

2023 National Ministries Conference
Bring Him to Them
“God’s Mission – Bringing the Lost to Jesus” John 4
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We will be in John 4 for this study. This is the first time that I have ever preached in the state of Alabama. As my mom and I were talking about that, there's something kind of neat about that for our family. My mom was actually born in Alabama City and for many years our family vacationed on Dauphin Island down in the Gulf of Mexico, but those are all before I became a Christian in my young twenties. So to be back in this state to preach the Gospel is a privilege. Let's turn our attention now to the Word of God. From John 4. The Bible reminds us that flowers outside will fade, but the Word of God will endure forever so let's heed the Word of God faithfully together.

John 4:1- says [1] *Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John* [2] *(although Jesus Himself did not baptize, but only His disciples),* [3] *He left Judea and departed again for Galilee.* [4] *And He had to pass through Samaria.* [5] *So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.* [6] *Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.*

[7] *A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”* [8] *(For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)* [9] *The Samaritan woman said to Him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”* *(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)* [10] *Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”* [11] *The woman said to Him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?* [12] *Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.”* [13] *Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,* [14] *but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* [15] *The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”*

[16] *Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”* [17] *The woman answered Him, “I have no husband.”* *Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”* [19] *The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.* [20] *Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”* [21] *Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.* [22] *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* [23] *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.* [24] *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”* [25] *The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.”* [26] *Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”*

[27] Just then His disciples came back. They marveled that He was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to Him. This is the Word of the Lord.

I know that not everyone reading this is married and in God's providence, those who are not perhaps one day will and for those of us who are married, we know how important it is and how joyful it is to remember when it was that we first met our spouse. My wife, Heather and I, have been married now for 27 years, and I can remember when I first met her. I was attending a Baptist Bible college in Central Florida. Her dad was the president of the college, and she just happened to come home on a trip from the other college that she attended in Arkansas. As a young Christian man, I was praying, like many young Christian men, for a Godly, athletic, hippie chick. That's exactly what I wrote in my journal. It's my story. I'm sticking with it. My wife finds at least two of those terms applaudable and one of them she's not quite sure about. You can imagine which one, but I remember the day Heather came into the school cafeteria. I was sitting with friends and she walked in the room with her mom and her little sister, and she was wearing this modest T-shirt and a broom skirt. She was barefoot. She had one long braid running down the side of her long brown hair and she was wearing these really nerdy glasses, hiding behind them a beautiful set of blue eyes. As I caught Heather's gaze, every young woman in that room grew a beard. They all disappeared, and only Heather remained. In a certain sense, you might say that wedding bells began to play because on that very day, I knew that that was the woman that I was going to marry. She tells me all the time that it's really good I didn't tell her that, especially on that first day.

I do want to talk about this theme of where we meet our spouses and use that as a way of connecting to our text for this study. In John 4 when Jesus meets this woman as well, there is a sense in which we ought to hear wedding bells beginning to play in the background. As a brief detour to just the Old Testament backdrop, very often in the Bible, people meet or find their spouses of all places, at a well. In the Book of Genesis, there are two occasions where this happened. One is when Abraham sends his servant down to the place of Abraham's upbringing with a mission, and the mission is to come back with a wife for Isaac. So the servant of Abraham goes down to where Abraham came from and there the servant sits down by a well, and begins to pray. To summarize that prayer, he prays, "Lord, might it be the case that even as I finish this prayer, you will bless your servant, Abraham, and provide a wife for Isaac." He opens up his eyes and there stands young, beautiful Rebecca and for Isaac and Rebecca, wedding bells begin to play. Often the Bible has a very interesting way of sending us a signal when it recreates the same stage, but with different actors as a way of saying to us, 'You've been here before. Pay attention.'

The second time is in Genesis 29. There, Jacob is fleeing from Esau. He goes down to the land of his relatives and he asks about a man named Laban at a well. As he's there interacting with these people and asking questions about his uncle, lo and behold, a young woman named Rachel arrives on the scene. It's a little bit overwhelming what happens, because on the first day that they meet, they kiss. I have a teenage daughter. This would not work for me, but they do and more importantly, when Laban comes on to the scene and recognizes who Jacob is, he uses a very interesting phrase that comes from Genesis 2, when he refers to Jacob as 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.' The point is, you two can marry. So, Jacob and Rachel meet here at a well and wedding bells again begin to play.

