

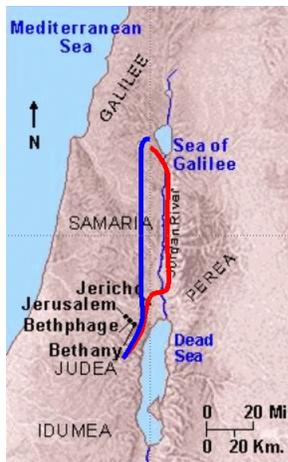
Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. John 4:10.

John continues to introduce to the reader the Person of Christ and His evangelistic reach toward sinners. We are introduced to what is, indeed, a paradox - and that is this. Although we learn that the heart of the sinner is desperately wicked¹ and does not seek the Lord,² we are introduced to an undercurrent - a drama, if you please concerning the sinful heart: that of being an enemy of God but having a thirst for Him. I've mentioned this many times before, but we just do not know the activity of the Lord behind the scenes in His calling of the sinner to Himself - this activity is covered in Acts 17:27. That context was in the midst of rank heathenism on Mars hill in Athens and yet, there were some who "clave unto him and believed" - became followers of Christ. So we just do not know the power of the Gospel and the attractiveness of the call of Christ to the thirsty and hungry for God.

The important point that I cannot emphasize enough is the power of the Gospel in the hands of the committed believer who sees the sinner through the eyes of Christ. "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." says the psalmist (Psalm 34:8). So the paradox is that on one hand the sinner is completely devoid of any clue about who and what the Lord is and yet he seeks - make that gropes after the Lord. It's up to the believer to show the sinner the way to the well of Salvation.

Jesus Does the Unusual in Evangelistic Outreach.

He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. [4] And he must needs go through Samaria. [5] Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. [6] Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. John 4:4 - 6.



The normal route from Judea would be to go over the Jordan through Perea and then cross over to Cana where He had performed His first miracle. He did not go to Nazareth for He knew He would not be well received (see verse 44). Why the "must needs"? Some place great importance on this phrase while others do not. As we can see from the map, it certainly would

¹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? [10] I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Jer. 17:9, 10.

² There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. [12] They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Rom. 3:11, 12

have been convenient for Jesus to pass through Samaria on His journey, but I do think there is some importance on the phrase “must needs” because He knew of the town of Sychar and its thirsty people - including a woman most “liberated” in today’s sense of the word.

We need to understand the importance of this “detour” (in the minds of the Jew). By taking this route, He was giving the Jews opportunity for criticism - He had technically become “unclean” in their minds and not fit for any kind of religious activity. He was about to offend the customs of the day on other ways also - he spoke to a woman and she was a Samaritan - a sort of “double whammy” if-you-please.

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Jesus, in His humanity, was tired and thirsty. He did not have a bucket to retrieve a drink so He did something that bridged centuries of bad blood between the Jews and the Samaritans³ - he asked the woman for a drink:

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. John 4:7.

What followed was a fascinating insight into the soul-winning modus operandi of Jesus - we would do well to study this narrative and apply it to our own lives. His request albeit revolutionary in the sense that the Jews just didn’t talk to Samaritans, let alone a woman in public was nevertheless quite mundane - a common, open, approach to the sinner in order to present the uncommon - the Gospel. So all concepts of stigma and restricting customs were set aside so that He could bring this woman to a saving faith in Himself.

Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. [10] Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. John 4:9, 10.

His approach was direct. He brushed aside the common for He knew that this woman was thirsty for the Lord - she just didn’t know it. May I make another point on the side? Jesus was tired - He could have been self-centered, self-serving. Indeed, the request on the surface might seem to be so to the uninitiated - but He steadfastly

³ The “bad blood” happened when the Jews were going to rebuild the temple after returning from captivity in Babylon after refusing help from the Samaritans who were Jews interbred with gentiles. They also could not worship in the temple as Jews II Kings 17:24 - 4; Ezra 4:1 - 3.

determined to get the Gospel to this woman in spite of His own fatigue. A lesson we could well learn. We might, indeed, at our weakest moment be presented with the glorious opportunity to share the Gospel to an apparently unconcerned individual but we should *always* be in the selfless mode and be ready to present Christ in our lives and His message with our actions and what we say. So we see Jesus engaged in the most thrilling of conversations - that of sharing the Gospel to a sinner.

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Let's consider the metaphor that Jesus is using. The act of eating and drinking is an act that results in life. My favorite Saturday afternoon relaxation is to watch the cooking shows on PBS. We currently have mostly Italian cuisine but a new show offering the oriental is now available. And let's not forget the American Test Kitchen where good old American cuisine is offered with nifty suggestions on how to cook the perfect meatloaf. We are a hedonistic society and it might be difficult to grasp this idea of eating and drinking to survive - but such is the impact of this metaphor. Later on when his disciples try to get Jesus to eat He said that He had already eaten⁴ - certainly a mystifying statement for the disciples.

I am really focusing on Jesus' evangelistic method and the result of this woman's acceptance of Christ as Lord - rather than the details of this chapter. After she realized that this was no ordinary Jew - but at least a prophet her attention was peaked:

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. [25] The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. [26] Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.
John 4:24 - 26.

A glimmer into the heart of the woman here! She is the one who introduced the idea of the coming Messiah. We have Jesus coming right to the point in verse 10 - we now have the woman coming right to the point in verse 25 - Jesus immediately responds that He is the Christ. Talk about rapid-fire evangelism - it's a wonderful experience when while sharing the Gospel the sinner finally puts two and two together and realizes that Jesus Christ is *their* Savior. The disciples having just arrived, the woman leaves her waterpot (no small thing) and becomes an evangelist herself:

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, [29] Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? [30] Then they went out of the

⁴ 4:31 - 35.

city, and came unto him. John 4:28 - 30.

Centuries of stigma melted away in that moment when Jesus Christ reached out and introduced Himself as Savior. That's the power of the Gospel! What a powerful lesson for us today. How many times have we let pecking order in the workplace get in the way of sharing Christ with a co-worker? How many times have we avoided engaging in soul-winning conversation with an individual because they are "on the other side" so-to-speak? Prison ministry comes to mind - what an intimidating experience! I have just a touch of claustrophobia and when that metal door slams shut behind you on the way to a cell-block, you know without any doubt where you are! The men that are on the other side of the table come from an entirely different lifestyle.

Are we too careful to pick up our trousers legs and avoid contact with these people because they are criminals? Are we to avoid the odd? Are we to avoid the down and outs? Who do we think Jesus was referring to when He said "**For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: [36] Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.**" Matt. 25:35, 36. He was certainly talking about the sinner who need Christ as Savior.

True, we need to visit the folks who are in need within the church body, but just as certain we need to have the correct attitude toward the unlovely, the imprisoned, the stranger (make that the odd). When the righteous about to receive their rewards in heaven asked when they did these things for Christ His answer was: "**And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**" Matt 25:40.

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What can we glean from this passage? We really need to grasp the urgency of Jesus' evangelistic attitude:

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. John 4:35.

We need to understand that every day presents another opportunity for sharing the Gospel with a sinner - a sinner whose heart has already been prepared for the Gospel by the Holy Spirit. We need to sense the urgency and the passion of soul-winning in the present moment - with every one we might meet. Jesus is the Living Water. He, alone, can quench the thirst of the sinner for God.