

Find and Follow Jesus

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Date: 08 September 2024

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[0 : 0 0] This is John chapter 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, but 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, and 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 asked for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?

For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God, 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? He gave us the well and drink from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.

[1 : 1 0] Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

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. 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 have now is not your husband. What you have said is true. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming, when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

[2 : 1 3] 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 is called Christ. When He comes, He will tell us all things.

Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am He. Just then, His disciples came back. They marveled at what he was talking with a woman, but no one said, what do you seek, or why are you talking with her?

So the woman left her water jar and went away into the 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 the town and were coming to Him.

We are working our way through a series on vision and values. And so this is our second week. At St. Columbus, we definitely prefer to work through whole books of the Bible, verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph.

But every once in a while, we'll hop around a little bit and look at something thematically. And so we're doing that right now with this vision and value series. Last week, we looked at Luke 19:41, where we saw that when Jesus approached Jerusalem in his final week, he looked out upon the city and wept for her.

[3 : 20] And we talked about how Jesus Christ loves Edinburgh. He loves all cities. And we need a heart of compassion, like Christ's heart, for our great city if we're going to see a city-wide movement of the gospel.

What is a city-wide movement of the gospel? A city-wide movement of the gospel, our vision statement, the beginning of it, is simply an intensification of the work of the Holy Spirit, where we see more and more people coming to faith in Christ, conversion, lives of prayer, and the multiplication of good works across the city, all because of an encounter with Jesus.

So that's a city-wide movement of the gospel. And today, we turn to the idea that we exist to seek a city-wide movement of the gospel by helping people find and follow Jesus, the second aspect of our vision statement here.

And so to see that, that comes from the Bible. One of the great passages is John 4. Every single person needs an encounter with Jesus Christ.

There can be no city-wide movement of the gospel. There can be no conversion experience unless you have an encounter with Jesus Christ. And so every single human being needs to find and follow Jesus.

[4 : 32] And so that's exactly what happens here in John 4. This woman at the well has an encounter. She is encountered. And so we're going to actually look at that for two weeks.

This week, what it means to find and follow Jesus. And then next week, think about the very end of the passage about what it means to help other people find and follow Jesus. So let's think about that together.

Four things today, not three, but four. Jesus Christ came to find us. And we have a need to then find Him, secondly.

Third, what it means to follow Him. And then lastly, just a very short preview for next week, how to help other people find and follow Him. So let's think about that together.

He came to find us. There's an encounter that happens here in John 4. Who did Jesus come to find? Who is this encounter for?

[5 : 28] So if you look down in chapter 4, verse 4, Jesus is traveling from Judea to Galilee, where He was born, where He lives. And to get there, He has to go straight through Samaria.

You can go around by way of Jericho, but the most straight shot is to go right through Samaria. And so that's what He does. And it's very hot. It's an arid climate. He is tired. And in verse 5 and 6, it says that at 12 noon, high noon, He arrives in Sikhar in Samaria.

And that's where Jacob's well from the Old Testament, from Genesis 48 is. Now, we are fairly confident that we know exactly where this took place still. The scholars, the archaeologists, we've never lost the sight of Jacob's well.

It's always been known, passed down century after century. And so today, this well is inside a Greek Orthodox church, as these things often happen, in a little village called Ascar in the West Bank, down in the crypt.

So it's now several levels below where people live today. And at this well, Jacob's well from the Old Testament, Jesus is there and a woman comes.

[6 : 36] She's unnamed, as is often the case, women in the gospels are often unnamed. And Jesus says to her in verse 7 and 8, give me a drink.

And she is shocked by this command. Give me a drink. It's a request. And she's shocked by it. Now, you may know why. If you've been in church at all, if you're a believer today, you've heard John 4 preach probably.

And you know some of the issues that are going on here. There is first, very clearly in the passage, a massive religious barrier between the woman and Jesus.

And Jews would not eat, would not drink with Samaritans. That had been the case for about 400 years before Jesus was born.

And in the Mishnah, which is a document that recounts some of the traditions that had developed between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Mishnah says this about Samaritan women, actually.

[7 : 31] It says all daughters of Samaritans are unclean from their cradle. So there's no interaction. There's a sense that all Samaritans are defiled in some way, religiously unclean.

And a few chapters later from this, in John 8, Jesus is called a Samaritan. So some of the people accuse him and say, you are a Samaritan. They're saying he is defiled, he's unclean. They say you

are Samaritan and you have a demon.

They say to him. So there's this religious barrier that takes place. Now if you look down at verse nine, it's very prominent though, slightly veiled in the ESV that we read from.