The third time is of the Book of Exodus. Early there in the book of Exodus, when Moses flees Egypt, he goes outside of the land of Egypt and he sits down by a well and who should walk up, but a beautiful young lady named Zipporah. This theme is returning where another very significant person in the Bible has met their spouse at a well. There's a little cue here that if you, by the way, are single and looking for a spouse, apparently place you need to go is to a well.

So, what does any of this have to do with John 4 and the woman at the well? I use this as a backdrop to say that I'm quite convinced that when we come to John 4, God in His providence would have us thinking about weddings and bells surely do begin to play in the background. Where does Jesus perform His first miracle? He performs His first miracle at a wedding in Cana in John 2. There, upon that beautiful occasion, Jesus takes ordinary water and He turns it into extraordinary, really good wine and at least a portion of God's people would say, 'Amen.' But there's something significant that happens there.

There's a little of an interaction that begins around who John the Baptist is and this question comes up in John 3 very early in response to all this. They begin to ask John, "Are you the Messiah or should we look for another?" And John answers with a metaphor. He says, 'Actually, if you want to know who I am, the best way to understand that would be to think about a wedding and you can think of me as the best man. I'm not the groom. I don't get the girl. I don't ride off into the sunset with the bride. In fact, I'm really here as a servant that has come to tend to the details, to set the stage and to get everything right and ready.' So, John is the best man. He identifies Jesus as the Groom and if you have a best man and a groom and you want to have a wedding, there's one more person you need – a bride. So where is the bride? If Jesus is the Messiah, where is the bride of the Messiah?

Now we come one step further into John 3 and I think it's very intentional in the narrative design of the Gospel of John that we meet Nicodemus when we meet Nicodemus and the reason why is Nicodemus represents the best of the best of Israel. He is all that in the eyes of Israel. He is a male Pharisaical, Jewish teacher of the law. He is, in a manner of speaking, self-righteous as it goes and he would represent the very high-water mark of the spiritual life of Israel. There's only one problem. Nicodemus is far from the Kingdom. The very way that he enters into the story tells you a lot about him. He comes to Jesus by night. In the Gospel of John, darkness and night are spiritual metaphors for unbelief or distance from the Kingdom. So, it's noteworthy that when Nicodemus first encounters Jesus, he comes into the story almost like a snake slithering into your yard in the nighttime. He does not want to be seen or noticed. He comes to Jesus asking questions about the Kingdom.

Clearly, very early on it becomes the case that Nicodemus is actually a long way off. He might be a male Jewish Pharisaical teacher of the law, who is self-righteous in his own eyes, but not on the side of God. So Jesus evangelizes is Nicodemus explaining to him the very nature of the Kingdom and Nicodemus, not only does not get it, he asks, what I'm going to argue is the dumbest question in the entire Bible, so that when Jesus says to Nicodemus, "This is not that complicated. You even you, in order to enter the Kingdom of God, have to be born again" and here comes the dumbest question the Bible. Nicodemus looks at Jesus, a grown man saying to a grown man, "So I have to go back into my mother's womb?" That's a pretty dumb question for a theological expert to ask. Nicodemus does not get it – he may be the best of the best of all things Israel at that moment but Nicodemus is far from the Kingdom of God. So he slithers back out of the story the same way that he came in under the darkness, in the shadow of night.

Now, with all that we come to John 4. I want to suggest that the text makes it very clear that there's nothing accidental, incidental or unintentional about what Jesus is doing. In fact, our

text uses language that makes that very clear. John 4:4 says that He had to pass through Samaria. The old King James says 'He must needs go through Samaria.' Jesus doesn't just sort of happen to find Himself here. This is providential, it's intentional and this is Jesus seeking and saving His bride. The one that He comes to first meet in the town of Sychar near this well that Jacob had left for his sons is a woman of Samaria.

