolutely free offering, no strings attached. This gift is the Holy Spirit. She now asks a question Jesus again indirectly answers. She sees He has no bucket or vessel to draw water so asks how He can get the water. He begins to reveal HE IS the vessel, and it's not water of the world, but water of God He offers. Jesus' water is not for the slaking of physical thirst but spiritual thirst!

5. Of course the woman wants this water. Jesus, in His statement to her, shows He already knows this woman: go call your husband. Obviously, her face and hope must have fallen. She “fesses up” she doesn't have a husband. Jesus then reveals His complete knowledge of this woman by saying she had five husbands and now was living with a sixth man outside the legal, moral, and religious bounds of propriety. Some have suggested the woman was widowed five times. That doesn't fit with the nuances of the text of this woman not only being alone but abandoned, and certainly the Greek would have said Jesus said she was widowed five times. This woman was rejected, neglected, and disrespected. It becomes more obvious why she is alone (the other women saw her as an untouchable) and felt totally alienated, isolated, and separated – except by the One who was waiting (?) for her!

6. In verse 25 Jesus delivers the goods! The Messiah all have been waiting for – including the Samaritans – is talking to her. Jesus boldly reveals Himself as such. In the Greek Jesus says, “Εγω ειμι, ο λαλων σοι” – *“I AM, He speaking to you.”* Jesus purposely uses the great I AM of the Old Testament in identifying Himself as both LORD and Messiah. No wonder her actions now betray her former lifestyle of loneliness and independence. She has just had her life changed by the God of the universe!

7. When Jesus' disciples returned from the village, notice what they didn't do! They didn't try to be Lord of the LORD and a) try to tell Him how to do His work (i.e. Peter not going to allow Jesus to die) or b) insulate Jesus from an undesirable person (i.e. little children brought to Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman with a demon possessed daughter). Perhaps they noticed the importance of Jesus welcoming this outcast of the outcasts into



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community. Perhaps they were too shocked to see all the norms and mores being broken. Regardless, they behave themselves.

8. This woman then does the remarkable: she goes to the very ones who had shunned her, abandoned her, left her to face elements outside the village alone to show them the loving, saving God in Jesus. She is a mirror in miniature of what Jesus Himself has done at the incarnation! He left the heavens to be born a man so He could go to the very ones who had shunned and abandoned God and show them a loving, saving God in Himself!

9. As many have noted, it is important to highlight that this woman left her water jar when she ran back to the village to tell everyone about Jesus. Now that she has met Jesus, her life has changed forever. Old ways of doing things, old feelings, old paradigms, old thought patterns have now evaporated. No longer was she living for the moment and the satisfying of physical needs and wants. She had been offered the Spiritual draught of Jesus and she drank deeply!

10. Humbly, she goes to the people full of hope, joy, holy passion, and exuberance. She exaggerates in her description of Jesus (So far as we know – maybe their conversation included other parts of her life John doesn't tell us about.) but then asks a question to the townsfolk that she herself already is sure of the answer: *"Could this man be the Messiah?"* "Messiah talk" was always code for people there and then. Even from an outcast, even from an outcast of the outcasts, identification and verification of one thought to be the Messiah must surely be investigated and either substantiated or negated. So, the people come running.

11. It's so important to know Jesus "didn't mail it in." He brought it in. He picked the right person in which to reveal Himself and then He willingly went into the village with the villagers so they would believe. Jesus surrounded Himself with the folk, and by His Words many came to believe. It was important to Jesus to have person-to-person(s) interaction.

Sermon Thoughts

A. Jesus, the ultimate Outcast of the outcasts, steps into the life of another outcast of the outcasts to show that God, in His grace and mercy, wants to welcome in those He claims as His own. Jesus sabotages a lonely woman in her isolated state and ushers her into a new kind of community where she can be whole and healthy.

B. Jesus then steps into the lives of more outcasts to welcome them into His kingdom and family. They were the unlikely receivers of Jesus' love and ministry – until one understands how much Jesus loves everyone!

C. In a time where so many fear missing out (FOMO) or worse, being left out (FOBLO), Jesus comes to invite in, bring in, welcome in, and secure in those for whom He loves. Jesus, being



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born into our world then dying in our sins and then rising in the Father's power, turns we, who were on the *outs*, now as part of His *ins*.

D. For those who have felt beat up, put down, done in, or left out, Jesus says welcome to the family, welcome to the kingdom, welcome to forever in heaven! His blood is shed for the sins of all regardless of their social, economic, age, gender, or racial status.

E. Jesus delights in being in communion with people and He delights in His people being in communion with each other. Even the marginalized and ostracized in our communities are an essential part of the Welcomed Ins.

Suggested Sermon Themes

- "When The Out-Sides Get Turned In"
- "Sabotaged to be Made Whole and Healthy"
- "Unlikely But Not Unloved!"
- "A Most Holy Communion With Those Thought To Be Unholy"

