

Every Person Ministry and Public Faith

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[0 : 0 0] Let us hear God's word. John chapter 4 at verse 27. Just then his elders 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? 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. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat, but you do not know about. So the disciples said to one another, has anyone brought him something to eat? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say there are yet four months, then comes the harvest? Luke, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who sows and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap for which you did not labor. Others have labored and you have entered into their labor. Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them and he stayed there two days and many more believed because of his word. 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. Amen. May God bless to us our reading from his word.

We are working our way through our vision and values right now. This is the third week and this is just a look for six weeks at our DNA and who we want to be here at St. Columbus. Let me read to you one more time our vision statement that has come out recently from our elders. St. Columbus and our family of church plants exist to seek a city-wide movement of the gospel by helping people find and follow Jesus, love God in one another, and seek the peace of the city. Last week we talked about the fact that every person needs to find Jesus, discover Jesus, and then follow Jesus. That leads us to our first two core values here at St. Columbus, which is every person ministry and public faith. We won't have a sermon on every single one of the core values. That would be a long, long series, but I did want to stop for a week and pull this out because it follows directly on from this emphasis we have in the importance of every person in our city having the opportunity to encounter Jesus, to find him, to discover him. We say in the vision statement that we seek to help people find and follow Jesus. If we're going to do that, that means that we've got to have a mentality that every single person here is a minister and that that means we're all called to have a public faith, not a private faith. We'll just pause on that this week and focus on it for a little bit. Last week we read the first part of John 4 where Jesus encounters this unnamed woman, Samaritan woman, at a well. He said to her that he could offer her a drink thirst. He could quench her thirst for something that is beyond physical thirst. He was talking there about the thirst that every single person has in the bottom of their soul for eternal life, for eternity.

Ecclesiastes 3. Every single human being, every single person here, every single person in our city is thirsty, longing for eternal life. That's how God made us. And so we all need an encounter with Jesus. And that's what happened in the beginning of John chapter 4. And here in the back half of John 4 we learn about what that creates. When you have an encounter with Jesus, you become a minister of the gospel. And the reason we're talking about this, the reason we long for this, the reason we're focused on this in our vision is because we are praying as a church, we're praying as leaders here, elders, deacons, women's pastoral team. We want to see our city in the next generation, in the next 10 to 20 years, move from 2 to 3 percent, meaningfully Christian followers of Jesus, to 10 percent or more. And that means adding 80,000 new believers, 80,000 new Christians to see it move from 2 percent to 10 percent. And that's what we long for in this vision. That's what

we're praying for. It takes many, many churches. It takes many, many Christians and a movement of the spirit. And so to do that, we need to have an every-person ministry focus and a public faith. [6:21] That's the two things. Let's look at those two things. Every person ministry and public faith, it's right here in John 4, 27 to 42 that Billy read for us. So first, the call to every person ministry, every follower of Jesus is a minister of the gospel. Verse 27, we've got the woman at the well and she, as soon as she has this encounter with Jesus and she comes to faith, she runs off into her village, Sychar, to tell everybody. And if you jump down to verse 39, it says that when she did that, many Samaritans from her town believed because of her, and here's the word, testimony. Now the word testimony in Greek, this word here, is *martyrio*, and it's where we get our English word martyr. So the martyrs, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church as an example. So this is the word here. So the word martyr, a martyr, what's a martyr? A martyr is just a person who gives testimony to Jesus, who bears witness. That's what the word here means.

We'll see in a little while, while it got a greater connotation of suffering, martyr, that word. But the point is simple, and it's just to say this today, when you have a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, you become a martyr, a witness. She had had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, and immediately she ran into the town, her village, because she wanted to tell other people about it. Let us pray. No, you don't get off that easy. We're not done.

But that's the point today. That's it. When you have a life- encounter with Jesus, you become a witness. It's just a fact. It's an identity that actually becomes you. And one of the ways that's especially highlighted here is the way that John laid out the story for us, which we find in the book of John in and Mark's Gospel. It's often like this. If you look at last week, we looked at verses 1 to 30, all about this encounter with the woman at the well. And then if you look at verse 39 to 42, again, it's all about the woman and what she did. But right in the middle, it's all about the disciples. So it's the woman unnamed, the disciples, and we know all their names, and then the woman again. And so it's a sandwich in fancy Bible terminology. We call that an *inclusio*, a sandwich. And there's bread on the outside and there's meat in the middle. And that means that you're looking at the meat in the middle. John's pointing you to that. And what is he saying when he does that? She had had this life-transforming encounter and then the disciples come back to the well in verse 27. They had been away gathering lunch. So Jesus had said, go to Sychar, get some lunch, bring it back. So they went, they got some lunch, some bread, and they brought it back. And here they are. And it says in verse 27 that when they came back to the well, they saw Jesus and her together. And the ESV says they marveled that he was talking with a woman. But no one dared say anything about it. So they dared not say, what do you seek? I like the King James version.