This woman of Samaria in many ways is the perfect opposite of Nicodemus, but they have some things in common. If Nicodemus was hiding under the cloud of darkness, this woman hides under the light of day and the way that you know, that is by the time of day that she has come to the well which we see in John 4:6. It was about the sixth hour and the sixth hour is high noon. If you are a Jewish reader of the text and familiar with the cultural details and landscape of the day, this would immediately capture your attention because you would know that women often would come to this well to draw water, but they would never come at this time. They would come early in the morning when the sun was cool and had not yet fully risen, and they would come at the end of the day, just before sunset when the sun was beginning to set and again it was cooler. This woman is coming at the perfect time of day if you want to be alone. She hides under the noonday sun and Nicodemus hides in the night.

Jesus often takes the ordinary, everyday things of life, the basic needs and necessities of life and turns them into a stage for Gospel opportunity. So, in a manner of speaking, He begins talking about an everyday earthly need that the woman has to elevate that conversation to an eternal spiritual need that she has and yet does not fully comprehend. He says to the woman in John 4:7 'Give Me a drink' and this sounds more polite in Greek than in English for His disciples had gone to get food but the Samaritan woman, is surprised. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink for me, a woman of Samaria?" Part of the reason for surprise of the Samaritans were nickname by the Jews half breeds. My dad is black. My mom is white. The Samaritans were half breed leftovers of those that came back from exile and had intermarried with the Gentiles of the land and the Jews disdained them. There's a tremendous cultural, theological, spiritual divide between them and so she is surprised, but that does not stop Jesus for a moment. Jesus answered her and immediately begins to elevate the ordinary to the extraordinary, the earthly to the heavenly by saying 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'give me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.'

Now, I have not accomplished a whole lot in my life of 51 years, but I've done a couple of things. And one of them I'm going to share with you right now. It's a word that I invented. It's a really great word and you have permission to use it without ever mentioning my name. It's the word – snarkastic. It's snarky, enhanced with sarcasm, and it comes with a little kind of a gotcha dimple in the cheek. You know that feeling when you look at someone and you're like, 'you don't know what you're talking about. You can't do what you say you can do.' I imagine at this moment, the woman has a little snarkastic dimple on her cheek because when Jesus offers this water, the woman said to Him in John 4:11 "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" Can you see the dimple on her cheek? Can you hear the snarkasm in her question?

Then she asked a question far more true than she realizes, "Are you greater than our father, Jacob who gave us the well and drank from it himself as did his sons and his livestock?" Are you greater than our father Jacob? What a beautiful question. Even though she didn't know how true it was. Notice that Jesus is not deterred by her sarcasm or her snarkasm, or even by this element of distraction. Jesus, rather, continues the theme of that which is eternal and essential when He says '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 they will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' Don't miss what Jesus just did here for evangelistically, it's remarkable. He took the ordinary need. What does she need? She needs water but to show her that what she really needs is water that comes from above. Our earthly needs so often are a reflection of our true, eternal and heavenly needs.

Jesus also just made somewhat of an offer to the woman that certainly caught her attention. The idea not simply of receiving water, but water that would flow in such a way that she would never be thirsty and never have to come back to draw water again. In John 4:15 we can see that quite clearly this has her attention when she says to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." Why would that matter to her? What's going on in this woman's life? What makes her desirous to not have to come back and draw water? Is it simply a matter of thirst? Is it simply even a matter of the flesh? Or is this not now beginning to reveal the real war, the real trouble, the real sin, the real shame that resides in her soul.

Then notice what Jesus does for her in John 4:16, where some would find it impolite and insensitive yet it's the perfect opposite. Jesus, the sweet lover of our souls tells us the truth about ourselves. Sometimes the law comes to us in the form of a command do or do not do but often, actually, the law comes to us in the form of a story telling us what we have done and showing its ravaging consequences. Jesus says to her in John 4:16, a line that I'm pretty sure removed that snarkastic dimple from her cheek when he says to her, 'Go call your husband and come here.' In a manner of speaking, she was just unmasked. You can imagine that the woman responds with a voice that's an octave or two down from her previous chatter, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, "You right in saying, I have no husband, for you've had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." This is a horrific story. The woman, to put it bluntly, is a five time loser. She's had five husbands.

