

JESUS TALKS WITH A SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4:1-26

Key Verse: 4:10

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

Today's passage is Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman. This woman from the lower stratum of society thought that if she married she would be happy forever. So she married five times. But she was not happy. She was only sorrowful and cried many tears. Somebody should have understood her. But nobody understood this woman. Out of his compassion, Jesus understood this woman. Jesus also gradually and patiently led her to the living water welling up to eternal life. In this passage, let's learn how Jesus helped this pitiful woman to open her spiritual eyes.

I. "Will you give me a drink?" (1-15)

First, Jesus at the well of Jacob (1-6). This event took place by a well near Sychar, Samaria. How was it that Jesus had come to this place when the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans? It happened when the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John. The Jews plotted to put some political pressure on Jesus in order to thwart Jesus' ministry. Jesus realized that it was not necessary for him to collide with [the Jewish](#) leaders at the outset of his earthly Messianic ministry. So he left Judea to return to Galilee (1-3). Judea was located in the extreme south and Galilee was to the north. Samaria lay in between. The most [direct way](#) from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria. Using that route, the journey could be made in three days. But because of the centuries-old feud between the Jews and the Samaritans, the Jews usually did not pass through Samaria. The alternate route took twice as long--six days. The Jews did not mind taking the longer route in order to avoid the Samaritans. But Jesus was different. He passed through Samaria, ignoring human prejudice and barriers. Praise Jesus! This incident seems to declare that Jesus is God of all men; not only God of the Jews, but also God of the Samaritans. There are no human barriers in Jesus. This reminds us of Ephesians 2:14: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."

So Jesus came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near a plot of ground which Jacob had given to his most beloved son Joseph. Jacob met Rachel first at the well at Haran after a long journey, leaving his mommy behind. As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, he began to cry with a loud voice. Why? We don't know. This event took place in Haran. Still people call this well the well of romance, because it was Jacob's well. It is also a well of romance between the heavenly prince and a sorrowful Samaritan woman. And Jesus was tired, he sat down by the well (5,6). This place had many [historical](#) memories for the nation, Israel. Perhaps Jesus looked up at Mount Gerizim, the mountain of blessing, then turned his eyes to Mount Ebal, the mountain of curse (Dt 27:12,13). We can imagine the panorama of history that passed through Jesus' mind's eyes. Jesus sat there by Jacob's well. It was 12 noon, the sixth hour by Jewish time. It was the heat of the day.

Someone disturbed Jesus' reverie. A Samaritan woman came to draw water. She was a lonely woman: They say that women usually went to draw water in the early morning or in the cool of the evening, to avoid the heat, gathering as many as 20 or 30 at a time, carrying water jars on their heads. It was a social occasion for the women in a strict, male-dominant society. But this woman came all by herself in the heat of the day (7). Why did this woman come to draw water in the heat of the day all by herself? For she was ostracized by her town's women. In those times, the Jews despised the Samaritans. And the Samaritan men despised the Samaritan women. But the despised Samaritan women despised this lonely Samaritan woman because of her immoral life background. How did Jesus help her?

Second, Jesus talked to her first (7-9). Sinful human beings are so proud that no one wants to say first, "I'm sorry." There was a world-famous philanthropist. He established 600 orphanages around the world in the '70s. But he divorced his wife at the age of 75 and died soon after. He divorced his wife simply because he did not want to say to his wife, "I'm sorry." Because of his pride, he betrayed his conscience and faith, and invalidated all his achievements in God. What was worse, he made God very sorry despite his achievements. But Jesus was different. Jesus humbled himself and asked first a favor of this woman to create a relationship. We call this, "God's initiative." 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." Jesus really wants to talk with us personally. Revelation 3:20 says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." However, the best example of God's initiative is when Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Will you give me a drink?"

Why did Jesus ask a favor of this indecent woman? It was to save her soul. The Samaritan woman's sinful life wounded her so deeply that her heart was closed and her heart was so hardened that no one could even talk to her. Even merciful Buddha could not talk to her. Suppose Buddha said to her, "Buddha mercy. Dear lady, forget about everything." How could she forget everything when all the memories of bitterness and wounds made her sorry day and night? As long as she was alive she would not forget her past, because she was not a vegetable. And no one could help her. Suppose Confucius had met her and said, "After you were seven years old, you should not even sit in the same room with a boy." She would talk back to him, "Are you telling me or yourself?" Suppose Socrates said, "Know yourself." That's nonsense, for she knew about herself too well. None of these great men or their words could open her closed heart. But see! Jesus asked her quietly, "Will you give me a drink?" His words were full of God's grace. His words immediately melted her closed heart until she was able to talk to Jesus. We give honor and glory to Jesus who is full of grace.

What was her first response to Jesus' request? Look at verse 9a. "The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?'" She talked about racial barriers between the Jews and the Samaritans, which were insuperable. The Jews had not associated with the Samaritans since the Assyrians had invaded Samaria, the capital of Northern Israel, around 720 B.C. The Assyrians made them intermarry with foreigners. They lost their racial purity, since then they were called the ten lost tribes. Out of their

self-righteousness, the Jews despised the Samaritans, instead of having God's compassion for them. There was another barrier between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. She was a woman and Jesus was a man. The Jews did not even speak to a woman in public.

