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JOHN 4:1-30

John Series

I don't know what God's going to do in your life today. I don't know what He's going to say or how He's going to work in your life. But God will speak to you today from His word as you listen to what He has to say to you from His word. Maybe it'll come from something I say or maybe something I say will spark something in the scriptures, but God is the teacher and He's the one we're seeking to be that teacher for us today. Let's just go before Him and ask Him to bless our time as we look at John 4 today.

[PRAYER] Lord, we are coming to you and asking you to be the teacher and to give us grace, the grace to understand the passage and the grace to apply it to our lives. Do that supernatural work, Lord, where we come in contact with you now, we connect with you in a personal way. Cause us to leave this place different people. Aspire to be the people that you've called us to be. In Jesus' name, amen.

John 4:1: Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now notice that Jesus is leaving for a reason. He's leaving Judea, going to Galilee for a reason. Verse 3 says *so he left*. It starts in verse 1 by saying *Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John*. There was this kind of pressure that He was getting from the Pharisees. He's going to leave Judea now for whatever reason, something to do with the Pharisees and they're scrutinizing Him and whatever. He's going to go down to Galilee and He's going to spend some time there in Galilee.

Verse 4: Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

I want you to see the geography of what's happening here. He was in Judea which is down in this area. Here's Jerusalem. These are the Judean hillside all around here. And then He's going to go, it says, down here to Galilee. This is the place where He's going to go. And this is Samaria. So there's three regions on the west side of the Jordan River. There's Judea, there's Samaria, and there's Galilee. Those are the three areas.

It says in the passage that Jesus had to go down to Samaria. He had to go through Samaria to get to Galilee. That is not exactly true. In fact no religious Jew would actually do that. Jesus was breaking tradition. He was breaking the culture of the day in order to do that.

In order for you to understand this story about the Samaritan woman, I'm going to take you back in history and give you some information, some history of what's happening in this passage. This will also help you understand the passage about the Good Samaritan.

Anytime we have the Samaritans in the Bible we've got some controversy going on. I want you to understand why. To take you back in history we're going to go back to 1400 years before Christ. We have Joshua and all his crew coming into the Promised Land. They crossed the Jordan River, they come into the land, they conquer the land in 1400 B.C. About 180 B.C. a kingdom has been established and it divides into two parts. So now we have two kingdoms in Israel. We have a northern kingdom up here and we have a southern kingdom down here. This is called Israel, this is called Judah.

About 200 years later – because none of the kings in the north were responsive to the Lord. All of them were bad kings. None of them listened to the Lord – God allowed them to be judged. So the Assyrians came in and took over this northern kingdom here.

What the Assyrians did when they took over an area is they came and they brought new people in and took some of those people out. Because they didn't want to them to gather together and revolt against paying their taxes or whatever. So the Assyrians brought new people in and those new people intermarried with the Jewish people over time and their religion even changed.

So the Jewish faith was changed a bit as they were trying to worship. They still believed in the five books of the Old Testament. That is, the Samaritans here believed in the five books of the Old Testament, but they twisted them a bit. So they believed that Abraham when he offered his son on Mount Mariah, which is right here in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, instead of offering him there, they believe that Abraham offered Isaac up on Mount Gerizim. When Noah's ark landed on Mount Ararat, they said, "Oh it didn't real land there," which was way over here in Turkey. They said it landed here on Mount Gerizim. So they really valued this mountain, Mount Gerizim. You're going to see that in the passage today as we look at John 4.

Now go back to verse 4 of John 4. It says, *Now he had to go through Samaria.* No respectable Jew would go through Samaria because the Jews hated the Samaritans. They hated them because they were half-breeds pretending to be Jews. That's how they viewed it. They were people who didn't have the true faith, the true religion, the true Judaism. So the Jews wouldn't have anything to do with the Samaritans. A good Jew would pray, "Thank you, Lord, that I am not a Samaritan" regularly. So there was this animosity between them.

That's why the story of the Good Samaritan is so powerful. Because the man was a Jewish man asking Jesus, "What is a good neighbor?" And Jesus says, "Let me tell you about a Samaritan man who went out of his way." And then he asked the Jewish man, "Which one was it? The priest, the Levite who went by? No. It was the Good Samaritan who was such a good neighbor." That's what makes the story so powerful.

