

John 4 Sermon

My name is Brian Baughman. My wife and I, along with our two daughters have attended this church for about 3 years. Today we are going to be looking at John chapter 4. John's gospel was written as a gospel for the entire world to read. The theme verse states: "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." This is a powerful call. This applies to anyone who would pick up a Bible, people you care about deeply, people you will never meet, and as we'll see today, people you would never expect.

Four things are going to happen today. First, I'm going to quickly lay out a goal for today's message. Second, I'll do an overview of the passage. Third, I'll go back over three points and pull more from the passage. And lastly, we will have a collective call to action.

My goal, after going through this passage together, is that this would change how we think about evangelism. I'm probably not the best person to bring this message to you, but if we rely on the Holy Spirit to lead us, anything is possible.

Let's go to our passage, John chapter 4.

We are going to pick up in verse 5. Pretend like this is the start of movie, or a play, and we see Jesus, by a well, with a woman, who can come to draw water.

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.) "

So Jesus is just starting his earthly ministry. In chapter 2, we see his first miracle, turning water into wine. Chapter 3, Nicodemus, a religious leader, comes to Jesus and says "you are doing some amazing signs, you must be of God. Jesus is also exalted by John the Baptist, who was a transformational and his own following. This earthly ministry is ramping up and Jesus is going to stay on the move.

The Jews didn't like the Samaritans, But Jesus takes the move direct route from point A to point B, and this includes going through Samaria. They get to a town called Sychar, they need food, they need water. But you need to know this: everything about this interaction is controversial.

Most Jewish Rabbi's would not be caught dead going through Samaria. To make matters worse, they are reloading supplies. You can almost hear the disciples saying, "what are we doing here!?" And it gets even worse, Jesus addresses a women.

Jewish Rabbi's didn't speak to our their own wives in public, much worse to address a stranger, and a Samaritan.

A quick word here on the Jewish vs Samaritan divide. If you've attending church your entire life, you know these two groups don't get along. I'm going to give you a 3 minute review of the back and forth between Israel and Samaria.

Stay with me: There was a prophet named Jonah. God told him to go to city called Nineveh and tell them they were going to answer to God. This wasn't from a fortune cookie at a restaurant, this is God talking to him. Jonah, hates the Ninevites and doesn't want them to receive God's mercy. He runs the other way. Why? The Ninevites were a gigantic, wicked city, that bragged and gloated about being vicious. Nineveh happened to be the largest city in a world empire called Assyria. How does that connect to John 4? The Assyrians conquered a part of Israel called the Northern Kingdom. They took over the land, took a bunch of people and then transplanted a bunch of foreigners. God had told Israel, don't scramble the bloodline, or you'll find yourself worshipping other gods, which they did. Blurring false gods, Jewish tradition, opposing things Israel did. Not only that, but they had the audacity to tell the Southern Kingdom, "y'all don't even worship the real Yahweh, none of the Prophets are inspired, etc". For the sake of cultural connection, imagine if half of America was conquered by Iran, and they went on Fox News and told Sean Hannity, you never really had the true Declaration of Independence, or Constitution, we actually have that. Bottom line, tensions were high, and they had been that for hundreds of years, with no end in sight.

Now, let me read this verses again:

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.) “

But we are about to shift from an ordinary drink to something totally life changing:

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.”

The phrase living meant water that was active, like water running in a stream. The water in the well was dormant, it was 100 feet deep. She has a good point, the water from the well is hard to get to, so how are you going to make things easy? Also, one of the Patriarchs, Jacob, this is his old well that is still working for us. Are you seriously better than Jacob? Without directly saying so, Jesus infers that he has better water than Jacob by saying his water will not just sustain for ordinary life, but for eternal life. This was actually very touchy ground, they both wanted to lay claim to

Jacob, but he goes beyond that struggle to point to a much bigger issue. Still, she is probably a combination of confused, frustrated, and annoyed, and increasingly sarcastic.

Before we read verse 15 I need to set the stage. In junior high I went with a group to the Sears tower in Chicago. Of course there are people with signs outside saying various things. One guy has a sign that says “Aliens are joining with Bill Clinton to take over the world”. I was a little snot and so I tried to call his bluff, “how do you know that this is true?” This guy looks at me, serious as a heart attack and says “because the aliens told me”. After that response, pretty sure this guy doesn’t care if he is taken very seriously. He is just making things up.