Now, in this day and age in the world of Vegas weddings and Jerry Springer and all the nonsense, maybe imagine somebody being married five times is still a little bit of a feat but in the first century, this is unbelievable, quite rare and not only has she had five husbands, but she is now having a man who is not her husband. Think about what this would mean. This is a woman who five times like the old country song says, has looked for love in all the wrong places. This is a woman who has been used, abused, objectified repeatedly and discarded. This is a woman who has bought the lie over and over and over that sin so often makes, which says 'I will satisfy you' at night and in the morning leaves you cold, alone and naked on the floor. This is a woman who's not only been married five times now, it's almost as though she's given up on marriage and so she is living with a man who is not her husband. This is a woman whose very life is broken. This is a woman whose life is arguably summarized in the bucket that she brought to the well – it is empty, dry and parched. It is in need of something that it cannot provide for itself. This is a woman who is very broken inside and out and now you begin to understand why this woman is there at high noon.

Imagine what a woman like this would be thought of in the eyes of the town women. Town women can be a little bit vicious. A woman who's had five husbands and is now living with a man who is not her husband, she would be perceived as a predator, a pariah of sorts, a woman almost to be feared, a man eater, a marriage wrecker, a horrible model for young ladies. No doubt there's a great reason why now she is there alone. It's not just that she is avoiding them. Arguably, they would be avoiding her, but Jesus is not. It is Jesus who has come for her and with this word he says to her, 'Go call your husband and come back' she is immediately

undone. In John 4:18 when it says 'you've had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband' in the Greek is literally the one you are now having. This woman is in an open, adulterous relationship.

What would you do if somebody took off your mask like this and exposed the sinful, broken realities of your life and the disappointing ravaging consequences of sin and the shame and emptiness that has left you alone with? You would do probably what she does. Change the subject or at least she tries. You know that feeling when you get a little nervous, so you attempt to change the subject. That's exactly what she does in John 4:19 when she says 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain but you say that in Jerusalem is a place where people ought to worship.' She brings up a distracting topic. She knows the old rivalry between the Jews and the Samaritans – this mountain or that mountain, your temple or our temple, your way of worship or our way of worship. But Jesus will not be distracted. He is here to talk about far more than mountains.

Jesus says in John 4:21-24, [21] *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. [22] You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. [23] But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him. [24] God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* Yes, we can talk about worship, but it has very little to do with mountains. God is a Seeker and He's actively on a mission trip seeking and saving the lost.

Sometimes we talk about a horrible phrase called 'seeker sensitive worship.' It actually came about in the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. All that stuff that you thought happened outside the church had a little bit of a splash inside as well and for all the wrong reasons. We began to readjust our paradigm of worship as though somehow playing a certain kind of music would attract people, and we could almost pull like a bait and switch. Worship was designed for seekers and the seekers were perceived to be people but here's the point; Man on his own does not seek after God and a style of music is not going to convert his soul. More importantly, the Bible actually applauds the idea of seeker sensitive worship but the Seeker is God. It is God who seeks after those who are lost. It is God who sought after you. It is God who sought after this woman here at the well and Jesus is on a mission trip seeking and saving that which is lost.

It's at this moment that the woman references the Messiah. This is a very important transition in the text. John 4:25 says [25] *The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things."* What the Jews and the Samaritans had in common was the Old Testament expectation that a Messiah would come – a Redeemer and Savior of Israel, and fulfill all of the promises of the Old Testament but notice the way that Jesus responds when she brings up the Messiah. It's actually mind blowing, because when she says, 'I know that Messiah is coming, and when He comes, He will tell us all things' Jesus responds to her in John 4:26 saying "I, who speak to you, am He." In the Greek it reads like this; 'I who speak to you I am.'