In verse nine, there's this little parenthetical comment that John added that says, for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. So he's just explaining to us, this is why this is such a shock.

Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. But the Greek text there can also be translated something more literally like, Jews do not use the same dishes as Samaritans.

[8 : 28] So no dealings is actually an issue of kitchenware in the Greek text. And it says, Jews will not eat from the same utensils, buckets of water, dishes, cups, anything like that.

And that was exactly the case. That's what John adds here. Meaning she is saying, John is telling us very literally in that moment, the shock is that they would drink from the same bucket. When Jesus says, can I have some water?

No chance you're drinking from my bucket. That would be a ritual defilement, religious defilement. There's a huge religious barrier. Beyond that, the religious barrier stands on top of an ethnic barrier, a barrier of racism that had been built up for century and century between both people groups.

And 700 years before this moment, Assyria had conquered the land that is called Samaria here.

And when that took place, the Assyrians and all sorts of international people groups from all over, they all mixed and had children.

And so the people of this time see Samaritans as defiled ethnically, because of how many different people groups are represented in the melting pot that became Samaria.

[9 : 33] There's a massive ethnic barrier. And even more, on top of all that, there's a gender barrier. And the gender barrier really comes out in verse 27 when the disciples come back.

And it says they couldn't believe that he was talking, not to a Samaritan, to a woman. And the commentators will tell you, if you read very widely on this, that normally women would come to the well every day, but they would come in the early morning or in the late evenings, never in the middle of the day, at the heat of the day.

And when she comes, that means that she is isolated from her own people. It's not just that there's a Jewish Samaritan barrier, it's not just that there's a religious barrier, it's not just a gender barrier, it's that she actually is seen as defiled in some way by her own people.

That's why she's showing up there in the middle of the day. She's alone in the world, at least from the other women that would have normally been at the well with her. And so the commentators will say, and we don't know this for sure, but that oftentimes that encounter at the well in the middle of the day might have been an encounter where prostitutes would often come to meet people.

And so there's conjecture there, but there's also a guess that this is, whatever this is, this is scandal in the eyes of everybody that sees this. And so there's so many barriers, and Jesus breaks right through it without hesitation and just says, can we drink from the same bucket?

[10 : 56] Will you give me a drink? And the first thing we learn here, here's the first lesson, John four comes after John three, right?

And if you don't take anything else away, there you go. That's actually very important because in John chapter three, Jesus had an encounter with a man named Nicodemus.

And Nicodemus came not in the middle of the day, but in the middle of the night. And he was very religious, very Jewish, Jewish elite, aristocratic, wealthy, everything that the society wanted, privileged, a person of status, upright, a moral man, a man in fact, yeah, in this first century.

And in this passage, he comes in the middle of the day to a poor, scandalous, isolated, lower class, racially separated, richly unclean person, a woman who he's not supposed to talk to in the middle of the day.

And he says, Nicodemus, you need to be born again. And he says to her, give me a drink. And in both situations, what is so clear in the gospels, Nicodemus at night, this woman unnamed in the middle of the day, Jesus had all these scandalous encounters and what it tells you is that across every single one of them, nobody understood the extent of Jesus' ministry, that he came to be for everybody.

[12 : 21] He came for every type of person, from the most privileged to the lowest class, every type of person. And if you just, if you have a Bible, you can back up just one verse, chapter three, verse 36, where John the Baptist is defending Jesus against people who were wondering who the Messiah really was.

And John the Baptist, right before this moment says, whoever believes in the sun has eternal life. And we pass by that, but you see the word whoever, whoever believes in the sun has eternal life. And then that sandwich between Nicodemus and the woman at the well. And that means we learned something very simple and we said this last week, Jesus Christ came for every type of human being, every single person.

He loves Edinburgh more than we do, because he loves every single person and every single type of person. And when we realize that we are that person, no matter where we sit and all these categories and spectrums, and we're all judged differently by different peoples, no matter where we sit, he came for me, he came for you, he came for all of us.

And when we realize that more and more, day in and day out, more and more, what will break through our hearts as a church is that we long for every type of person in our city to know that, to know that he came for them.

[13:42] Do we have that heart? The heart of Christ for Edinburgh, he wept for the city and he comes to everybody. Secondly, he came, he encountered us.

Secondly, the need we have then to find him. We have to find him, we have to come and see our need to discover Jesus. Every person in our city needs this, every single one of us needs this today.

She's surprised, she said, you a Jew would ask me for water. So she understands very well all the barriers that are taking place in this moment.

And then in verse 10, here's the big statement. Verse 10, he says, if you knew the gift of God and who it is asking you for water, you would have asked me for the drink.