But here is verse 15: **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.”**

Now, in all fairness, some people believe she really wanted this water that I might have had. I don’t really buy that.

What we see here is an interaction where she goes from an annoyed, playful banter, to something that cuts much deeper, and has incredible implications to her life.

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.”

So, he asks a question, and she lies. At best, she says something technically accurate that intentionally dodges the point. This is like

a child who steals a cookie from the kitchen, and stuffs it into their mouth. By the time their parents says “hey what is in your mouth?” they swallow the cookie and say “nothing”.

By the time he has responded to her, she knows this isn't some crazy guy outside the Sears Tower.

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.”

Just then his disciples return. She doesn't even pick up her water jar, but goes to her town and says to the people “can this be the Christ?”

For the sake of time, I'm going to skip over verses 31-38, however I would encourage you to read them and study them at a later time.

Listen to how this portion of the account concludes:

39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his word.

42 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."

Never a dull day with Jesus. His disciples at this point are going - just when we'd thought we had seen it all. How will we even begin to explain this? See verse 39, "many samaritans from that town believed in him because of the women's testimony". A town they should have avoided. A people they clashed with. A women he should speak to. A conversation that was strange.

Three Points from today's passage:

1. People are difficult, complex, and lost
2. The gospel is living water
3. Let the Holy Spirit Lead.

1. People are difficult, complex, and lost.

Remember in verse 6, when it tells us "it was about the sixth hour"? This is a big deal. The heat was scorching, and the sixth hour would have been high noon. All of the other women, would have

been drawing their water earlier in the morning when the temperatures were far cooler. However, the woman at the well was most likely a social outcast. They told her, don't you dare come around us. This would be difficult. You connected with people during times like this. Back then getting water, making food, and trying not to die took more of your time up. Jesus could have gone to the well in the morning, that is when all the normal people would have been there. But here he is, in the heat of the day, talking to a woman who is back talking him!

Speaking of complex, why was she an outcast? For most of history, commentators would say that being an adulterer, which could lead to 5 husbands, and now be living with a new guy, led to this outcast status. The other ladies could have said, we don't want to see, and I sure don't want to see you anywhere near my husband. However, culturally we are now giving women the benefit of the doubt. Some more modern Christian websites will try to frame this as all of her husbands were the bad guys, and she was a victim of circumstance. I think there is a reason we don't have all of the details. I bet, if you spoke to her and her husband's, it would be a complex situation. Many years ago I interacted with a couple. Lady told me, my live in boyfriend is an alcoholic, so I'm concerned, praying, looking for an opportunity... until one day he shows up and tells me, I had to kick her out, I've filed domestic violence battery charges against her, she is using drugs. I remember thinking at the conclusion of our conversation, I have no idea who to believe right now.

Friends, it will never be easy sorting through the worlds problems. We are surrounded by people who are ultimately lost. I think that

sometime we anticipate people who have roughly the same moral compass we do, agree on politics, agree on schooling, and even agree with us on child immunizations will float into our lives. There is a world full of people, ready for the gospel, who probably despise the way you are living your life. What else should we expect? Expect difficulting. Expect complexity.

Have you settled into a mindset that says “these are my people, these are the folks I interact with, and here is how I serve?” Maybe God has something for you that you wouldn’t think of. I’ll tell you what, the disciples were horrified at Jesus talking to this women. What are we doing in this Samaritan town, well, I’m glad we got the food... oh no is the Rabbi talking to some woman? Matthew could have been thinking, I might be a traitorous tax collector, and Simon the Zealot was part of a group that the Romans classified as terrorist, but even we knew that talking to this women is way out of line.

Check this out, the woman at the well has just a had a stranger correct her and point out she isn’t single, she has a long line of marital problems, and she immediately shifts to a cultural religious difference between Jews and Samaritans. She is changing the subject! Wait, we were talking about you. I have to admit, her reflexes are fast.

...a guy engage a street preacher. After quickly realizing that he was a sinner, in need of a savior, the man changed the subject abruptly, moving it from his need to repent to theory that he had to drag back into the equation. “Should I repent...? Uh, I don’t know,

I mean do I go to God, does God come down to me..” Conviction helps an unbeliever change the subject at hand.