This phrase "I Am" was used in Exodus 3:14, when God summons Moses to a bush and says, 'I'm sending you to Egypt to deliver My people from their bondage.' Moses says, "Lord, who shall I say, has sent me?" His answer is, 'I am.' This is the God of the Covenant. This is a God who made covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is a God who not only redeemed Israel out of her bondage, but He was also the creator and upholder of all things. This is the One eternal God who now stands in front of this woman at a well, in Samaria in the flesh – the great I

Am of Israel on a mission trip seeking and saving His bride. I want you to pause and think about what this means.

Here's a woman who has been used, abused, objectified repeatedly, ravished and disappointed, who now comes alone to this well, in the middle of the day at high noon, clothed in her shame, hiding under the heat of the day and yet she's met Jesus, One who is so different than every other man she had ever met, who is actually the embodiment of a perfect husband, One who has come not to take from her or to objectify her or to use and abuse her, but rather One who is calm as the perfect husband to lay down his life for His bride. As many have left her cold, alone, naked and ashamed, this One has come to cleanse her from all of our sins, to clothe her with His own righteousness and to adorn her with that beautiful term part of the Bride of Christ. Jesus is the One who has come to give His life, that great sacrifice that will redeem her in such a way, a redemption that is far more beautiful than Israel had ever seen. This is love to lay down one's life for another. This is the measure of a man and the perfect husband.

Almost on cue, the disciples come back. They're stunned that He is talking with a woman but there are too nervous to ask the questions, like what do you seek or why are you talking with her? You can almost sense that the woman is flustered a little bit and John 4:28-30 concludes this way; [28] *So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" [30] They went out of the town and were coming to Him.*

I want to make a couple observations that are very pastoral and they apply very well, especially at a missions' conference. One is with what did this woman come to the well that morning? She came with a bucket. What do we learn about that bucket? In many ways, it was the emblem of her life. It is empty. It is dry. It is parched. It is in need of something that can only come from outside of itself and when this woman meets Jesus, in a certain sense, the wedding bells begin to play not of an earthly marriage, but a spiritual union between her soul and His. Where does she leave that bucket that was the emblem of her life? She leaves it with Jesus, as it ought to be. It is almost as though at this moment, her old life now fades to the background summarized in that bucket left with Christ. A new life is about to begin because here now in front of her is a Man who has treated her unlike every other man, yet knows the perfect truth about her. As soon as she comes to know Jesus, the old passes away and the new has come.

Not only that, think about what she did at the beginning of the story. She comes to this well in the heat of day under the blistering sun to avoid the people of the town. What does she do at the end? The exact opposite. This woman who avoided the town women and the town men now goes back to the town on her own mission trip. Why? Because she just met Jesus; Someone who not only knew all of her sin, exposed all of her sin, but loved her anyway. It is the sweetest offer of a marriage ever, and it raises a very important question; have you met this Jesus? He is the One who can tell you all that you ever did. He is the One who can comprehensively, in one word in one sentence, unmask you, see your nakedness and your shame, but not leave you there, cleansing you with His own bloodshed for sinners, clothing you with His own righteousness, that He freely gives and loving you far better than all the love of this world.

If you have not placed your faith in Jesus Christ, your life is an empty bucket. If you have, then this woman in many ways truly does reflect your life, because not only does she leave her bucket with Jesus, she goes back to town. I want you to notice what she does here. In a certain sense, she says to the town people whom she formerly would have avoided, 'Come and meet this Man.' What would propel this woman to do this? What is the engine that drives evangelism? This is what it's not; it's not guilt. It's not me beating you over the head saying 'you

ought to do evangelism or you're just not really good Christians.' We call that evangel legalism. The engine that fuels evangelism is being touched by the love of Christ and being so overcome by His love that people are no longer scary.

