**John 4:5-30, 39-42 (ESV)**

[5] So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. [6] 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.

[7] There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) [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." [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? [12] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." [13] Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [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."

[16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." [17] The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." [19] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. [20] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." [21] Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [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. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." [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." [26] Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

[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?" [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to him.

[39] Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." [40] So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. [41] And many more believed because of his word. [42] 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."

**“God’s Service To Stragglers”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Last week it was a Pharisee named Nicodemus. This week it is a public sinner with no name. Last week it was in the seclusion of darkness that a man came to Jesus. This week it is during the brightest time of day that Jesus came to a woman. Last week it was a Jewish leader who spoke with authority. This week it is a Samaritan woman who has no authority. Last week a man believed after Jesus’ death. This week a woman believes being present before Jesus’ life. Last week words were spoken about being born again. This week words are spoken about “living” water. Two contrasting events, yet one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Taboos exist in every culture. The word simply means “not allowed” or “forbidden.” Strong taboos existed between Jews and Samaritans. They did not talk to each other. They did not worship in the same place. They had nothing to do with one another. It was taboo to do anything less. So once again, we notice the Savior of the world steps in-between the apparent division between sinners. His Jewish disciples going off to get food made room for the Gospel to be shared with this Samaritan woman. God’s Son alone has no taboos. He always teaches with the Spirit and Truth. Just like last week, if anyone can witness the good news of salvation in Jesus, it is going to be Jesus. God’s service to stragglers is His saving grace that He loves to give to sinners.

Gracious words were hidden under Jesus request for water. Wearied from a long journey. The Son of God was also completely a man. He was thirsty. Yet, Jesus never thought about Himself as if He came to be served and not to serve. His need turned into an opportunity to offer a woman what she needed the most. Her reaction was not to the request as much as to the reason for speaking anything. The dividing lines so clearly drawn between Jews and Samaritans had been breached! Someone said something to break the silence. Unknowingly that someone just happened to be God’s Son, the Savior. He said to 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.” Of course, she did not know nor was able to ask. Everything rested on the saving grace that Jesus loves to give.

It is by His Word that God’s Son steps into lives. The conversation starts from the ground up. Daily life is what captures the attention and so it is there where Christ meets sinners. However, the taboo in our culture is that church and my life remain separate. The shocking fact is we miss out on who is speaking in this world. Luther points out,

“If we looked upon it as the Word of God, we would be glad to go to church, to listen to the sermon, and to pay attention to the precious Word. There we would hear Christ say: “Give Me a drink!” But since we do not honor the Word of God or show any interest in our own salvation, we do not hear the Word. In fact, we do not enjoy listening to any preacher unless he is gifted...﻿﻿” [[1]](#footnote-1)

Like the woman getting water, the immediate needs of life blind us from what the Word says. If God would speak based upon how well we listen. Little would be said to save anyone. However, the compassion of Christ is to give faith to stragglers. St. Paul said, “…God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Once the great importance of what Jesus promised to give found a place in her ears. The woman was more than eager to receive this living water. The only problem is she had to face her sinful life. “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." Whether Jew or Samaritan they both had lax laws on divorce. Let alone, it seems her sixth husband was more of a live-in. Jesus made no room for excuses. The woman in response gave none. Instead, she called him a prophet. Bringing sinners to repentance was the task of prophets in the Old Testament. She looked for the forgiveness of God in the only place where a Samaritan goes Mt. Gerizim. Jesus said, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”

The truth of the matter is the Samaritans in Jesus’ time were basically churches corrupted by a sinful culture. As one commentator notes, “Jehovah was still nominally adored, but who also worshiped the gods of the heathen.”[[2]](#footnote-2) There are plenty using the Name of Jesus in churches, but the need for confessing sins has become taboo by our culture. Some go so far as to condone the sins people openly live-in and welcome them to the Sacrament. Sadly, it stands this way in some Lutheran church bodies. However, God is particular when it comes to repentance and forgiveness. Jesus proves to the Samaritan woman and us that He knows our whole life. He puts before us the sorry state of affairs that we must face about ourselves. Is this just to cause harm, to hold something over our head, to shame us into believing? No, it is to open our hard hearts so no excuse stands in the way of the savior that forgives all our sins. Christ gladly gives to His Church the Word and Sacraments declaring His deepest love to stragglers.

Neither the glorious temple in Jerusalem nor the mixed worship on Mt.Gerzim had a place before the presence of God’s Son. Jesus told the woman,

“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."

When we begin worship in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is by this spirit and truth of our one baptism into the Triune God that we know and receive all His gifts of salvation. The revelation of Jesus as God were absolving words of forgiveness that made the woman tear off. She broke pretty much every taboo by leaving her work, talking to men, and admitting to everyone He “told me everything that I ever did.” It was through her confession that God knew her as a sinner that many came to meet God as their Savior. She could not forgive them, but Christ could and why they declared, "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."

Two contrasting events between last week and this week. A Jewish Pharisee and today an sinful Samaritan. Yet, the same savior and Lord of all. Except, there is one difference. More Samaritans would flock to Christ in His ministry along with many more Gentiles later in the Church because they finally could neither hide their live or glory in them. God’s service to stragglers is His saving grace that He loves to give to sinners. May we be nothing more nor waste our time in denying it. Christ is nothing less than Savior for this sinful world. Hold to the promise of baptism into Jesus’ death that gives new life. Rejoice in the words of absolution from Christ’s office as we confess our sins to hear Him speak. Receive joy from the altar as the savior pours out His true body and blood from the cross. Amen. In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. Luther, M. (1999, c1957). *Vol. 22*: *Luther's works, vol. 22 : Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kretzmann, Popular commentary, vol. 1 427 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)