

February 2, 2014

Lesson 17: Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42



Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, ‘Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John’— although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 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.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and

with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’ Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’

Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come back.’ The woman answered him, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You are right in saying, “I have no husband”; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’ The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you want?’ or, ‘Why are you speaking with her?’ Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you do not know about.’ So the disciples said to one another, ‘Surely no one has brought him something to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, “Four months more, then comes the harvest”? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labour.’

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. 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 truly the Savior of the world.’

Woman at the Well

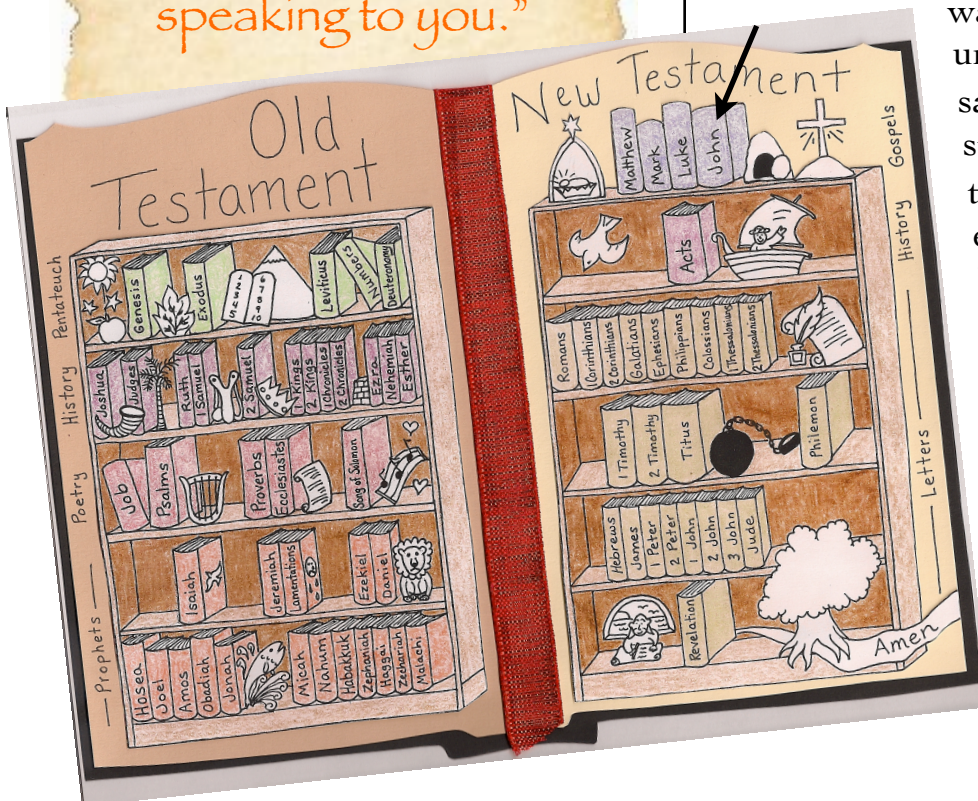
John 4:1-42

“The woman said, ‘I know the Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ Jesus said, ‘I Am, the one who is speaking to you.’”

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The Big Story Truth: Jesus overturns expectations! Jesus comes in unexpected ways and gets rid of anything that separates people from God and from each other.

About This Scripture Passage: The woman at the well is the exact mirror opposite of Nicodemus who we met last week. Nicodemus is a leader of the Jewish people who comes to Jesus at night. The woman, in contrast, isn't introduced by name. But we know that she is a Samaritan, which means that she would have been regarded by the Jews as a foreigner, an enemy. As a woman, she has little power and really shouldn't have been talking to Jesus at all. Unlike Nicodemus, her conversation with Jesus takes place during the light of day and she leaves the conversation testifying to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah- and because of her the whole town listens and believes Jesus. Jesus talks to her about “living water” (which can mean fresh running water or life-giving water). At first she doesn't understand what Jesus is saying, but by the end of the story she runs off leaving even the jar she came with to tell everyone about Jesus. She has learned that Jesus is indeed greater than the ancestor Jacob, that he is even more than a prophet, He is “I Am!” (Remember where we heard that “I Am” before?!?!)



Making the Connection: Picture a school lunch room. Imagine the seating arrangement of the room. The “popular” kids sit together in one spot. Perhaps there are tables made up mostly of star athletes and cheerleaders. Maybe there are tables of kids that have been friends since kindergarten, or those that share certain interests. Somewhere in the lunch room is a table made up of kids who don’t fit in at any of the other tables. Life is different at that table. Now imagine a popular guy walking from one table of friends to another suddenly stopping mid-way and striking up a conversation with a girl at that “other” table. And not only talking, but sitting down and finishing the meal there. That’s the sort of scene playing out

in this story. The fear of Jews about the Samaritans is that they would become “unclean” by associating with them. But Jesus stopped and stayed 2 days in Samaria!!! In this day and age when we worry so much about bullying in our schools, about kids who are lonely and don’t have meaningful connections with others, this story is an opportunity to point out how our faith in Jesus bridges all the gaps between us as people, and between us and God!

For Your Reflection:

Think about the kids in your classroom. Are there any kids that might be feeling excluded from the group? What might be the cause of that? What could you do this week to help draw that child into the group? Pray for your students by name and for their friendships with kids in school and in Sunday School.

Where in the World Are We?

Jesus is on his way from the region Judea to Galilee (two Jewish areas). But his travels take him through the region of Samaria, where he encounters the woman by a well in the city of Sychar. Samaria was an area in which the descendants of Jacob had intermarried with the Assyrians (around the time of the exile) so they were of mixed heritage (which was a big no-no according to God’s law). One big controversy between Samaritans and Jews was over what the proper place to worship was. The Jews believed the temple in Jerusalem was the place to worship God. Samaritans believed that the place to worship God was on Mt. Gerizim, the highest mountain in the region in Samaria. As soon as this woman realizes that Jesus is a prophet, she asks him about this controversy. Jesus’ response, though, is that she doesn’t need to worry about which place it is that is the “proper” place of worship, because the time has already arrived when access to God won’t be through a particular temple, but through the gift of the Spirit. Jesus is announcing that he is the “I Am” - the Messiah- and that the time for a new kind of worship has already arrived!