The day I proposed to Heather, my wife, I took her to the beach. We were in North Carolina together, and there on the beach we would often have breakfast and devotions together. Then I would go to work and she would jog home. Heather is as introverted as I am extroverted. I will talk to a tree. I will talk to total strangers. Christians actually scare me a little bit, but that morning when I proposed to Heather, I made muffins and we went to the beach. We did a little devotional thing and I drew a circle around the sand and I got down on one knee, some kind of old school and I proposed to her and she said 'yes.' It was a gray cloudy day but after she said 'yes,' the clouds parted, cherubs came out, descending, playing harp, billowing around a case. Maybe I overstated this a little bit but I went off to work. She jogged home. On the way home she sees an older lady there, pruning her roses and Heather stops. This is very out of character for her. She just has to tell this lady, this total stranger about this man that just put a ring on her finger. The theologian often under credited, the theologian Thumper from the movie Bambi, termed a fantastic phrase to describe this dynamic; 'Twitterpated.' Twitterpated is when you get stung with love and in a certain sense, the rest of the world fades to gray or black and white but the one whom you love or who loves you stands there in the middle, in color and people aren't that scary.

That's what happens to the woman as well on this day. I want you to notice what she doesn't do. She didn't go to church, although there is nothing wrong with that. She didn't get baptized. She didn't go to seminary. She didn't take a class on evangelism explosion or anything else. All she did was meet Jesus and now the world can never be the same. It's as though, finally she is met the love of her life – the One true, everlasting love of her life that takes away her empty bucket and now causes in her soul a well to spring up, bubbling up to eternal life.

There are two more reasons why I want to press on the idea of marriage and really make you walk away thinking about it. One is, if you are a Jewish reader of the text, again, the numbers here would catch your attention and you would noticed the woman has had five husbands and she now has a man who is not her husband. Five plus one is six, which Biblically speaking, is a lonely number. It's a number of frustration and incompleteness. Seven is the number of wholeness. So she's had five husbands and she's now with Mr. Wrong who beloved is Mr. Right. It is Jesus the sweet lover of her soul and mine and your soul.

There's one more way that we ought to see this wedding and marriage thing play out and for this, I want to look at Revelation 22. The author of the Book of Revelation is John. It is the same author John, who wrote the Book of John that we've spent all of our time for this study. I'm firmly convinced that when John writes the verse, I'm about to read to you, he has the woman at the well in mind. Think about John 4 when we see what Revelation 22:17 says; *[17] The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*

John clearly has the woman as well in mind. There are several ways you can't miss it. What is the first word out of her mouth when she goes back to the town people in Sychar? The first word out of her mouth is come but here, John says it's the Spirit and the bride. This is beautiful. It's important. This is identity forming. This is John's way of saying that until the curtain closes and God's drama of redemption is finally completed the Spirit and the bride or the Spirit speaking through the bride have a word to say to the world and that word that the bride is saying to the world with the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, is come – come and meet

the One who can tell you all that I ever did. Come and meet the One who can expose and unmask all your sin and your shame. Come and meet the One who alone can satisfy you and enable you to leave all your empty buckets behind and be full of that everlasting water. Come, for this water has no price. It is far more valuable than anything that you can ever purchase and yet it is offered freely to all who will take it by faith. Let the one who is thirsty come. Aren't we all so thirsty? Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Why is the church still here? Have you ever wondered that? Why are we still here? Why is it not all done? It's because Jesus is still seeking and saving His bride and He uses His bride to gather His bride, which is what makes evangelism such a remarkable privilege. I want to close sharing my story and yours in very brief form. I mentioned the very beginning of the service that our trips to Alabama were before I became a Christian. I grew up a non-Christian. We were a non-Christian military family. My dad abandoned our family when I was 12. At that time, my ten year old brother and I started doing drugs and all the dumb stuff. By the time I graduated high school, I think I'd perfected the art of sin. I'd been shot at twice, I'd been in gangs, I'd been arrested. I failed my senior year of high school and had to repeat it. I was voted by my high school senior class, most likely to live in a Volkswagen van forever, and I'm still not sure if that was a compliment or an insult. A year after high school, I moved down to the beach and I was just delivering pizza, selling drugs and not really doing much.