If you knew who is asking you, if you knew that it's a gift, you would be asking me for the drink and I would give you living water. So he adds this little adjective, not just water, not just water from the well, but living water, that's really important.

[14:43] And then down to verse 13 and 14, he says, the water that I give this living water will quench your thirst forever. It actually is like a river that leads, a stream that leads to a river and that river is full of eternal life.

And so the water I offer will lead you down a river and that river will become an ocean of eternal life, the swell, that's the word there, that's translated. And then right in between that in verse 11 and 12 and down in verse 15, she is very confused by this.

So she thinks that he's offering something as a prophet that will make it where she literally does not have to come back to this well in the middle of the day ever again and carry water, heavy water, water's heavy, right?

Just like Nicodemus had said, Jesus said, you need to be born again. Nicodemus said, am I supposed to enter my mother's womb a second time? Very literal, very physical, very confused. She's very confused as well. I want that because I do not want to walk out here to the well every single day in the middle of the sun and get water. And it's very important to know that in Greek there's a couple different words being used here for well, a well, a cistern.

[15:50] One of them is you could translate cistern very much what you think about when you think about a well. You know, a pile of rocks with a hole and you look down at it, you throw coins, that kind of thing, that's one of the words.

But the other word that's translated for well here is a word that can mean living water or something moving. And that's because at Jacob's well, there is the well, but then it goes down to an actual river that's underneath the ground, a stream.

And when Jesus says I can offer you living water, he's talking about running water, very literally. He's taking the literal thing that's at the bottom of the well, which is a moving stream, and saying you don't need cistern water, you need living water.

Now, the reason he's saying this is because it's all a metaphor, but it's all about something spiritual, right? And the reason that he's saying this is because when you would come to Jacob's well, or any other well in the first century, the water on top has been sitting.

And so you don't want to drink the water, you don't just dip your bucket in and take from the top, no, it's stagnant. You've got to get your bucket all the way down so that that bucket fills up with the living water, the moving water, so that you don't get sick.

[17:04] And so he's taking something that's very normal in her experience, living water, water at the bottom, and he's saying I can offer you that, and I can offer you it to the point that it swells all the way up into eternal life.

That means, that means this, that Jesus Christ is taking something in her physical experience and saying to her, look, I know that you're thirsty, but I also know that you're thirsty.

In other words, Jesus is saying that at the bottom of every single human heart, we thirst, we long for a spiritual satisfaction that we have not yet found.

That's the metaphor he's talking about. He's saying that I can offer you soul satisfaction that you've yet to find in all of your life. There is stagnant satisfaction at the top of the well, things that are stagnant, waters that are stagnant, where you go out into the world and you look for satisfaction. You look to have your longing, your cravings fulfilled, and it's stagnant water, and he's saying, you've got to go all the way to the bottom to really have your spiritual thirst quenched, satisfied. In Hebrews 11, there's a long list of names, heroes of the faith, people who believed well all throughout their lives, and at the very end of it, it says that the one thing they all had in common, Hebrews 11, was that they all longed, yearned for a better country.

[18:34] The one thing that it says all the heroes of the faith had in common was that they longed, thirsted for a better country than this one, than this life. And that's exactly what Jesus is talking about.

C.S. Lewis in several of his books put it really well, in the weight of glory and surprised by joy and mere Christianity, he talked about this secret, he called it the secret.

It's the thing that's deep down in the bottom of the soul, and it is an unsatisfied longing that every single human thirsts for. Have you ever been thirsty?

Have you ever been really thirsty? And you know that when you're thirsty, there's water tastes really good, and when you're really thirsty, water is honey.

You know, it is sweet to your lips. And Jesus is saying that there is a spiritual thirst deep down at the bottom of your heart that is so, so tired, arid, dry, longing for something that it's yet to find in this life.

[19:37] And Lewis, he said it like this, he said, this longing hurts so much, it hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like nostalgia, by calling it romanticism, by calling it adolescence.

It's just for the kids. It's the longing for Narnia. And we put it away by calling it adolescence. And he says this, some of us, the more sophisticated, we call it beauty.

And you look in books, you look in music, maybe you look in the most climactic moments of your favorite movies, and you look and say, that was beautiful. I loved that. That makes me want more. And this is what he writes, he says, the books of the music in which we thought the beauty was located, it was not in them, it only came through them. And what came through them created a longing.

They are not the thing itself, they are only the secret of a flower that we have yet to find, the echo of a tune that we have not heard.

[20:42] News from a far country, a better country that we have never visited. And he said, there's a longing that just cannot be satisfied in this life.

