

Bible e-Study Women of the New Testament #5

The Samaritan Woman

“¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?” John 4:11-12

NUGGET - This Samaritan woman ([John 4:1-26](#)) has much to teach us. But one of the most important things she shows us is just how important it is to pay close attention to what God actually says. She demonstrates, by her response to what Jesus has said, that we can easily miss the meaning of what God has to tell us.

We can have our minds so wrapped around ourselves that we can miss the gifts that God puts right in front of us. Read [4:7-12](#) and take careful note of what Jesus says in 10 that sets up today’s key verse. Did you notice what Jesus did not mention in His statement that this unnamed Samaritan woman mentions twice?

She equated:

- Living water with
- Well water.

She spoke of the well and Jesus spoke of the living water. Now we, with the benefit of study and familiarity with the story have to admit to a huge advantage over this dear lady in seeing what Jesus said and meant. But that points up all the more, how important it is to pay attention to what God really does say to us in His word. She missed the fact that Jesus was not referring to just water or even to the water down in this well of Jacob.

He was making a reference to water that flows, that moves, that is alive, like river water. She was so wrapped up in trying to get water without having to come to the well that she missed His meaning. And of course in the context of the conversation the larger meaning of Living Water, of that quenching of all peoples need for God’s forgiveness which comes because of the gift of God, that will later become clear to her.

But that is later. For now let us take in the lesson she teaches us about paying close attention to God’s word. She didn’t listen to what Jesus said; she heard what she wanted to hear. She ran right past the fact that Jesus was offering her something far greater than well water. So often we can get caught up in our own plans and desires that we miss what Jesus wants to give us. And many times when we read scripture we are so used to seeing one thing in it that we can miss the larger gifts that God has for us there. We do this to our own detriment. Let us learn from this woman to pay careful attention, in real time, to the real Word of God that is His gift to us.

APPLICATION - This application is for your study of God’s word. Look up [John 4:27-42](#) and do these things:

1. Read it over seven times, don’t short cut this one! Read it carefully seven times and as you do look for:
 - a. What words or ideas did you see repeated? How were they repeated?
 - b. Conversely, what one word stuck out for you in the given context? What difference does that word make to understanding the whole passage?
 - c. Go back and re-read 4:1-26 and describe what ‘looks’ different now.
2. Take the next 3 minutes and consider what it is that God would have you learn and apply in your life from what He has shown in His word to you today.

PRAY – Ask God to give you heart and hands to put into practice what He has shown you and eyes to see clearly what He longs to show you each day in His word.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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GOING DEEPER

As we said above, this anonymous Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus teaches us many things. ([John 4:1-42](#)) We'll look what she can teach us about our mission here at Zion Lutheran Church, Hearing, Sharing and Living the Gospel.

One thing must be clearly understood when talking about this woman – she would, in today's parlance be known as an 'easy' woman. There are others terms that could be applied, but suffice it to say, she slept around. And that was known to others, and she was ashamed of it. Part of how we know that is by the description of when she comes to get water.

It says it was "about the sixth hour" when she came. It also indicates that she came alone because it says "a Samaritan woman". Going to the well in the sixth hour and alone, these things along with the ensuing conversation indicate her status in community. The sixth hour was noon, the hot part of the day, and not the time of day when a woman would choose to go and do the heavy work of carrying water home. That was traditionally done in the morning and the evening, the cooler parts of the day. Also going out to the well was a community thing. The women would gather there, much like we gather around the water cooler at work to take refreshment and to share some time with others.

All of this indicates that she was either shunned by the women or embarrassed to see them. So she came at loneliest part of the day, trying hard to avoid having to see others. But today she can't avoid the Jewish man sitting near the well. And she has an extraordinary encounter with Him.

As we have seen with other women, Jesus does not let nationality or gender stop Him from engaging others with the gospel. The fact that we do this so often must tell us how important a point it is to God. Jews and Samaritans had a special loathing of each other that had to do with the Babylonian captivity and intermarrying with those not of Jewish blood. So the fact that Jesus even speaks with her is itself a huge lesson.

When we seek to be Sharing the Gospel we need to open our eyes to all who are in our community. That is not easy for us. It means crossing not only our 'boundaries' but our fears and dislikes as well. It also means understanding those around us if we are to reach out and share with them. When she and Jesus in verses [19-24](#) speak of Jewish and Samaritan religious traditions, they both speak to the fact that they understand each other. That's important when we seek to share with others around us.

How can we learn what is important to those around us in our community? What can help us to identify and overcome our inclination to separate ourselves from those who are not like us?

Jesus does understand this woman and she indicates the cultural understanding of the Jews, but Jesus does not let that become the definition of the experience. Jesus folds that understanding into helping this woman come to realize God's grace to her. For us we can learn to accept people where they are from this. But we also don't leave them there. The understanding we gain, is not used in a duplicitous fashion but honestly to help people.

As to Living the Gospel this woman teaches us a great lesson about the power of forgiveness. When the encounter reaches the stage where Jesus tells her everything she has done, she comes to understand that this is the Messiah, the Anointed one promised to come and who would deliver God's forgiveness. She goes and tells the whole town about Him.

She does not let her shame or fear overcome what Jesus has given her in this encounter. She believes to her core that she is changed by what He has spoken to her. Her own community standing no longer matters to her, only that others know what she now knows.

How would you interpret that? What do such actions and words on her part show us is important in Hearing, Sharing and Living the Gospel?

One last thing we learn about Sharing the Gospel from this encounter. We must learn the culture around us. (And remember we live among many 'unchurched' people. What we do on Sunday's is not part of their world and we need to be patient and persistent in teaching those that come here why worship is important.)

It's important to learn what goes on around us so that we reach them in ways that make the gospel relevant to them. The challenge is how to do that and remain true to the word of God and the full teaching of the gospel. We can't leave out those parts that may offend people. After all look at what Jesus said to this woman about her having had 5 husbands and living out of wedlock. This wasn't a fun thing for her, but it was liberating. It cleared the way for her to receive God's forgiveness. No, the issue is how do we cross our own cultural barriers without sacrificing the Cross?

Let me give you a few examples and you can go from there and give this some thought as to how we help others in our culture see who Christ is and what He has done for us. How could 'the Lamb of God' be described to an Eskimo? Or how would the image of working in God's vineyard be explained to someone who had never seen a grape? God's Peace as you ponder, Pastor Rhodes.