Now we come to Jesus stopping at this particular place. No respectable Jew would do that. The Jews would leave Jerusalem, they would follow the path down to Jericho, they would cross over the Jordan River, they would go trans Jordan all the way up the path here, then they would cross over into Galilee up here. They would not go through Samaria. If a Jew went into Samaria when he came back into the Promised Land, into Judea, they would shake the dust off their feet to say, “We don’t we don’t want to have any dust on our feet.”

It’s interesting when Jesus was teaching His disciples He said to them, “If you go to someone and you tell them about the Lord and about the kingdom and they don’t respond to you, then you shake the dust off your feet.” In other words, Jesus is taking that illustration and applying it to their spiritual relationship.

Go back to verse 4. *Now he had to go through Samaria.* You have to wonder why is He going through Samaria? Why does it say He has to go there? I don’t think he’s saying He has to go there because geographically it was required to go there to get to Galilee.

I think he was saying is there was a woman there who needed the touch of Jesus. There’s a woman there who’s disillusioned with relationships. She’s been married five times. Five times she’s been married and she’s disillusioned with that and she needs the touch of Jesus, she needs to meet Jesus. So Jesus had to go there. There was a plan in place.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar (here’s Sychar right here), near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

Notice it says Jesus was *tired from the journey*. It just reminds us that Jesus was 100% God, 100% man. We see He was tired, He’s thirsty. It just reminds us again about Jesus.

Why twelve noon? Why is the time of day reported in the story? I think the time of day is important because if you were a woman coming to draw water from the well you would not come at twelve noon. There was a well in Sychar and there’s this well here outside of the city that we call Jacob’s well. But the well in Sychar is where most of the women come. They get up in the morning early, they’d all go out there, and when they’re at the well (remember they have their stone water pots and they’d have to fill them) and while they’re filling them then they would talk about the news of the day.

That’s how information was passed on, was at the well. That was the internet of the day or the newspaper of the day. They didn’t have any other way of getting the information, so they would share the things that were going on in town at the well. The women would find that out. They’d do that early in the mornings. All the women would gather.

But this woman couldn’t go there. She would not be accepted. Five husbands and the one she’s living with now isn’t her husband. So she’s living with a guy now. Even among the Samaritans that’s against the law, the spiritual law. It’s wrong what she’s doing. So she’s an outcast among the women there. Among the Samaritans she’s an outcast.

She's an outcast among outcasts. And Jesus is going to spend time with her. He's going to touch her in a very particular way. Anytime she went outside to the road outside of Sychar to the Jacob's well she'd be reminded of her sin, her weakness, the fact that she was dry in her soul. There's a woman drawing from the well of relationships with men and it's not satisfying her. She needs to meet Jesus who's going to help her.

Now what does Jesus see? When He sees this woman, what does He see? He sees a woman who's disillusioned with life, I think. I mean, when she first got married I'm sure that first marriage she was all hope. "Wow, this is great. Marriage is so fun. I'm so excited about this." And then something happened in that relationship. We do not know what it is. But she finds herself single again. Then she gets married a second time with more hopes about what this would look like. And then that relationship somehow ends. Then she gets married again a third time, and then a fourth time and a fifth time, each time investing herself in this new relationship. Finally after five times she's had it. "I'm not getting married again," she says. So she's just living with this guy and not even married to him. She's going to these wells or this well of relationships and she's not finding what she wants.

If you found a woman and you were talking to a woman like that, you knew about her history, what would you say to her? You knew that she needed Christ, would you say, "Hey you need to repent from your sins." Or "Let's talk about codependency here. It looks like you've got a problem in your relationship with men." Jesus doesn't do that.

Let's look at what He does starting in verse 7. *When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

He's alone with this woman at the well. They are alone together and He asks her for help, He asks her for something. "Would you give me something? Would you give me something to drink?" She never intended to be the way she was. She never intended to be married five times and now living with a sixth guy. She's disillusioned with life. She's got her hope in the wrong places and Jesus is going to help her see something different.

He asks her the simple question, *"Will you give me a drink?"* She could've turned Him down. She could've said, "Look. Guys have been taking stuff from me all my life. Get your own water." She could've done that. But she doesn't.

Notice verse 9. *The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)* I think she's surprised. "Wait a minute. Let me get this straight. You're even talking to me? Now you're asking me for a drink?"