And Jesus came and said, you're thirsty, that's what you want. I say this with fear and trembling.

And I don't think our German staff member is here today, but I know there are other Germans in the room, but Lewis used a German word that I might mispronounce, Zenzucht, to describe this, it came from German philosophy, Zenzucht.

He said there's just not a word in English. And Zenzucht, it's something like inconsolable longing for life, inconsolable longing for life. And he said, our whole education, our whole lives has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent inner voice.

Almost every modern philosophy has been devised to convince us that the good of humanity, the longings of humanity can be fulfilled in this life. And he just said, and they just can't, they just can't. And that's exactly what Jesus is talking about here. And so Ecclesiastes 3:11 is the background of this, where we read, God has set eternity upon the human heart.

[21:55] And Augustine's very famous line that we began the worship service with today, Peter Crave says, this is the greatest sentence ever written outside the Bible. Maybe that's true, I don't know. But he says, Augustine read this, because God, you have made us for yourself, our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee.

See, that's the objective and the subjective. Objectively, because God, you made us, subjectively our hearts will be restless until they find rest in thee.

It's both, that's what Jesus is teaching us here. Jesus can quench our thirsty souls thirdly. And really, this is the conclusion. How do you follow him?

You see, that's the need. Every single person in our city needs to discover Jesus, needs to encounter Jesus, because the claim of Christianity is that only Jesus Christ, only the real God can objectively and subjectively quench the thirsty soul.

That's the need we have, that's the need we have to seek a citywide movement of the gospel. So how do you follow him? Lastly, and Jesus here picks up on the theme, also Ecclesiastes three, also Jeremiah chapter two, verse 13, and Jeremiah and the prophet, God gives a condemnation of humanity, a judgment.

[23 : 12] And this is what he says, all of you are searching for living water, but you all dig your own well, your own cistern, and your cisterns are broken, and they cannot hold water.

So God looks out upon humanity and says, that longing is there, that spiritual thirst you have, but you're digging your own well, looking for the wrong streams, and you've got zinzuped, you've got this inconsolable longing in your heart, and you're looking in the wrong places for it.

And that means that he's saying here, Jesus is saying here, our hearts are sort of like buckets with a hole, and you keep trying to fill them up with a stream of living water that will keep you happy, joyous, but it's just a steady leak, it just comes out the bottom.

And that's why in verse 10 he says, if only you knew to this woman, he says it to all of us today, if only you knew the gift of God. And one of the things he's saying in there is that the only way you can find your soul quenched from the thirst is that if you know it's not law, but gift.

And you say every single one of us, we try to get this thirst quenched through law. You might not know it, but this is the human, this is what we do. And you can think about the first century, you can think about the 21st century, we all run from gift and try to get our satisfaction by way of law, behavior.

[24 : 37] And in the first century it was through ritual cleanliness, it was through observing the religious practices very steadily, in the 21st century it is productivity. It is achievement, it is busyness, it is trying to earn your path, it's all law.

And Jesus says if only you knew it was a gift. And so in verse 16, he does something that's sort of shocking and which sort of seems out of place after saying it's all a gift, I can quench your thirst, it's all a gift, and then he says now, verse 16, go and call your husband.

And you think, how does this fit the logic that Christ is building here? And it seems abrupt, but it actually does fit. And she says, you must be a prophet.

He's son of God, he said, you know, I know that you've had five husbands, and the man that you're living with right now is not your husband. Jesus is trying to help her to see that what he offers, soul satisfaction is entirely a gift, and so he cuts straight to the heart.

And she, friends, you know this, she's at the well in the middle of the day by herself, she's cut off from her own people. She is a bruised reed. She's a bruised reed, but he's not there to break her, not at all, no, that's not what this question is.

[25 : 56] That's not what the statement is, no. He's not there to break her, he's there to cut, expose her heart so he can offer her something, to give her a gift that she has yet to find.

And what he's trying to offer is to help her see that she is pursuing relationship after relationship after relationship to have her soul, her satisfaction quenched, the thirst, deep down on the bottom of her heart.

So she's moving from man to man to man, looking for satisfaction, and he's saying you're not going to find it there. And men move from woman to woman to woman, and we chase sex, money, and power, and whatever it is that we move from this to this, to this, to this, thinking finally I'll be happy, finally I'll have joy in this life, finally this will give me satisfaction, and the secret is that none of it is going to fulfill the eternal longing that's sitting at the bottom of your heart.

None of it will quench the thirst that you have. It's not something inside this world that can give it to you. And the commentators will say, we don't know exactly what's going on in her life. It could be that she's moving relationship to relationship.