It says they dared not say, what seekest thou? They dared not say, why, why does dust thou talk to her? They dared not. They kept it in their heart. They wanted to. Why? Because they felt very, it's saying that they felt so awkward. They came back and they saw him talking to her. And there was this incredibly awkward encounter. And what it's saying is that they felt like this was inappropriate. [10:11] They saw him talking to this woman in the middle of the day by themselves and in the first century this was to them wildly inappropriate. And they didn't want to say a word about it. And the very next thing Jesus does is tells them this parable, this proverb about harvesting and yielding crops and things like that. And he's doing that for a reason because he's taking her and contrasting her with them. That's why the sandwich is there. You've got her, you've got the disciples, and then you've got her again. And in the middle, in the middle, Jesus gives them this little parable right after they're so upset.

They think this was so inappropriate. And in verse 32 they say, Jesus, you know, you're tired, you're hungry, why don't you just eat? And he says this, I've got food to eat that you don't know about. And he's picking up there on Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 3 where we read Moses saying, look, there's spiritual food and there's physical food. And Jesus says, I've got spiritual food that you don't know about. And he goes on and says, the spiritual food that you don't know about is I came to do my Father's will. And so Jesus immediately shifts the conversation to the category of mission. I came, do you not know that I take such delight and pleasure? My bread is the word. He's just told her, I can give you water, whereby you will never be thirsty again, water of life. And now he says, now we've got bread on the table. And he said, look, my bread is to do the will of the Father. And then he says, and you know what? Disciples, the field is white for harvest and I have sent you to reap what you did not sow. And it's a little confusing maybe at first glance, but what is he saying? He's saying,

don't you know that while you were out getting bread, I was, I was, I went into the harvest. I came to do my mission, the mission. My life is all about the mission that the Father sent me to. And he said, and you know what? I've already sent you to the harvest as well. And what is he saying? He's saying, the disciples don't see it. He had already commissioned every one of these named men and none of them had any mission mindset. None of them saw themselves as a martyr, as a witness, as a person who went into the village to bear testimony. They just went into the village of Sychar and they didn't say a word to anybody. They got the bread and came back.

But they added, when she, this woman, poor, unnamed, has an encounter with Jesus immediately in verse 39, we learn she went straight to the village to bear witness. And Jesus is saying, disciples, the field is white for harvest and none of you are going out to reap anything. None of you are going out to share with every single type of person that I've sent you to, the fact that the Messiah has come into the world. But this woman, as soon as she has an encounter, she goes straight to the town, the village. And that means that what's happening here is that the disciples show back up at the well. They see this woman in verse 27.

They dislike her. They think that she, it is socially inappropriate for Jesus to be talking her. There is a racial barrier, a gender barrier, a religion barrier, and quite frankly, an encounter that they think is publicly inappropriate by way of a man speaking with a woman at the well in the middle of the day. And they can't break through that. And Jesus says, you know what? She is your school master.

[13:36] She's the one who's here to teach you. She had an encounter with the Messiah and she ran straight to the village to testify to bear witness and none of the disciples saw it. They couldn't see it. And that means it's a simple point, but she was showing them, she was showing them as an example that every single person who has an encounter with Jesus becomes a minister of the gospel. And so here we talk about ministers and this can be confusing language. Ordained ministers, people who have been set apart, called by the Holy Spirit to lead a church as an officer of a church. We have that and I serve in that role and others do as well. But every single Christian is a minister of the gospel.

