

**Joke:** Three men were about to be executed by the firing squad. The first man was brought forward and before they could shoot him he yelled "avalanche"! The firing squad panicked and in the confusion, the man jumped over the wall and into freedom before the firing squad could regroup.

The second man thought what the first man did was clever and when he was brought forward for his execution, he yelled "earthquake"! Again, the firing squad panicked and the second man took advantage of it to jump over the wall and into freedom.

The third man figured out the pattern: and decided he too would yell out a disaster and jump over the wall. When he was finally brought forward, with a smirk on his face he yelled "fire"!

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I think the story of the Samaritan woman illustrates perfectly one of the things that Jesus was sent to do and I will share what that was in just a moment.

In the story of the Samaritan woman Jesus humbles himself, engages the woman in conversation, and with that encounter He sets her free from shame and guilt.

She arrives at the well as a sinner, but leaves totally transformed.

Encounters with God have the potential to do that. Even for you and I today.

So, today I want to share some things from that story from the Gospel of John.

And I think it's a beautiful story because it is about someone who was completely broken and living in shame, but had an encounter with Jesus, and afterwards was never the same.

Some of you have heard this story 100 times. But I want to share something in closing about the woman at the well that you may not be familiar with. A little twist in the story if you will.

Before we read about the woman at the well let me share what John tells us one of the things Jesus came to do was. . .

We all have heard John 3:16 and many of you have it memorized, what does it say. . .?

John 3:16 (NIV): For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

I love that verse don't you. It carries such wonderful news.

The problem is most of us stop there. But the next verse tells us even more about that love. . .

John 3:17 (NIV): For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Nowhere in Scripture is that verse more clear than in the story we are about to read.

God come to condemn people.

Hear this church, I don't care what others have called you or said about you. God does not condemn you, even in your brokenness, your mess, your sins and your imperfections?

He doesn't shame you nor condemn you. He's not even disappointed in you.

I have looked and the idea that God is "disappointed" in people is not found anywhere in scripture.

He understands you and loves you right where you are.

That doesn't mean he's going to leave you right where your at, He loves you to much to to keep you where you are and He wants to save you, heal you from the darkness that has tried to have power over you: the anger, anxiety, resentments, depression, greed, lust, unforgiveness you name it.

He wants to - desires to - and will - save and heal you from all of those.

And in their place He wants to plant a peace that passes all understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory, love that is beyond comprehension, and courage to stand when everyone else is caving in.

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to heal it. And I don't know about you but, I think that's pretty good news?

So looks dig into the story, it's found in John 4 it's an incredible story and I want you to hear it all so bear with me and follow along as I read starting in verse 5.

John 4:5–30 (NIV): So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 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.) 10 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." 11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 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?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 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." 15 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." 16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You

are right when you say you have no husband. 18 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.” 19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 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. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” 25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” 26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” 27 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?” 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Now let's skip down to verse 39

John 4:39–42 (NIV): Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And

because of his words many more became believers. 42 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.”

Let me share a few observations from these verses about what’s going on, and there’s a lot going on. I want to point out some context and background so that the story doesn’t lose its impact.

Jesus sits down beside a well because he is tired and thirsty from his journey. He’s alone because his disciples went into town. A woman approaches to draw water. She is all by herself and she is a Samaritan.

Let me pause and point out a few things here.

First, Samaritans were despised by the Jews. They did not interact together because the Jews felt the Samaritans had abandoned the Jewish faith by intermarrying with Gentiles and adopting Gentile practices.

The Jews felt the Samaritans weren’t “real Jews” there were considered half-breeds because they adopted Gentile and pagan practices both in life and in their religion.

It was very unusual for a Jew to speak to a Samaritan, as a matter of fact many Jews would cross the Jordan to avoid going through Samaria, but here we find Jesus in verse 4 saying He had to go through Samaria. Why did He have to go that way? Simple answer He had a divine appointment. Not only was it unusual for a

Jew to talk with with a Samaritan but, it was unusual for a Jewish man to speak to a woman, alone. Not because the man might be accused of impropriety, but because women were so far beneath men on the social ladder. Women were more like objects to be used rather than people to be valued.

So, the fact that Jesus speaks to (1) a Samaritan, and (2) a Samaritan woman, is quite eye-opening to all hearing, seeing, this play out before them.

I mean look at how even disciples reacted when they returned to find Jesus talking with this woman. It was quite radical.

Verse 27 - 27 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?"