See, the Jews wouldn't talk to a Samaritan. They'd rather starve to death or die of a thirst before they would talk to a Samaritan, let alone a Samaritan woman. The Jews wouldn't even talk to their own wives in public. They wouldn't talk to their daughters in public because they viewed

women as second class or not as whatever as men. It's interesting to me that Jesus continually over His ministries breaks down that barrier and values women, surprising the people around.

Verse 10: *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

He's saying, "I'm the gift of God and I can give you living water." I wonder what she must have thought. Married five times, maybe thinking, "Yeah, lots of guys have told me they're the gift of God before." But she doesn't do that. "You would've asked me and I *would have given you living water.*" What He's saying is she lacks spiritual insight. That's the challenge here that she needs if she could just see what's going on spiritually, life would change for her. So He says, "What you need is living water."

The solutions to life's problems aren't going to be found with money, they're not going to be found with governmental policies. It's not the Democrats or the Republicans are going to bring in huge change into our world. It's spiritual needs that need to be met and Jesus is bringing her to that conclusion.

I just love what He does. He talks about this living water. We know what the living water is. It's Jesus. But she doesn't know that. Maybe she thinks it's bubbling. Water from a brook or water from a stream. But Jesus is using a physical something to illustrate a spiritual something, just like He did with Nicodemus in the last chapter. Remember He talked about birth to illustrate a spiritual experience we have with God. Or earlier than that in chapter 2 He talks to the Pharisees and He talks about the temple. He says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it again." He's in the temple area, but He's not talking about the physical temple; He's talking about something spiritual. So Jesus is going to go back and forth and do that many times because He wants to illustrate a spiritual lesson.

Verse 11: *"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"*

She's gone from describing Him or talking to Him from just being a Jew, saying, "You're a Jew," now she's saying, "Are you greater than Jacob?" We'll see a progression as she continues to talk to Him. But now she goes to this idea about Jacob. I wonder what Jesus was thinking at that time because Jesus knew Jacob. Maybe He was thinking, "I can wrestle better than Jacob." Maybe He was thinking, "Jacob slept at the bottom of my stairway." See, Jesus knew Jacob well. This woman knew Jacob's well, but Jesus knew Jacob well. He knew all about Jacob.

The interesting thing to me is that it was about 2000 years before Christ that Abraham lived and then Jacob. So 2000 years before this story takes place, Jacob built a well. I know that God when He had Jacob build that well knew that there would someday be a time when His Son Jesus would sit at that well with a woman who needed some help, that that well was designed 2000 years before, not just for water but for a spiritual encounter with a woman who needed the living water of Jesus.

It just reminds me how God is so intricately involved and we don't know all of the things that are going on. But something happens here and God is orchestrating so many things at the same time. It's awe-inspiring for us as we worship the Lord to imagine all the things that He does.

Now she asks this question. The question she asks is, *"You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"*

No, notice how Jesus answers. He could've answered in a number of ways. This is what He says in verse 13. *Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks – the idea there is drink continually. Everyone who continually drinks this water will be thirsty again. In other words He'll continually have to come back here to drink. But whoever drinks the water – that's one time – whoever drinks one time the water that I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

A spring of water like a fountain welling up inside. That's what we have when we accept Jesus into our lives. We have this spring inside that's welling up inside, producing this spiritual fruit, that's producing this spiritual energy, that's producing this spiritual connectedness with God. It's this reminder, this foundation inside of us. I don't know if you feel it inside of you. But it's there that God is doing this thing inside of us, welling up inside.

He says, *"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."* It's inside.

Verse 15: *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."* So she's kind of getting the picture, but she's still a little bit confused about the spiritual versus the physical. Jesus needs to lead her to the next step and tell her about the Father and tell her about the fulfillment that comes from the Father. But she's not quite ready yet. So He's going to take her on a little bit of a path in order to get there. Before He can do that He has to move her from curiosity to conviction. So He's going to move her along a path here so she'll realize her need, her thirsty need for the water she really needs to have.

In verse 16 *He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."* Go call your husband and come back. Now this is the first time they've met and He's moving her to conviction, so He goes to the place in her life where she needs this living water the most because she has invested in her life in the wrong things. Her hope has been placed in the wrong things. She's disillusioned with life now. And Jesus knows what that is. He knows what it is in every one of our lives.