Every single Christian. Every single Christian is a martyr, a witness. And so today friends, if you have had an encounter with Jesus Christ, it is who you are. And the disciples couldn't yet see it, but this unnamed woman, she saw it. And I think that's a simple invitation today. One is to see that here the word testimony to testify to bear witness martyred them. It's exactly the same Greek word that Jesus uses in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 when he says in his commission, you church will be my witnesses, my testifiers, my martyrs from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the very ends of the earth all the way to this little end of the earth we have here, the city of Edinburgh. And that's that's the language he uses. And we come this morning to testify, to be martyrs, to testify to him in worship and then go out into the world and testify to him as well. Let me bring this home. I think one of the ways to think about this is that this is an invitation today to ask the question, do I do I'm asking this question to myself this week. Do I approach Christianity largely as a consumer, largely as a person who comes here as a follower of Jesus week by week and if you're not a Christian today, this is not for you, but I'll come around in just a minute to everybody else. But if you're a follower of Jesus day friend, the question, do you come to this space largely as a consumer? And the nature of the gospel is this, that Jesus Christ gave everything, He gave himself fully away, you get everything in the gospel, pardon a living relationship with God, to then be sent, to then go then to give, to serve, and even worship is that space. So in worship we come not merely to get, oh no. And so one of the questions maybe we can ask this week is, is the posture I come to even in the worship space one of mere receipt, mere receiving, or do I come actually to give first glory to the living God? And so the idea, the logic of this space is that because Jesus has given everything to you already, you come today to lose your time, to lose your treasures, to give away your goods, to give glory to the living God. And then when you go out, because Jesus is giving you everything and has given you everything, you give yourself away to the witness, the martyrdom that you're called to in this city. And I love what Dietrich Bonhoeffer says about this, he talks about the distinction between a person that's been transformed by the gospel through and through and cheap grace. And cheap grace is where we come to get, but never to give, never to count the cost, never to say Christianity really does cost me something. I've got to change my life in response to him. I've got to become a witness in response to him. I heard, I don't know where I heard this first, but you've heard this quote probably, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the late

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, I first heard him say it, he said, in the age of Amazon, the world is no longer our home, it has become our market. And in the same way because we live in the age of Amazon all the time, we can come to treat everything as a market. And let me just say to everyone here that we're not selling anything, Christianity sells nothing, we don't have anything for sell here, because the Christian life, the Christian life is the call to see that Jesus Christ saw you all the way to the bottom yet loves you to the sky. And, and go and give your life away for him. A deep cost, nothing cheap about it, nothing for sale. Gavin Ortland puts it like this, I love this quote from Gavin, he says, pursuing our own glory in this life, consumption, a mere life of consumption is pathetic and boring, but seeking the glory of Jesus Christ is the most thrilling and thralling adventure you could ever spend your life on.

Everybody is living as a consumer in this world, that is boring, we're all doing it, everybody's doing it, do something different, he says. The most enthralling, thrilling thing you can do is give yourself away as a witness in every person ministry for the sake of a citywide movement of the gospel. Now the Samaritan woman saw that she got it so secondly and finally she exhibited a public faith, what does that look like, what is it, what is a testimony, what does it mean to testify, that's what we learn about here. And so let me, let me give you four quick things that it looks like to have public faith that we learn from her today and will be finished. The first thing to notice here about her public faith is that it's simple and there's I think two types of simplicity. The first is when you look at verse 39 it says that many Samaritans from her town, her hometown believed in Jesus because of her testimony and what does she say, she just said this, he told me all that I ever did. And just note the simplicity of living a real public faith from her example. There she did not, she did not go into her village with a sermon, she did not go into her village with an elaborate method, she did not go into her village handing out tracks, those can all be okay things but she didn't do any of that, she didn't have a program, she didn't have a track, she didn't have a sermon. She went simply to the people that she knew and she was actually just herself. And so the first thing to say about public faith is public faith is just being yourself.

Follower of Jesus, go into the city and be yourself. In other words, live a life in the way of prayer, gospel-centered life and then just be yourself, be honest.

[20 : 22] So I think the simple thing to say here is that public faith first as opposed to private faith is simply honest faith. And that's no beating people over the head.

