

# “Anyone. Anywhere. Anytime.”

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John 4 – Jesus and the Samaritan woman  
Rev. Bruce Stanley. January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

**Intro:** I want you to imagine going to a brothel, striking up a conversation with a prostitute, and then going out to dinner with them. Nothing dirty. Just a friendly conversation. A nice dinner. And then invite them along to church. Who would do that? Jesus would.

By John chapter 4, Jesus was famous. He was bigger than John the Baptist but he's not yet ready for the full attention of the Jews, so he leaves Judea. He goes to Galilee, but he had to pass through Samaria. And that's significant.

You see, Samaria was the capital of Northern Israel. Israel used to be one nation under God's rule, until there was a big split in 686? BC. Northern Israel wanted a different King, and they worshipped false gods. The Northern Kingdom was unfaithful. Their capital city was Samaria. The southern Kingdom remained relatively faithful. Their capital was Judea. So these two areas became quite different. People from Judea (Jews) didn't associate with people of Samaria (Samaritans). Jews and Samaritans **did not get together**.

So when Jesus had to go through Samaria with his disciples, they were probably thinking they would just pass through. But Jesus was tired. So he stops at a well and rests while his disciples go off to do something (we don't know what) and while he waits, Jesus starts up a conversation with a Samaritan woman.

There are 3 significant things about this:

1. First, she was a **Samaritan**. And Jews don't associate with Samaritans.
2. Second, She was a Samaritan **woman**. Jesus was speaking to this woman on his own. This would have been seen as a little *inappropriate*.
3. Third, he was talking to this Samaritan woman **in the middle of the day**.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. That was significant. Unusual. Hidden. But so is visiting a well in the middle of the day. Who would go to a well in the middle of the heat of the day? Morning or evening - that's when you go to a well. Not in the middle of the day. **Unless** you're trying to avoid people. And that's what this woman was doing. Because she wasn't a very "good" woman. Jesus knows this. He knows (from verse 16) that she has had 5 husbands and is currently living with a man who is not her husband. She wasn't well thought of in her own community. So she was probably at the well in the middle of the day to avoid people.

So here was Jesus, in Samaria, talking to a Samaritan woman who is not well respected in her community. For us, it might be like going to have dinner with a

prostitute on your own in the middle of the night. Not something that would be good for your reputation.

### **ANYONE**

Jesus says to the woman, verse 13-14:

- *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

Jesus offers her the spiritual water of eternal life. He offers her what she really needs.

Here is a woman people avoid. A woman who has probably had a very difficult life, a life that's lead her to have many husbands in order to survive as a woman in that culture. And she meets Jesus, who offers her eternal life.

### **ANYWHERE**

Then Jesus offers her more – he says, verse 23:

- *23Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.*

Here's the situation. Previously, God's people could only worship him on a certain mountain or in the temple at Jerusalem. So if you were a Samaritan who worshipped God, but you weren't allowed to go into the Jewish Jerusalem temple, you couldn't actually worship God. So Jesus says: The time is coming, AND HAS NOW COME when you, a Samaritan woman, can worship God, not on a mountain, not in a temple, but in Spirit and truth.

With these words, Jesus is bringing down a dividing wall between Jews and Samaritans that has existed for 700 years. He's saying to her: the time has come. You can worship God NOW, from your HEART.

### **ANYTIME**

And the woman replies, verse 25:

- *“I know the Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”*
- And Jesus says: *“I, the one speaking to you – I am he.”*

Jesus says: “I am the one you've been waiting for. I am the Messiah. I am the Christ... “Hello. It's me.”

What happens next? The disciples return. The woman leaves to tell everyone what has happened and what Jesus has said. Unlike Nicodemus, this woman doesn't keep it quiet. She goes and tells everyone.

And the disciples talk to Jesus about food.

“Jesus” they say, “eat something! You must be hungry” And Jesus says, 32:  
*“I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”*

The disciples reply: *“Could someone have brought him food?”*

Did he go to the shops when we were out? Does he have a hidden chocolate bar?  
What food is he talking about?

Jesus has just offered the woman spiritual **water**. Now he has to explain to his disciples that he has spiritual **food**. So he says to them, verse 35:

- *Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.*

It's an old saying – an excuse not to work. It's 4 months until harvest. It's holiday time! But Jesus is talking spiritually. He's saying that there's a huge harvest of people coming to know God right NOW. Even in Samaria, there is a **heap** of people coming into the kingdom of God. This is not holiday time. This is not the time to sit back and rest. This is January in our churches. This is not a time to rest when people are visiting our churches. This is a time to be active. To welcome. To care. To invite people for meals.

So what happens next with the woman? Verse 39:

- *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony*

She goes and tells people about Jesus, and many people believe.

- **What's the message for us today?**

1. **Jesus will meet with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Will you?** There are people ready to come to know Jesus right now. But it's not always the people **you** might expect. Are you considering **all** of the possibilities of people around you to talk with about Jesus?
2. **People need to hear that knowing Jesus isn't about ceremonies, or meeting in a special building**, or fulfilling regulations or laws. People need to hear that being baptized or confirmed doesn't MAKE you a follower of Jesus. Coming to church doesn't MAKE you a follower. We don't want people to get the impression that Jesus is about ceremony or tradition.

I still remember inviting someone to church once and they said to me: “Am I allowed?” I thought they were joking. “What do you mean ‘Are you allowed?’”

They didn't think they could just ‘come along’ to church. They'd never been to church. They'd never been invited. They never realized they could just turn up. They thought Church was only for Christians. Who gave them that impression? I did! You did! We did! And we need to break that wall down.

**Is it possible** that we give people the impression that Jesus is not for them?

**Is it possible** that we avoid sharing our testimony with people because **we** think they're not really interested or ready?

**Is it possible** that we put up barriers for people coming to church? Either in the way we welcome or the way we talk afterwards or the way we run our services?

**Or is it possible** that Jesus is right. That the fields are ripe for harvest. That we could simply invite someone to church, or offer them a Bible in their own language?

- **Is it possible that we could start a conversation about Jesus?**

If you wanted to find out more about Islam, would you know where to start? What version of the Koran to buy or download? Or what if you wanted to find out about Buddhism or Hinduism or atheism? It's no different for people wanting to find out about Jesus. Most people wouldn't know where to start. Inviting them to church can be the easiest first step. "Do you want to come to church with me on Sunday?" Would you like a copy of our Bible? Or a gospel?

I met a lady once who was doing some cleaning work at a church I was at. She saw a Chinese gospel of John on our front table. She picked it up and said to me: "Can I have one of these?" Of course, I said "YES!" But I was thinking, "Why haven't I already offered her one? (Or story of a friend packing for cruise – half a suitcase left for gospel giveaways)

I remember replacing the pew Bibles at a church once. We had some trades people on site. One of them, a Catholic, asked me about the Bible. I said: "Do you have one?" They said no. I gave them one. Their first Bible. How simple is that? Maybe they'll read it straight away. Maybe they'll pick it up in ten years. They probably will NOT throw it away.

We have gospels in English, Chinese, Arabic and Korean. Take some. Give them away. Offer them to people. Use our invites to invite people to church.

I think we often rule people out. We make our own judgement that some people aren't **ready** for a conversation about God. Perhaps we make judgments based on their beliefs, or their nationality, or their history.

That's what I love about this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. He will meet with **anyone, anywhere, anytime**. And he will reveal himself to them. And they can be saved.

- Jesus said: "open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest."

Prayer.