The women at the well wasn't super easy to deal with. Jesus was very patient. I think that any of us, at any time, would be wise to say things to God, even out loud: God, if I need to give up my social comfort to further you'll kingdom, I'll do it. If my little world gets disrupted, for your name, so be it. If I need to clear space in my schedule so busyness isn't any idol, let's make it happen.

That won't look the same for all of us. And it won't come without making adjustments to our lives. However, if you are willing to engage with people, you need to keep the next point front and center in your mind:

2. The gospel is living water.

Think about this way: a person just trying to be good, or trying to religious will see good actions like bricks they are building to show their own righteousness. A person who has turned their life over to the grace of God, trusting only in God, is not building anything, rather the gospel, like water building up a plant or a tree, is flowing through them. I don't put any trust in having good deeds of my own.

It would have been very easy for Jesus to get side tracked with her comment about where they should worship. This was cultural issue. A custom issue. A “your people vs my people issue”. This was a hot button issue. (list hot button issues) free will v predestination, abortion v pro choice, Israel v Palestine, (refine this, but potential include “we should all be aware of things that distract us from focusing on the gospel) Jesus is going beyond

good vs bad, beyond the technicalities of her statements, refusing to get distracted. .

But he stayed right on target. V10, Jesus was talking about living water v14 Living water that wells up to eternal life.

Jeremiah 2: for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Isaiah 2: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Friends, people are lost without the gospel. They are digging broken cisterns that hold no water. Stop believing the lie that because someone has a new car or big title at work or lots of pictures on their instagram account that they are fulfilled. Millions of people will join cults in the next year. People are looking.

When she said she'd "Sir, give me this water", it wasn't a mistake that Jesus countered with "Go, call your husband". She was trying to satisfy herself outside of the living water of the gospel.

People are looking to be satisfied, but they are trying to find satisfaction in the world. In the midst of this pursuit, there will be conviction. In the midst of their worldly pursuits, we want to be there, testifying of Christ so that the Holy Spirit can transform their hearts. In John Bunyans work "the Pilgrims Progress, Christian knows he has a great weight on his back, and wants to badly to get rid of it. He encounters a man named "worldly wiseman", who invites him to stay for a while, and after a few days he'll forget all about the weight he feels"

In my experience, people will often use exterior circumstances to distract from the conversation that might be convicting, or they will bring up something that makes them feel justified, a good person.

The way Jesus stayed focused is important to emulate(right word?). Think about this: in chapter 3 Nicodemus was a religious leader, and Jesus brought it back to his personal situation(not more laws to follow, but a spiritual rebirth), and the same thing happened for the women at the well.

Get out of the way. Get out of the way and make Christ and his gospel the focus. Jesus is still a unique figure, towering over history, occupying a special place in the minds of many. Most people will have a concept of Jesus. They will have opinions. Ask people “what do you believe about God”. If you ask sincerely, and you listen well, people will talk. If they ask a question you aren’t quite sure about, you’ll usually have time to get a response back to them. You don’t need to have some kind of knowledge that enables you to immediately answer deep questions. You need to have a perfect response.

People are hurting everywhere. With all the modern advancement of medical technology and communication people are still looking for something. Kate Spade/Anthony Bourdain

Tell of Christ...

(needs to be edited, kept on Christ) I know in my own life, I can get distracted, and lose my focus. I need to remind myself to get back to focusing on Christ. I’m also really grateful for friends who have confronted me or gently reminded me to keep focus, in a number of ways. For instance, by being consumed with politics during

election season, my mind, the conversations I'm having, and even what I'm concerned about day in and day out. However, my goal now is to shift the conversation. What do you think are the most important issues facing the country? Do you think that either political party can really solve the biggest issues we face?) Maybe you are distracted by family. Or by work, or by your status, or by what people think about you.

Jesus, the apostle Paul, missionaries past and present, along with anyone who God is using in evangelism, will share this trait: they will bring the conversation back to the person and work of Christ.

(perhaps skip over, or reword) The woman at the well had barely spoken to Jesus when she ran back to her village to share the good news. If the woman at the well, the most unlikely convert, can tell of Christ, do you really think that you can't? If an outcast can turn a village upside down, why can't God do something through your life?