It's responsible witness and responsible witness is always being ready to give an answer for the hope that is within you. I think even from the life of Jesus here when he encounters the woman at the well, you can see that Jesus went to the woman at the well and just all he did was asked for a cup of water and then she initiated a conversation about the meaning of life. And he took that opportunity, he responded to that. And responsible witness testimony martyred him in the most technical sense of the word, is simply going out into the city with honest faith. With just being who you are, looking for opportunity to say something about Jesus when the opportunity arises. It's an honest public faith. One writer, when he writes about this, he says, here's the opposite of that, the way to fail. As he says, the way to fail at this is to be a Christian and to hide who you are. And the question here today is if Jesus Christ is the way that you structure your life, if Jesus Christ is the one from whom you make your decisions, if Jesus is really the center of your life, then sharing your life with other people will come out. It has to. If you're just honest about who you are, if Jesus really is the center of your life, then it has to come out. If you're just being honest about who you are. But, and here's the hard part, if Christ never comes up, if Jesus never comes up in our lives, the question today, the diagnostic question is, is Jesus Christ really essential to us as he ought to be? If we're living a life of public faith, is he really essential to us as he ought to be? The second thing here to note about public faith is a second type of simplicity is just very practical. Jesus simplicity as it has been called. What does she say when she goes into her town? She says, come and see a man who told me all that I ever did, verse 29. And then again, he told me all that I ever did. So she said in her town, come and see a man, Jesus, who told me all that I ever did. It's important to say, I think, that she does not know very much about him. She does not have the epistles. You know, she doesn't have the rest of the gospel. She doesn't have the cross at her back. That hasn't happened yet. She actually does not know very much about him. And one of the things that you think, I think we see that so striking is yet Jesus upholds her as an example of true testimony. And that means that there's just a Jesus simplicity. What do you take to the city? You just take Jesus, just Jesus simplicity. And you can go out into the city and say, you know, I don't know very much about

the age of the earth. And you know what? Nobody does. That's the truth, because we change it every year, the consensus. How old is the world? I don't know. And nobody knows. And you might not know very much about science. You might not know very much about philosophy. And you might not have your answers ready for what to do with sections of the book of Judges when it comes up, right? This woman didn't know any of that. And she just went out into the city with Jesus simplicity. And what is it? What's the content here? What is she exactly saying when she said, come and see a man who told me all I ever did? She's not literally saying, Jesus, you know, set with me for so long day after day and told me everything I'd ever done in my life. You know, that would be impossible. What is she saying? She's saying, he told me about the situation that I'd been living in. Jesus had said to her, I know that you have had five different husbands and the man you're living with right now is not your husband. In other words, she's saying, he told me the deepest secrets of my heart. And he loved me anyway. That's what she went and told them. That's the implication here. She went into her village and said, let me tell you about a man who saw me all the way to the bottom in every bit of my ugliness and loved me all the way to the sky anyway. She went out with Jesus simplicity. She said, look, there are secret sins and misdeeds dark down in the bottom of my soul that nobody knows about. And is that true of you? Have you made mistakes? Are there things in your life you don't want other people to know about? Is there guilt? Is there shame? She went into the city and said, let me tell you about a man who knew every bit of that about me and said, I love you and I want to give you eternal life. Jesus simplicity. That's all you can say today. You know, I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if I can tell people about Jesus and she didn't know anything. She didn't know anything. And we can. We can. We can go and bring Jesus simplicity. Third afford. The third thing we say here is that she had a public faith that was courageous beyond her culture. And so here, remember back to verse 27, the disciples come to this encounter with

Jesus and her at the well and they are so awkward by the cultural barrier that they just keep it quiet. So they feel actually offended by Jesus in this moment. They think that he's done something inappropriate, crossing every single one of these cultural barriers, but they don't. They're not even courageous enough to ask their rabbi, their savior a question to say, Lord, help us understand. They're not even courageous enough to do that. They just suppress it in awkwardness. And then you get to verse 39 and remember this woman. Do you remember that from last week if you were here, she came to the well at the middle of the day by herself when it's normally the case that the women would come together to the well in the mornings and evenings. And that means that though she was separated from Jesus by religion, by race, by gender, in every category, she was also completely separated from her own people. She was an outcast amongst her own people. That's why she's at the well in the middle of the day. And she goes straight to her hometown to every single person she knows and says, let me tell you about a man who told me all I ever did come and see him. She broke through every cultural barrier that was at place between her and the people that she knew. And you've got to believe, you've got to believe that because she's clearly an outcast in her town, she would have come to her town and they would have said, nobody listens to her. Look at what is she on about? And we're going to see this in just a moment as we close in verse 40. She started a city-wide movement of the gospel. She broke through every cultural barrier. Why? Because Jesus Christ had broken through every barrier with her. And when you see that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of God himself, loves you, knows you to the bottom and yet loves you to the sky to the point that he became flesh. He humbled himself all the way to the point of being willing to die in your place. He broke through every barrier.