The second thing I want to point out is there were differences in worship practices between the Samaritans and the Jews. The Samaritans believed that worship was to be conducted on Mount Gerizim, which is where this story is most likely taking place or at least nearby.

The Jews, however, believed the center of worship was in Jerusalem at the Temple.

Jesus says that "true worship" will take place neither on Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem, but instead will take place "in Spirit and in truth." He was saying in essence I about to build my church and you will become the temple.

Jesus continues with “these are the kind of worshippers that the Father seeks”

I love that, the Father is seeking those not who just make it on Sunday afternoon for corporate worship although that is important.

Look what Scripture tells us about that idea. . .

Hebrews 10:25 (TPT): This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing, because we need each other! In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning.

But God is looking for those who are willing to worship Monday through Saturday as well by living and loving as Christ did. Becoming the temple of God to dwell in every moment of every day, to be the light in darkness so that others can encounter Jesus by how we live out our life's before them.

The third and probably most glaring detail in this story is the woman herself.

She comes to the well “at noon” to draw water. That's significant for a couple of reasons, one women would generally head out of the village to draw water in the mornings, when it was cooler. Not in the midday sun and heat. Secondly, the woman was alone.

Women would usually go together to draw water. The fact that she's by herself and drawing water at a unusual time is most likely



because she has no friends, or probably more so, she been shunned by the other women of the village.

And we find out why she has no friends in her discussion with Jesus.

She's had five husbands and the person she is now with is not her husband either.

Here's something you may have never thought about. How many of these men that she has had belonged to other women from the community? Is that why she is shunned? The local women don't want to associate with their husband's mistress? Certainly she hasn't lived a life to be proud of.

And think about this there are men that didn't live with integrity in the town as well.

If she's been with six men, there are six men just as guilty. But I digress. . .

What does Jesus do?

Jesus reaches her by humbling himself. . .

It's so interesting and revealing of a servant's heart what Jesus does.

And think about this church. So many have the wrong idea of who God is. They see God of the Old Testament destroying cities.

Having war after war pop up and they think He is so mean and unjust. How could God allow or even be part of that.

Think about this for a moment. It took Noah somewhere around 60 years to build the Ark. During that time Noah was telling people what was going to take place and encouraging them to follow and obey God. I think that's a God of grace. He gave opportunity for people to receive Him. He was and is slow to anger, just and merciful. Always wanting no one to perish but all to come to Him and live. God was and is and always will be good. And Jesus came to show us just who God is. . .

I love this. . .

Hebrews 1:3 (TPT): 3 The Son is the dazzling radiance of God's splendor, the exact expression of God's true nature—his mirror image! He holds the universe together and expands it by the mighty power of his spoken word. He accomplished for us the complete cleansing of sins, and then took his seat on the highest throne at the right hand of the majestic One.

My point in all that is that God is not Bi-polar. Jesus simply revealed the nature of God without all the rules of men.

Let's get back to the woman at the well. . .

Jesus humbles himself. He speaks to a Samaritan woman. "When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

Jesus is humbling himself here, speaking to a despised Samaritan woman, whom he already knew everything about. And Jesus

engages her with conversation. So that she can have an encounter with the Savior.

He is not too good or too Holy to talk with her. And He was God in flesh. He knows she is a sinner and yet, he looks upon her, talks with her.

Where do we get this idea that God is too holy and pure to look upon our sin? Where do we get the notion that God is so righteous that he cannot engage with sinners? NOT FROM JESUS. Jesus was constantly eating, healing, loving, talking, and praying with sinners like this woman. And He was never offended, or concerned about His reputation.

Let me tell you where it comes from. It's a religious spirit. . .

Check this out. . .

Mark 2:15–16 (TPT): Later, Jesus and his disciples went to have a meal with Levi. Among the guests in Levi's home were many tax collectors and notable sinners sharing a meal with Jesus, for there were many kinds of people who followed him. 16 But when the religious scholars and the Pharisees found out that Jesus was keeping company and dining with sinners and tax collectors, they were indignant. So they approached Jesus' disciples and said to them, "Why is it that someone like Jesus defiles himself by eating with sinners and tax collectors?"

The religious folks the one's that had all the rules. That understood the law those were the ones that had trouble with Jesus.

I love the He gets us commercials that are airing on TV because truth is He gets us.

Have you see them yet? Here's one. . .

### **Show: He gets us Love your enemies**

Check this out from Romans 2

Romans 2:4 (TPT): Do the riches of his extraordinary kindness make you take him for granted and despise him? Haven't you experienced how kind and understanding he has been to you? Don't mistake his tolerance for acceptance. Do you realize that all the wealth of his extravagant kindness is meant to melt your heart and lead you into repentance?