Some people invest in their lives in other things than God and their hopes are there. Sometimes their hope is in a family, that that family's going to somehow produce some fulfillment in life or in a child or in a job or in money or in something else. A dream that they have. That's where their hope is.

Jesus has to take her on this path. So He says to her, *"Go, call your husband and come back."* The woman says *"I have no husband," she replied.*

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." I think what He's saying to her is you don't have anything left to give in a relationship. You don't have anything left that you can share. The well is dry for you in this area. You are empty. You need this living water.

Verse 19: *"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.* She's moved from Jew to greater than Jacob; now she's calling Him "sir" and now she's going to call him a prophet. It's kind of interesting. He says to her you have to have living water. She says give me the water. He says okay go get your husband. She says I don't have one. He says you've had five and the guy you're with now isn't your husband. And she's saying wow you must be a prophet. Like this is some big surprise.

She's getting it. Something's different about Him and she realizes that she needs something that He has. This is a little bit too close to home for her. She's realizing that He's talking about her deep inside of her heart.

I don't know if you feel that sometimes where God is getting to that center place inside of you where you know that He wants to talk to you. Where He knows He wants to speak into your life. He's prophetically speaking and saying, "That's the area I want to touch in your life." That can be an uncomfortable place for us, I think. It's hard for us sometimes to actually want to deal with an area of our lives that God wants us to deal with.

This woman responds by diverting the subject. She leaves the subject her need for male companionship or the relationships that she's had, she leaves that and she changes the subject to some spiritual issue. Which is what people do with us all the time. We share with them and they do that. It's getting too close to home for her.

Look at verse 20 what she does in the conversation. *Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.* So there's this controversy about Mount Gerizim and Jerusalem. Where do we have to worship? She's taking this to a spiritual dialogue about the place of worship. What do we need to do?

People do that. We share something about Jesus. "Let me tell you about Jesus." "Oh I attend St. Peter's church over here." We're not talking about what church you attend. We're talking about what's going on inside your heart. That's what Jesus is going to do for the woman. He's going to help her see it's not about where you worship, it's about what's going on inside your heart. That's what's important and that's what she's lacking.

Verse 21: *"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."* It's not the place that's important.

Verse 22: *You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.*

Verse 23: *“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”*

First of all, notice the word *true worshipers*. The Father is looking for true worshipers. That means there must be some people who worship who aren't true. There's something missing inside of them. He's going to further describe what true worship is. It's someone who worships *in Spirit and in truth*. We're going to bring those two words together in our worship. As we come before the Father both of them exist. It's coming from our spirit. It's coming from truth. And together they form inside of us this well, as it were, of worship before the Lord, before the Father.

The interesting thing to me it says there *the Father seeks true worshipers*. Sometimes a person says, “Well, I just don't feel like I'm close to God.” If you ever feel like you're not close to God, here's what you do. Get alone and sing to the Lord and worship the Lord. Raise your hands and worship the Lord. He'll say, “I see that hand.” He'll find you. He's seeking true worshipers. That's what it is. I'm not talking about standing in Kmart and saying, “Praise the Lord!” I'm not talking about blue light special, that kind of stuff. We're talking about true worshipers who say, “God, I just worship you.” If you feel like you're not close to God, worship God. And when you worship God, God will find you. He's seeking people who are the true worshipers.

Wow. That is a beautiful thing to see how we can be close to God in the midst of worship and to understand what true worship is. It's not the place. You can worship in a middle school and still bring honor to God. It's your heart where it's coming from. And that's what Jesus is saying.

Verse 25. Now we're getting down to the invitation part of the story where Jesus clenches it all together. So this is like the climax, the exciting part here. *The woman said, “I know (she's still on the spiritual thing here kind of discussion) that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”* I know we'll understand this someday.

Verse 26: *Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”* Do you know nowhere in the whole Bible does Jesus make Himself this clearly known to anybody. It's always kind of hedging around or telling a parable or telling a story. He says, “I'm the guy! I'm the Messiah!” This is just so fun. He reveals Himself to her. He goes out of His way to be honest with her so she can understand that yes, He is the Messiah.

He says, *“I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”* And if you listen carefully to the Lord in the course of your week Jesus will say to you, “I am He. I am the Messiah. I am the one who you seek. I am the one to *explain* all things, *everything to us* (that's what it says in verse 25). I'm the one. Come to me. Be a true worshiper. Come to me.” That's the message that Jesus is sharing with her. It's the line that we need ourselves as we come before God.