And the greatest barrier was him going down to hell itself at the cross. Boy, can we break through barriers? Can we? Can we? Because we've received so much now go and break through a barrier to talk to somebody about Jesus, to say, let me tell you about a man who knew me and all my guilt and all my shame and yet loved me right through it, loved me to the point to die for me.

[28 : 05] The fourth and the final thing we see here is that she did indeed, through the Holy Spirit, start a city-wide movement of the gospel. She became in very popular modern productivity language. She became a movement leader, as we say. Jesus used her, the Holy Spirit used her, this woman to such a degree that in verse 39 it says, many people believed because of her testimony.

And then many Samaritans came out to him and they said, please stay with us. And so he did. And then it says in verse 41, and so many more believed because of his word. And they said to the

woman, it's no longer because you told us to believe that we believe, it's because we encountered him and now we believe.

And here we see just a very simple thing that the Lord loves to actually bless the witness of his people. And so when we go and we do share the gospel with other people, the Lord by the Spirit loves to say yes to that and loves to start city-wide movements of the gospel amongst the people we know. Let me close with this. What do we need today? What do all of us need today to break through?

We need to break through and to say, I am a witness. I'm a testifier. I've come to give glory to the Lord in worship so that I can be strengthened to go and give glory testimony to the Lord Jesus outside this building in our city.

What do we need to break through? And let me just give you two things to close. We need the freedom and purpose that she had. And I think the first thing to say is simply this. She had a real freedom that was given to her by this gracious encounter she had with Jesus. One more time, final time, what did she say?

[29 : 58] Come and see a man that told me all that I ever did. The only way that we're ever going to be people who make witnessing, testifying, bringing our testimony to other people in our lives a spiritual discipline, a regular encounter. The only way that's ever going to happen is if we really do have a fresh encounter with the gospel where we can say, he really is a man who saw me all the way to the worst and loved me anyway. In other words, if you really do have an experience of the gospel in your life and you really do know yourself as a sinner, if you really can say today, Jesus knows me at my worst yet loves me all the way to making me into my best, conforming me to the image of the Son. Ultimately, one day, if you can say that, then you can go out into the city risk-free. You have the assurance of love that can never be taken from you. You can know that no matter what somebody else thinks about me, I know what he thinks about me.

And so I'm okay. I'm willing to lose a relationship. I'm willing in a responsible wise manner to go and extend myself to somebody so that they would know about him because he knows me to the bottom and loves me to the sky. You can say that, you can say today, because I am his treasure, I'm not afraid of losing treasures in this life. And the second and final thing is I think a freedom that we all need that's brought to us by conviction. And so the very last thing and the very end of the passage, when the Samaritans came in verse 42 to see Jesus, they said to the woman, it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, we have seen for ourselves and now we know that he really is the saviour of the world. He indeed is the saviour of the world. Let me just highlight one word there. The Samaritans came to him and they said now we can say he really is the saviour of the world. He indeed is the saviour of the world. And I just wonder today, you could be a person here, a Christian, a follower of Jesus who feels with me today the struggle to say I am a witness, who feels with me today the struggle to say God really has commissioned me to go and tell somebody else, let me tell you about a man who knows me to the bottom, loves me to the sky, come and see. And maybe one of the ways to break through that is that we all need such a fresh encounter with Jesus in our weekly life and our day-to-day life today where we could be enabled to say he really is the saviour of the world. Not just I come to church and I'm you know he is, but to say he really is. And I think for some of us that might mean coming again and re-exploring the claims of Jesus. You could have been a Christian in this room for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years and it may be time to come and say I actually need to re-investigate, to actually process intellectually, emotionally, and through my volitional will the claims of Christianity again. Not because I'm walking away, not because I'm doubting, but because I need to be reignited, I need to be fueled, I need to be able to say he really is. Have you done that before? Have you, if you've grown up in the church, have you broken through the cultural barriers that are in place in your life and come to explore the claims of Christianity, is he really the saviour of the world? He really is the living water, he really is the bread of life. And so for a city-wide movement of the gospel may we go forward as his witnesses. Let us pray. Father, we thank You for this word and we ask now that You would give us an every-person ministry and a living public faith, not out of guilt, Lord know, but by a fresh encounter with the gospel. And so we pray for this in Jesus' name. Amen.