I attempted college and just couldn't take it. Not ready to sit in the classroom again. So, I dropped out of college, sold everything that I had, it wasn't much. I followed a band called the Grateful Dead around the country and if you don't know who they are, you're not missing much. After about a year of following the Grateful Dead around the country and growing dreadlocks, which I thought were pretty cool, I decided I just couldn't take the smell of hippies anymore. I couldn't take the smell of patchouli anymore. I was tired of eating falafels every single day over and over and over, and waking up wherever with whomever and all the dumb that went with it. I decided to go back to North Carolina on a Greyhound bus.

My older sister, who was flirting with Christianity at the time, gave me her Bible. I had no interest in it. I grew up in North Carolina surrounded by the church, but having never really encountered Jesus Himself. After a couple of days on this bus, my fingers were tired from playing guitar and so I was trapped. I took out the Bible and I looked at the table of contents and there I saw my brother's name. His name is Mark. I was frustrated that there was not a book of Eric, but I started reading the Gospel of Mark, and there I was unmasked. I had perfected the art of sin and then in the Gospel of Mark, Someone told me all that I ever did and offered me water that could make me clean – a well of water that would never leave me dissatisfied and a love that could not be taken away.

Now I'm going to contrast my story because mine is a lot like the woman at the well with some of you, because I would imagine some of you have come into the Kingdom from kicking and screaming like I did, or the way the woman at the well did – rather dramatic conversion stories – but I actually want a word with those of you who have boring stories, those of you who grew up in the church, like my wife, third generation pastor's missionary kid who never remembers not being saved, many of you have not gone to hell in order to find your way to heaven. Many of you have actually been raised by Christian parents who did what Christian parents ought to do. They spoke the Word of God into your heart, and they brought you to church when you didn't want to come. Not only that, you sat under the ministry of faithful preachers. You've been shepherded by elders and deacons and Sunday school teachers and people that love you.

You might even be tempted to say, 'My story is kind of boring.' I want you to know, as a pastor and a dad of four kids, two boys, two girls – two teenagers, a five and a six year old, guess which story I want for my kids? It's not the story of the woman of the well or my story. It's actually the boring story that so many of you may think that you have. But why would we ever think that grace of God is boring? Why would we think that just because we haven't been arrested and shot at and spent a decade on drugs, that we don't have something wonderful to share? The reality is there are those who come into the Kingdom like the woman of the well and myself where we sort of sneak in from the side and then you have a covenant kid like Nicodemus raised in the covenant, probably thinking that that was enough and yet comes to realize even he needs to be born again.

Here's my point as we finish. If you are reading this by the grace of God, whether you snuck in the side door or have been raised up in the arms of the church, you have a beautiful story to share. You have a beautiful Savior to speak of, and you are part of this story, not simply a spectator because you are a part of that bride through whom the Spirit of God continues to speak to the world a clear, unambiguous and much needed word – Come, come and meet Jesus, the Savior of the world. Let's pray.

Prayer:

O Lord our God, we thank You that You were pleased to seek and to save the lost. That day surely the woman at the well woke up thinking very little about what might lie before her. It was a normal day, a normal routine, another day with her bucket and she ended that day without that bucket, but with Jesus. We ask O Lord that on this day, no one would depart from here in unbelief for the Gospel has been made clear. The Spirit of God is powerfully here and we ask Lord that You would convince and convert sinners into saints and that You would fill us with Your Spirit. I pray, Lord, for my brothers and sisters reading this that they would be so touched, so twitterpated by the Gospel itself and by the love of Christ Jesus, that the world would no longer be scary to us and that we would have a great desire to see many people come and to meet Jesus. I pray, Lord, that You would cause this church to continue in its faithfulness. Thank You for all that it has done, it is doing and we pray even for the things that are yet to be done in its future. We thank you, O Lord, that until the curtain closes and Jesus returns for His bride perfectly and finally gathered that we know who we are in this world and what we are called to do. We are the church, the Bride of Christ, and we are called to compel the world to come and meet Jesus. Bless us to that end, we pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.