



**Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.**  
John 4:39

### **Jesus' First Confession**

John 4:4-30, 39-42

Sunday, February 16, 2025

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### **Sermon, "Jesus' First Confession"**

Last Sunday we examined the faith of the Pharisee Nicodemus, even though the scriptures don't record him ever making a verbal confession of faith in Christ. And that's interesting because confessions are an important characteristic of the Gospel of John. Instead, John records an act of mercy performed by Nicodemus: along with Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus buried Jesus after his crucifixion, and we recognized that actions speak louder than words. I have no doubt that Nicodemus became a follower of Jesus, though I suspect it was a long process for the Nicodemus to become a disciple of Jesus.

Following the story of Nicodemus, John records another interview with another prospective follower. However, this person is as different from Nicodemus as different could be.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee; this next person was a woman, and a Samaritan. And this time there will be a confession, but it may not be the confession you'd expect. Let's dive into John chapter 4:

<sup>4</sup> Now [Jesus] had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

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<sup>7</sup> When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

<sup>11</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> 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.”

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup> He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

<sup>17</sup> “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

<sup>19</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

<sup>21</sup> “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet 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. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” <sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Skip down to verse 39:

<sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. <sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers.

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<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

The woman at the well has been described as an outcast among outcasts. Perhaps for good reason. We know that she was a Samaritan, and we know that the Jews looked down on the Samaritans. For the Samaritans weren't quite Gentiles. Rather, the Samaritans were half-breeds, if you will: the remnant of the poor and lower-class Israelites who, centuries before, weren't good enough to be deported to Assyria when that nation conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

The practice of the victors was to dilute the cultures and the religions of the nations they conquered by integrating them with other peoples they had conquered. So the Assyrians relocated hordes of conquered people into the Northern Kingdom. They then intermarried with the Israelites, obliterating their culture and their religion. The Samaritans became a people who mixed their Jewish faith with whatever else was introduced to them. And it became a practice which continued long after the Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians.

True Jews despised the Samaritans for their diluted brand of Judaism. We catch a glimpse of this when the woman asks Jesus which is the appropriate mountain on which to worship God? Jerusalem's Mount Zion? Or Samaria's Mount Gerizim? Jesus says **it's not the hill; it's the heart.**

To the Jews, the Samaritans were impure outcasts.

In John 4, we meet one of those impure outcasts: the woman at the well. But she was more than an outcast; she was an outcast among outcasts. She chose to go to the well in the heat of the day because it was likely she wouldn't run into any of the townspeople who might point at her and whisper and cast knowing glances in her direction. Conquer

Preachers generally assume that the woman at the well was an immoral woman. After all, John informs us that she had had five husbands and was now living with a man who was not her husband. She must've been immoral, right?

Not necessarily so. We don't know what became of her previous husbands. Perhaps one, two or even all five cheated on her or divorced her. She wasn't to blame; her husbands were.

Perhaps she was unable to bear children and each of her husbands left her in order to find someone who could provide him with a family. Yet each one left her lonely and ashamed.

Perhaps one, two, or even all five had died, leaving her a widow. That wouldn't render her immoral; it would only render her unlucky. But what would her neighbors say if her five husbands had all died? How would that affect her self-image? Perhaps that prompted her next suitor to say, "Honey, I'm not going to marry you because marrying you will be the death of me. But I'll live with you."

Any one of those possibilities--or any combination of them—certainly would've contributed to her sense of shame. The woman at the well may simply have been battling chronic depression. Wouldn't you, if every man you ever loved left you or died?

But one thing we do know is that the woman at the well had a date with Jesus; she just didn't know it.

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I love verse 4: "Now [Jesus] had to go through Samaria." This was no mere coincidence. This wasn't a sightseeing trip. Jesus was on a mission. *He had to go through Samaria*. Why? Because he knew that there was—

- a woman in Samaria who was overcome with shame
- a woman who likely was battling depression
- a woman who little more than grist for the gossip mill
- a woman who was an outcast among outcasts

*Jesus had to go through Samaria*. But that misses an important word—a word so important that it's the first word in the sentence: *Now*.

This was urgent. Jesus had to go through Samaria and he had to go *now*. This appointment could not wait. Jesus refused to tarry. *Now* he had to go through Samaria.

The woman at the well is not the only one. There are times when Jesus knows that he has to go to Aledo or Joy or New Boston or Viola because there's someone there who needs him. There are times when Jesus knows that he has to go to your house, to your school, to your place of business, to your watering hole. And he knows that he has to go *now*.

Aren't you glad that when you're feeling ashamed, when you're feeling depressed, when you're feeling lonely—like an outcast among outcasts—Jesus is compelled to go and meet you right where you are.

And he will meet you.

Ironically, when he comes to you, he may not give you what you need immediately; instead, he might ask you to give him what he needs. "Give me some water to drink," Jesus asked the woman at the well.

One of the best ways to begin to rise above your shame and depression is to begin serving others. Jesus knew that. So he says, "Give me some water to drink." It was a simple request, one easily met by the woman. But the request surprised her.

"Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" Jesus was not only asking her for some water; implicit in his request is that the two of them would have to drink from the same cup. Now the following parenthetical statement in verse 9 says that "Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other." Literally, that verse says that Jews refused to eat from the same dishes and cups which had been used by Samaritans.

This is Jesus saying, "Let me drink from your cup. Let me taste your shame and your bitterness. Let me drink of your depression, your rejection, your isolation because that's why I came into this world. That's why I had to go through Samaria."

This is where we learn something else about this woman: from her talk with the teacher Jesus we can discern that she had a longing deep in her soul for something intangible; something spiritual; something that only the Messiah could give her. And amazingly, Jesus reveals something about himself that he rarely if ever stated out loud: "I AM He. I AM the Messiah." It's the first confession of Jesus.

And with that this Samaritan—this... *woman*, this failure as a wife, this outcast among outcasts becomes the world's very first evangelist. She goes back into her village and she does something every one of us ought to do: she tells them about the Man she's met. Even

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though they had disdained her, whispered about her and scorned her, she tells them about Jesus the Messiah.

“Come and see a man who has told me everything I’ve done! Could this man be the Christ?” She makes a confession, too. Yes, it’s phrased as a question, and you can sense the hesitancy in her voice. But it was an effective confession because the villagers left the city and went out to the well to meet Jesus for themselves. Then in verse 39 we read that “many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman’s (testimony).”

Jesus revealed himself to the Samaritan woman so that she in turn might reveal him to her neighbors. She didn’t do it with what we might call a strong testimony; she did it with a question which she connected to her own experience with Christ. But it was enough to pique the curiosity of the Samaritans. And they came to faith because of the Samaritan woman’s question.

How about you? How has Christ revealed himself to you? And how might his revelation to you help you to connect your neighbors to Christ?