(Talk about the Awe of God and the fear of the Lord)

His kindness, God's kindness is meant to lead us into repentance which should lead to right living.

And guess what? She responded to that. She received his kindness, love, truth, and even His directness. She owned up to her faults. And, even though Jesus brought the skeletons out of her closet, she went back into town told every one about her encounter and brought everyone out to meet him.

Here we have a lady who not only was guilty of sin, but probably lived her life in shame. She was ostracized from the other women in the village. She walked alone to get her water in the noonday sun.

By the way church, do you know the difference between guilt and shame? Guilt has to do with your behaviors, when you do something wrong. Shame has to do with your identity, what you believe about yourself.

A person living with guilt says, "I made a mistake."

A person living in shame says, "I am a mistake."

Do you see the difference?

Shame is when we say to ourselves, "There is something wrong with me. I am nothing but. . ."

And we live our life believing whatever we put after that but about ourselves. That's shame.

The Holy Spirit will convict us of guilt, something we've done that's not right, honest, true, or good! In other words our sin. He may even convict us of things we failed to do that He was trying to lead us to do, our disobedience. But, and this is important, He will never shame us in the process of trying to change us to be more like Jesus.

Jesus points out what she's guilty of doing, five husbands, and the current one isn't her husband and not what she's guilty of being.

Jesus doesn't belittle her, insult her, look down on her, or condemn her. Why? Because the Son of God came to save us, not condemn us.

He also didn't come to shame us.

He knows we're pretty good at shaming ourselves without any help!

So remember, guilt is when we feel badly about something we've done or failed to do. Shame is when we feel badly about who we are. It's time to stop believing the lies the devil has said, your teacher has said, your parents have said, your co-workers or others have said.

Romans 8:1 (NIV): Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

And that's a great place for an Amen.

Do you define yourself by your failings, addictions, or weaknesses?

The truth is that religion could define you that way. Other people will probably define you that way. And you might even define yourself that way. But God doesn't define you that way.

God sees your sin, your mistakes, and failures, but He knows that's not who you are. You are His son. You are His daughter. And he loves you more than you probably even comprehend.

And He desires to clean you up and heal you from the sins, mistakes, and failures that may have tried to define you. But, you need to look to Jesus on the cross. Who cried out for you and I, "it is finished."

Because of Jesus we no longer need to define ourselves by our biggest mistakes, our ugliest sins, or even by what other people think of us.

He came to save you and set you free, not to condemn you. His salvation extends to your deepest hurts, your worst mistakes, and your ugliest sins.

He will heal them all, because they are not part of who you are. The question is will you allow His love to do that.

And so, Jesus heals her and starts a new story with her.

I mentioned at the start there would be a twist at the end of her story. And there is. The story of the Samaritan woman doesn't end at verse 42.

Her story is much longer than what we find in the gospel of John.

Here's the surprise ending: this Samaritan woman was known by the early church after the death and resurrection of Jesus. She didn't fade away as a nameless, faceless person in one of Jesus' stories. She was known. God got a hold of her did His thing and that encounter with Jesus transformed her life.

She was known then, and is still known today, after all here we are talking about her all this time later. But she's also known beyond the story as St. Photini, which means "The Enlightened One."

She's no longer the woman she used to be, she has become a new creation because of her encounter with Jesus.

She became a missionary to areas around the Mediterranean with her two sons. She led her five sisters and her two sons to Christ,

who then traveled with her to share the gospel. Her life changed the day she encountered the mercy and love of God in Jesus.

He installed in her Living Water, the living presence of God, and her life was never the same.

This woman at the well, St. Photini, was eventually martyred for her faith in Christ by the Roman emperor Nero. Her sons were martyred also.

The story is that Nero had her killed by throwing her down a dry well as a way to mock her and the encounter she had with Jesus.

She followed Christ joyfully and courageously to the very end of her earthly existence. She looked death in the face and would not recant her devotion to the Lord because she had encountered the God of love.

And now as Paul Harvey would say, you know the rest of the story.

So, this woman understands that. . .

“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.”

She heard that, received that and decided to live that.

And God does not condemn you. He loves you.

God is not done writing your story.



He knows about all the secrets and the messes in your life, and He's not going to leave you there. He loves you too much to keep you there. He's desires to install Living Water inside of you, too.

Do you want it? He says, "I stand at the door and knock."

Let's pray.