

“When Jesus Found What He Was Looking For” // John 4 // *Jesus, Lord at Thy Birth, #4*

Setup (all via video):

Silent night
Holy night
Son of God
Love’s pure light

Jesus truly was... **Lord** at his birth.

This is the testimony of the Apostle John:

“In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

–John 1:1 ESV

“In him was life, and the life was **the light of men**.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

–John 1:4–5

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of **grace and truth**.”

–John 1:14

The following is an adaptation of John 4:1–42, borrowed with permission from the television series, “The Chosen.”

VIDEO (7 minutes)

Message:

We are grateful for our friends at *The Chosen* for their incredible presentation of that story.

The Gospel of John is framed around 7 interactions that Jesus had with individual people, each establishing a pattern for how he relates to all of us; each showing us what the experience of meeting him is like. You are supposed to read each of these encounters as if they were happening to you, because behind these stories is a real, living Savior who is saying all these things to you.

I think this might be the most significant of all the interactions in John --because, as you heard, this woman is the first person to whom Jesus overtly reveals himself as the Messiah. It embodies who he is, why he came, and what his message is to people.

So, what are we supposed to see in it? What do we learn about him, and about us? 4 brief observations:

1. **Jesus comes to the unlikely**

- a. **This woman was a Samaritan.** You can see from the story there's a little guarded awkwardness between them, and that's because Samaritans and Jews had a long-standing feud stretching back for centuries. Most Jews thought of Samaritans as second class; racially- and religiously-tainted. Samaritans were the descendants of the Jews in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who had intermarried with Gentiles, and so they were half- bloods (Mud-bloods; Muggles).
- b. Most Jews thought that whatever a Samaritan touched was unclean. Jews wouldn't even sit somewhere a Samaritan had sat. Samaria was right in the middle of Israel, and when Jews were going from the Northern part of Israel to the Southern part, they would walk around Samaria, even though it added a day to their journey. Racial hatred between these groups was common; it was almost assumed in their interaction.
- c. This woman is not only a Samaritan, she's a woman with a bad reputation--the fact she comes late in the day probably means she wasn't accepted by the other women. Jewish men did not discuss religion with women in general; certainly not a woman like this. But this is the first person to whom Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah.
- d. I know I'm talking to some people here who feel ostracized by the church. You'd feel like an unlikely candidate for Jesus. I just want you to know: He came for you. Specifically for you.
- e. I love how John opens this story, "And Jesus *needed* to pass through Samaria..." When I was in SS, before I knew Samaria was a particular place, I thought the teacher was saying, "And Jesus came to 'some area,'" and I'd think, "WHAT AREA?" Samaria. "I know. But WHAT area?" Samaria. It was like a Abbott and Costello "Who's on First?" routine. But here's what I want you to see: Jesus *needed* to come to Samaria for her. He

needed to come to "some area" for you--and that's here. You may think the invitation to be here tonight was random, just a friend who wanted you to come to their church. But it wasn't random. He was in it. I don't care who you are or what your past is--how unlikely you feel that you are; he's looking for you.

Here's the second thing you learn...

2. Jesus knows all there is to know about you

- a. Jesus knew all of her secrets--he knew the things that caused her shame; he knew all the ways she felt alone; he knew her secret doubts and insecurities and fears.
- b. He also knew things about her that could have gotten her killed. You see, in those days, being caught in adultery was, in some places, punishable by the death penalty. For him to know this about her was not only embarrassing, it was threatening.
- c. But this encounter asks a question we all ask inwardly: **What's it like to be completely exposed, in all our sin and shame, in the presence of God?** And the answer is, "It's safe." It's the safest place in the universe. Listen: **What's it like to be completely exposed in the presence of Jesus?**

It's safe.

And that's because of...

3. Jesus comes not to judge, but to save

- a. He didn't expose her to embarrass her or shame her or judge her; he exposed her to save her. John said that's why Jesus came. "For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

- b. You wonder what Jesus would say to you if he met you? It wouldn't be words of condemnation or rejection, but acceptance.
- c. Maybe your interaction with the church has been the exact opposite of this. Maybe all you've gotten from the people of Jesus is judgment--shame, criticism, pushing you away in your weakness.
- d. It shouldn't be like that. John says that Jesus was full of grace of truth. This was the glory of God.
- e. That's because he was full of grace *and* truth. Grace AND truth. Truth without grace is fundamentalism; grace without truth is sentimentality. Jesus was both, and that was the glory of God.
- f. Nobody was more righteous and pure than Jesus. He always told the truth about sin; he never compromised the commandments of God--and yet, he drew in those whose lives were filled with mistakes and compromises and sin. He was full of grace *and* truth.
- g. And that spoke to one of our deepest needs: to be known and loved. Known *and* loved--because to be known and not loved is rejection; but to be loved and not known feels hollow. We want someone who sees all of us, the real us, the broken us, and loves us anyway. And that's what Jesus did. He saw the truth about this woman--he saw the truth about *us*--and he drew us close.
- h. The last thing Jesus' church should feel like is a cloistered group of righteous, judgmental people who huddle together and condemn the world. The church ought to feel like a hospital full of redeemed and recovering sinners.
- i. My favorite description of the church is probably in **1 Cor 6**. The Apostle Paul says, "Or do you not know that the

unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the sexually perverse, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 ***And such were some of you.*** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