Look, if you crossed the line and you've sinned in ways that you feel like I crossed the line, “I can't come to God,” you just need to know that's not a line that prevents Christ from crossing over. The Father seeks worshipers. As we come before the Father He draws us to Himself. It's a beautiful thing that He's done.

If you become disillusioned with life, disillusioned with relationships, disillusioned with the church, maybe that's a good thing. Because it gives you the opportunity to say, "That's not where my hope should be. My hope should be in Jesus. My hope should be in the Father and being a true worshiper before Him."

I think we all need that message. I need that message. I need to come before the Father, I need to worship Him. There's sometimes we get our hopes tied into something and when we get our hopes tied into something it can get us into trouble and we get stuck because that's where our hopes are.

I think that sometimes God uses disappointment in our lives to point out things that we've put our hope in. I'm not saying disappointment is wrong. But if you're going through life and you're so disappointed with something, we just need to ask the question, is God trying to speak to me in the midst of this? Am I listening to what He has to say?

There's an interesting story in the New Testament about Saul of Tarsus on his way to kill or to catch all of the Christians in Damascus. God is going to capture him on the road. Later on this story is going to be reported. This isn't reported in Acts, but later on Paul writes this as he's writing to the Corinthians. He says, "When I fell off my horse, I was on the ground and the large voice came to me and the light shone all around and I was blinded. The voice said to me this: '*Saul, Saul. Why do you kick against the goads?*'"

Why do you kick against the goads? I just like that because (and I think I shared this with you last week) the goads would represent things were pointing him to go in the right direction. I think that sometimes when we get off track, our hopes go into something else we get disappointed with that. We need to ask the question, is God speaking to me here? Because God often uses the disillusioned things in our lives to point us in the right direction and say, "Hey. Get your values straight here. Are you getting your hopes in the wrong things?" And so he points us in the right direction.

I've been thinking all week I like goads. I want to listen to the goads. So when something happens in my life, is that a goad? Because I don't want to wait for the big light to blind me. I want to pay attention to the goads in my life. And so I like goads. Lord, I'll just listen to the goads here. I think that's what's happening in this woman's life. She's realizing that her hope is in the wrong thing and now her hope needs to be in Jesus. "*I, the one speaking to you—I am he.*"

Verse 27: *Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. He's violating the social standards of the day. He's alone with a woman and he's talking to her. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"* They've learned to be quiet now, which I think is wise for them.

We'll end with verse 28-30 here. *Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*

Here's a woman who left her water jar and when she went back to the town she took with her a fountain of water that was welling up inside of her, a fountain that was welling up so much that she said, "I've got to tell you about this. Come on, guys. You've got to check this out. You've got to come and see. Could this really be the Messiah? Could this person who's told me everything about myself really be the one that can meet our needs in a very personal way?"

We're going to read more about this story as we continue on next week in John 4 and we'll see how the people responded and so on. But I just want you to focus in on the woman for a minute because she got to know the Messiah.

The word 'Messiah,' the word 'Christ,' the promised one that comes, the Savior of the world is what we celebrate at Christmas time. The Messiah who comes born of a virgin. Someone who came to die for our sins, that's the Messiah. And you and I – it's not just a Jewish term – it's the term we all need. We need the Rescuer. We need the Savior. We need the Messiah of the world in our own lives.

That is the lesson that the woman at the well learned and it transformed her life. It's the message that I need to remind me that it transforms my life. That I need to be regularly giving my life to the Lord and saying, "Lord, I want you to work in my life. Help me to realize today that you are the Messiah. You are the one who died for my sins, saved me on that cross so that I could have this well of water, this fountain of water flowing inside of me that I can enjoy."

It's a beautiful message what Jesus did on that day with that woman in the heat of the day, in the middle of the day. It's the same kind of thing He wants to do with each one of us as we worship, as we come before Him and give our lives to Him.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this story, a story of something that happened a couple of thousand years ago, but something that you continue to do in lives today. So Lord, do it in our own hearts we ask. Make that fountain flow inside of us. Well up as a spring inside of our hearts. Make it so powerful that we just have to share the message with other people so that they too can come and see who this Jesus is, who this Messiah is. Lord, remind us about what you've done for us and we are very grateful for that. In Jesus' name, amen.