Expand on the comment left on the facebook page of the testimony I just heard.

(find a way to close this out) Friends, tell of Christ, share the gospel. It won't be easy, but you'll never regret it.

3. Let the Holy Spirit Lead

Evangelism seems to swing from one extreme to the other. Consider how at one time things like open air street preaching, or going door to door doing evangelism, or handing out tracts, would have been the usual way to engage someone with the gospel. Just to be clear, like when people street preach, but I think about half of the people street preaching probably shouldn't be. There is probably a stereotype of overly aggressive tactics, a lack of

listening and empathy. But what happens to response to that isn't much better. We swing way to the other side of things to "friendship evangelism". I'm just going to live my life and be friends and hopefully something comes up sometime. Maybe we can forge a middle ground: take the desire to engage the culture and combine it with the desire to graciously listen and empathetically understand those around us.

Jesus in the upper room, when he was going to leave the way he comforted his disciples was to discuss the comforter.

One of the beautiful things about the ministry of Jesus is how he was led by the Spirit in all things. Led by the spirit to the tempted in the wilderness, led by the spirit to the woman at the well, led by the spirit to the cross.

We must engage in Holy Spirit led evangelism. The Holy Spirit will often make us feel uncomfortable, because our own sinful nature is exposed. For the non confrontational person, hoping to avoid evangelism or at least keep it at a minimum. Lord, it would be easier to not say anything, and just avoid that conflict. Lord, it would be easier to not take time out of my busy day. Or, I'm scared. Or, I worried what others will think. On the other side: Lord, it would be easier not to listen to this pathetic sinner. Maybe I should interrupt them and tell them off. It would be easier not to engage a person with a such a nasty past, I hate thinking Jesus would put up with these kinds of sin. I'd prefer to yell Bible verses than to listen. The Holy Spirit convicts our pride.

I'd like to suggest that if you are crying out of the Spirit of God to guide you, you can find any type of evangelism, and it will be God

honoring. A quick word of caution: we like to tell ourselves things are going well, when they aren't. "Well, I'm not really an evangelist, so if God wants that to happen in my life, he'll make it happen" or "even though I haven't talked to someone about Christ in decades... I'm sure I'll be ready when it comes up".

We must be talking to each other about things like this. We must be a community that listens and provides feedback. This is invaluable. Being led by the Spirit means being open and vulnerable and having our approach questioned. (Kevin confronting me via phone) And maybe we need to find people that subtly disagree with us on our approach, since God can use faithful brothers and sisters to refine us. Sometimes we may not be thinking about evangelism at all with the demands of life getting busy. I know there have been times in my life when maybe work is going well or I'm involved in a lot and I think "God, I'm kind of on evangelism time out for a while since I'm such a big deal right now". Do you ever think you are a big deal? Maybe you aren't going to ever talk to some woman at the well. Friends, nobody here is outside the call of the great commission. Practically, some of you may be stuck at home, or have a hard time getting around, I'd like to encourage you with ... stuck at home... tough family situations ...

If you are a person who never interacts with riff raff, and you only interact with high level people I am thrilled you are here today. In 1912, over 100 years ago, a man name Charles Jefferson wrote a book about being a pastor in the United States. Here is what he said "there is no more unreached people group in the US than the important and the rich". Poor must go to soup kitchen a church, the

rich have servants. The rich can bury problems with expensive counseling, long vacations, and the appearances of success.

Don't apologize if you've had success, but know this, we are all called to advance the great commission. Some people see the folks at the Boise Rescue mission and think think of the great need they have. I think of people at country clubs.

Mr. Charge Higher Prices - I'm not proposing that you hand out tracts at work, but I proposing that you lean hard on the Holy Spirit. Several years ago I heard a man speak who goes by the name "Mr. Chrage Higher Prices". Google him. He gets hired, as a business consultant, to go to companies like Mercedes Benz, major financial companies, major hotels, etc and tell them, your prices aren't high enough. Raise your value proposition. (explain)

A word caution, this person had better know you care. If they think you are judging them, or don't care about them, this could go poorly.

Call to Action:

Father in Heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit allow me to share the living water of the gospel, regardless of how socially uncomfortable, or personally risky it might be.