- "Such **WERE** some of you--that's who you were--but you are washed (clean), you are sanctified (set apart), you are justified."
- Interestingly, psychologists working in child welfare say 3 of our biggest needs are to feel clean, safe and special. And they mean this literally--that kids need to know they are in a space where they won't have dirt in their food, or that they won't have someone breaking into their home. We retain those impulses as an adult--some of our deepest soul needs are to feel...
 - **Clean:** We want to feel like an authentic person who is not a phony or hiding all kinds of secrets. We don't want to feel dirty and full of compromise.
 - **To feel... Safe:** We want to feel like the future is going to be OK; like we don't have to dread tomorrow, or that we have an ax hanging above our head, ready to drop at any moment.
 - And to feel **Special:** We want to matter to someone; to feel like we have significance.
- j. (v. 11) Paul tells us in the gospel of Jesus we get all 3. By his blood we are washed--that makes us clean before God. We are sanctified--each of us is set apart for him and his purpose. You are precious to him. He's designed you specifically and uniquely for his purpose. There's nobody just like you. He

knows when every hair falls out of your head and has a plan just for you. And, you are justified: you're safe. The full condemnation of your sin has been placed on Jesus. If you are in Christ, God *can't* punish you for your sin because he's already poured out that punishment on Jesus.

- k. Jesus exposed this woman--not to humiliate her, but to forgive her. He was going to a cross where he would die for her shame and pay the price for her sin, if only she'd be humble enough to admit she needed that.
- l. Again, this story asks a question: **What's it like to be completely exposed in the presence of Jesus?**

It's safe.

It's the safest place in all the universe.

And that leads me to #4, lastly,

4. Jesus is what you are looking for

- **All this woman's life she's been searching.** Searching for something to numb the empty longing; something to take away the shame. 5 husbands in, she hasn't found it.
- **I think this woman's greatest moment of recognition came when Jesus asked about those husbands.** They had been talking about this mysterious water, when he suddenly changes the subject and says, "Go, get your husband." And she says, "I don't have a husband," and he says, "You're right. You've had 5 husbands and the one you're living with now is not your husband." And I think it suddenly all made sense to her.
- You see, she'd been doing **with the men in her life the same thing that she did every day at the well.** Every afternoon, she got thirsty and she'd come to the well to get water. And she'd drink and be satisfied, but the next day she got thirsty so back again she came to the well. And she repeated this cycle endlessly. This is

what she's been doing with the men in her life. Her soul was thirsty, empty, so she went to the well of romance and took a long drink. And it satisfied her, for a while. But then she got hurt, rejected, used, whatever--and so she got thirsty again and back she came to the well. And again and again.

- And now she's had 5, and the one she's with now is not her husband, which makes him # 6. What number does that make Jesus? The 7th. Isn't that perfect? 7 is God's number. The point is, Jesus is what she's been looking for. **The arms she's been searching for in romance have actually been his arms.**

VAMP

Here's my question, "What have you been looking for?" Because Jesus is #7 for you, too.

I called this short message, "**The Day JESUS found what he was looking for.**" It's a throwback to one of the greatest songs of all time, U2's, "I still haven't found..." I think that song was popular because it resonated with so many of us--I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Maybe that describes you. You've been through 6 husbands--maybe they weren't actual marriages--maybe it was the search for the perfect job; or to start that family you've always dreamed of; or just to feel accomplished and know that you are really good at something. And you drank deeply from that particular well for a while, and it worked. But then eventually it wore off... and you're still thirsty. And you still haven't found what you're looking for.

Maybe the reason you haven't found what you're looking for is you've never realized that what you're looking for is actually SOMEONE who is looking for you.

C.S. Lewis: When an earthly idol disappoints us, we have 4 choices: we can blame the idol, and choose a new one--this didn't satisfy but that will; you can blame yourself (there's something wrong with me,

and live with insecurity and fear); you can blame the world (become a cynic and conclude there's no happiness in life, only despair), or you can realize you were created for something beyond this world. When an idol fails you, you can blame the idol; blame yourself; blame the world, or realize that what you are really searching for is beyond this world. He said, **"If I find in myself a yearning which nothing in this world can satisfy, the best explanation is that I was created for another world."**

This story, this woman, is a picture of you. What have your 6 previous lovers left you with? And do you realize that what you're searching for is him?

Jesus calls you, like he called this woman, to follow him. Accepting Jesus is not **a blind leap into the dark, as many critics love to say, it's a step into the light; a step toward a Savior who knows everything there is to know about you, who loves you anyway, who has never stopped thinking about you, not one time, and saw every hair that's fallen from your head and counted every tear that's dropped from your eye; a Savior who went to a bloody cross to die for your sin so that you wouldn't have to.**

Listen again to John's great invitation--it's the greatest invitation ever extended to anyone on earth:

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the children of God, even to those who believe on his name." John 1:12

Have you received him? You say, How do you do that? You recognize who he is and respond in surrender and trust. Surrender =... Trust =... Have you done that? I want to invite you to do that right now if you never have. ***Bow your heads...***