Third, the gift of God (10-15). How did Jesus respond to her sentiment? In spite of her defiant response, Jesus really wanted to give her the gift of God. Look at verse 10. Jesus spoke in the subjunctive mood so as to speak to her in a most gentle way. "Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water'" (10). The gift of God is the living water--Jesus himself, who gives us eternal life. There are many kinds of gifts. However, they all have strings attached. There is only one free gift. It is the gift of God, Jesus Christ. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." God gave us his one and only Son as a gift (Jn 3:16). If this woman had known the gift of God, she would have been really happy. But her spiritual eyes were not yet opened. So she said, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob...?" (11,12a) She wanted to know if Jesus had a bucket--she also wanted to know if Jesus was greater than Jacob. She did not know that the water in Jacob's well percolated up from the subsoil. On the other hand, the living water that Jesus gives comes from God. Revelation 22:1 says the living water flows from the throne of God. She saw Jesus humanly and no more. But Jesus saw her spiritually and spoke to her about spiritual things, even though she looked most unlikely to talk about spiritual things.

Jesus knew that she was a thirsty soul. Look at verses 13,14. Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." Jesus quenches human thirst, because he is the Creator God and the source of all human need. John 7:38 says, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." If we have no Jesus, we are like cut flowers in a vase. But when we abide in Jesus, our lives become fluorescent and fruitful. Jesus satisfies our souls. After hearing the word of life from Jesus, the Samaritan woman opened her heart wide. Look at verse 15. "The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'" She admitted that she not only was a thirsty soul, but also was weary with her life in the world. It is surprising that she was free to ask Jesus' help after hearing what Jesus said, "Will you give me a drink?" Here we learn that Jesus asked her a favor, not to get something, but to give her the gift of God, eternal life.

II. "Go, call your husband" (16-26)

First, Jesus wanted to help her repent her sins (16-22). The conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well was a beautiful love story. The woman may have felt as if she were in paradise dreaming. But look at verse 16. "He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'" It is surprising that graceful Jesus suddenly changed his attitude and said, "Go, call your husband and come back." It seems that Jesus touched a very sore spot. Why did Jesus mention her husband

problem?

These days, many people never talk about others' sin problem, because they are afraid they would violate others' human rights. But Jesus endured the pain of exposing her inner sin problem so that he might, by any means, help her solve her sin problem. This seems to be too harsh--and as if Jesus loved her no more. But in truth, it is divine love: It is spiritual love which makes her solve her sin problem. Her enemies were not her town's people. They were her sins in her. Sin poisoned her. Sin tormented her day and night with no rest. Finally, sin cut her love-relationship with God and men.

"Go, call your husband!" Humanly speaking, this was interference with her private life. However, Jesus did not mind violating her human rights to talk about her sin problem in order to heal her sin-sick soul. Her real problem appeared to be a husband problem or marriage problem as common people think. But it was a sin problem. Her cursed woman's desire controlled her and drove her until she became a helpless Samaritan woman. As a result, even if she had married five times, she would remain with a severe marriage problem. In proportion to her gravity of sin, her cursed desire might have tormented her without ceasing (Ge 3:16).

"Go, call your husband!" This was Jesus' divine voice and life-giving love. Most spiritually blind people are offended when their sins are touched by spiritual love. It is not easy to love others with spiritual love. Jesus, however, loved her soul. In part one, when Jesus said, "Will you give me a drink?" he was full of grace. In part two, when he said, "Go, call your husband and come back," he was full of truth.

How did she reply to Jesus' command? In verse 17 she said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband." Jesus understood her personal life problem. She had had five husbands, but none of them could be worthy of her husband in her soul. But fact was fact. She had had five husbands and now a boy roommate.

When the woman accepted Jesus' spiritual love, her spiritual eyes were opened and she began to talk about something spiritual. She said, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet" (19). Right after that, she asked him first about where to worship (20). Why did she suddenly talk about worship? She had gone too far to talk about worshipping God. Another reason might be that Jews and Samaritans had a different idea about the place of worship. Anyway she did not hesitate to talk about the worship problem. It was because she was still a human being created in the image of God. Her life was still shining like stars in the sky. Jesus clearly told her that the place of worship is not important (21). She must worship God because the woman's Everlasting Father is the Creator God and she is his precious daughter. Look at verse 22. "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." Here "the Jews" refers to Jesus. Jesus not only taught her why she had to worship God, but also he taught her from whom salvation comes.

Second, God is seeking her (23). Read verse 23. When we carefully read

verse 23 we learn that God is seeking the Samaritan kind of women, though they don't deserve his grace at all. In this verse we learn the shepherd heart of God. God is like a shepherd who left 99 sheep in the open field so that he might go out to seek one lost sheep. God is especially seeking lost Samaritan women in the hope of raising them as mothers of prayer. It's really a surprising story that God is seeking a woman like the Samaritan woman. Our God is a good shepherd. By the same token, we must know that corrupted men and wayward women are seeking God earnestly like the Samaritan woman in their hearts. We love Jesus in our hearts and souls!

Third, I am he (24-26). Finally, Jesus teaches her God's divine attribute. Look at verse 24. "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." When Jesus said, "God is spirit," he meant that God is not flesh; but God is spirit. He is not confined to the limitations of the flesh. He is the eternal and infinite God. Therefore, God can be our Everlasting Father. We will enjoy eternal life in the kingdom of God when our earthly tent is destroyed (2Cor 5:1). The Samaritan woman's sin was that she had given her purity, devotion, love and woman's faithfulness--all she had--to men, not to God. Also, she did not live by the word of God, but by her cursed desires. Finally she became a prey of the devil. Human beings can mutually love and help one another (Ge 2:20). But no human being can solve another's cursed desire.

What was her response? Look at verse 25. "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." She perceived that Jesus is the Messiah, and he is everything to her. Who in the world could be everything to her? Only Jesus--who is God. Jesus is everything to her (Isa 9:6). "Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am he.'" (26) Now we know why Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband." It was to introduce her true husband, the Messiah. It was to save her from her sins and give her eternal life.

May Jesus give you the gift of God. May God give you wisdom to help all Samaritan women spiritually. May God give you his compassion so that you may take care of them until they become sweet mothers in Jesus.