It could be that she's been left by men who are doing that to her. It could be all sorts of things we don't know, but we do know that Jesus sees her heart and he cuts to the heart to say, I can give you something that will actually quench your thirst.

[27 : 23] And I just want to note this briefly. She sidesteps massively like every single one of us do, right, because he says, go and get your husband. And she says, I see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors have worshiped on this mountain for centuries. You see what she's doing? She's saying, let's talk about theology. I don't want to talk about me. I don't want to talk about what's going on in my life.

Let's talk about theology. This has happened. Have you, I've done this, maybe you've done this, maybe you've done it with us talking and chatting. Somebody asked you, have you found spiritual satisfaction in the depth of your soul by hoping in the only God who can give it?

Are you seeking Christ? Are you praying? And you say, well, I've been thinking a lot about infant baptism. Can we talk about infant baptism? That's exactly what's going on here.

I've been thinking about whether we should have guitars or instruments and worship wars. She goes to worship wars, right? You say this mountain, we say that mountain for 400 years, the Samaritans have been worshiping on Mount Garazim, not in Jerusalem.

[28 : 26] And that's where she wants to talk. And in some sense, she is, as we move to a close, she's absolutely right. Because how do you follow Jesus Christ? How does anybody in our city follow Jesus Christ? She cuts to the truth actually, because it really is all about worship.

She goes to worship and it is about worship. And he says, you know, you're right. There is coming a moment. The hour, he says, is coming, where everybody, Jew and Samaritan, no matter what people group you're from, you will worship in one way and that's in spirit and in truth.

Now look, how do you follow Jesus? It's a matter of worship. It's a matter of bowing the knee. That's what she needed, was just to bow the knee to the Messiah. That's what every single person in our city needs.

And this is how he puts it. He says, there is a day coming when you can worship in spirit and in truth. And he connects that to his hour.

The day, the day of spirit and the day of truth is also his hour. And then he says, you've been looking for the Messiah at the very end, he says, and I am he, I am.

[29 : 32] That language, I am, that's the language from the Old Testament for the divine essence, God himself, Yahweh. You see, he's saying, I am the Lord of the universe.

I am. I am the Messiah and my hour is coming. And that means that he's connecting the fact that he is the Lord of the universe to one thing, the hour.

The hour every time in John's Gospel is a reference to the cross. And that means that Jesus is telling her, if you want to follow me, if you want to worship, if you wanna have your thirst quenched, you need to lift up your eyes and know that the Lord of the universe came for the hour, the cross.

He said, I am and I have come to die for you. And you see, the thirst that we need quenched is first, we need pardon, we need forgiveness because the objective is true, God made us for himself and we have chased after every other thing in this life to quench our thirst and it's not working.

We need pardon from that. And then on the flip side, we need rest, rest in him. And Jesus is saying, the Lord of the universe has come to go to the cross so that I could give you pardon and rest.

[30 : 45] How did he do it? You remember when he was hanging on the cross, what did he say? The Lord of all the universe came to quench your thirst. What did he say at the cross? He said, I thirst.

Jesus was on the cross and he was so thirsty, physically but also spiritually. His soul went into hell itself. He thirsted for the presence of God, the Father and it was absent from him so that you might drink today, the wine of the covenant and know that you can actually have a river that swells into eternal life.

Every single person in our city needs that and every single one of us needs that. And so let me preview to you in one minute, we're gonna talk about next week and that's this, how do you help other people? That's the mission, that's the vision, that's what we want our church to be all about. How do you help other people? And at the very end of the passage, it just simply says this, she went into her village, her town and she said to every single person, let me tell you about a man who told me all that I ever did.

And it says they came out to him and they believed. She shared her testimony. She said, let me tell you about the man who saved me. We seek a city wide movement of the gospel by helping people find and follow Jesus but the need starts right here, the need starts right here.

[32 : 09] We need him, we need our spiritual thirst quenched. And so whenever Jesus Christ encounters you and I hope he is today, he always invites you to a feast. He always says, come take, drink.

So let's do that in just a moment, let's pray. Father, we long for a city wide movement of the gospel and so we pray today that you would encounter us, Lord of the universe, Lord of the universe, become a human being so that we thirsty people might never thirst again.

We know Lord, we thirst in this life for all sorts of satisfactions. Lord, help us to see today that they cannot be fulfilled apart from you. So as we come to the table, we ask that you would bless us with your presence, the presence of the spirit that we would be allowed, Lord, invited to pull up a chair, to put our knees under the table, the table of the king, to know that because you thirsted, we may drink.

And so we ask Lord for your presence by the spirit as we take and eat. And we pray this in Jesus' name, amen.