

#12 – John – 4:1-14

Need: To see how Jesus interacted with people in great need.

Aim: To understand how Jesus interacted with people in great need.

Title: “Desperate Need” – Part I

Prop: In Jn. 4:1-45, Jesus **I. Avoided Religious Conflict – 4:1-6**, and instead had an **II. Encounter with the Unlovely – 4:7-30**, followed by an **III. Call to Service to All – 4:30-45** as many in our circle of influence are ripe for spiritual harvest.

Intro: I am not one who likes confrontation. In my experience I have had both positive and negative results. For the most part confrontations in counseling come from a question about a particular behavior and or lifestyle choice. Those situations have become less stressful over the years because when someone asked my opinion I have learned to tell the person my judgment doesn't really matter, instead I invite them to see what the Word of God has to say on the subject, or find an applicable principle of Scripture. It puts the burden on God and His eternal Word. That practice has served me well over the years, but it is one I had to learn by trial and error

When people come to me for counseling, I listen and at appropriate times ask for clarification by requesting more information through probing questions to get to the bottom of the issue. I have had people in my office ask me why their life was falling apart.

We usually both know the answer if they are living in sin or involved in practices which run in direct contrast to what God's Word says. As I hear a person pour out all their trouble, I have to guard myself from saying: **"It's not rocket science here!"** There are always consequences of being disobedient. I have also learned there are times when the path of least resistance is the best path to avoiding conflicts. However, when it comes to confrontation with God's explicit commands, I need to stand firm and not try to sidestep the issue but hit it head on. God's Word is eternal and always right. It is not subject to situational ethics or spurious interpretational practices.

In Jesus' case, He avoided the coming conflict between Himself and the Pharisees for the time being, because He had a pressing divine appointment. He thus headed back home to Galilee with His disciples in tow, because of this divine assignment with a certain woman of ill-repute.

Let me say this here. Jesus had no real success with religious people as a whole, although a few eventually did believe in Him. He had a difficult time getting them to realize that religious exercise and a well-ordered life on the outside, as Nicodemus learned, **"good"** behavior was not enough. This idea of **"good"** was one of manmade requirements. With this woman at the well she knew she wasn't good so that was never an issue.

She was aware that something was lacking in her soul; she needed something else as the present state of her life was less than desirable. She was ripe for a spiritual harvest. The bad situations of her life had brought her to this encounter with Jesus.

Prop: In Jn. 4:1-45, Jesus I. Avoided Religious Conflict – 4:1-6, and instead chose to have an II. Encounter with the Unlovely – 4:7-30, followed by a III. Call For Service to All – 4:30-45 as many in our own circle of influence are ripe for spiritual harvest.

I. Avoided Trouble – Jn. 4:1-6

A. Conflict With Religion (1-3)

1. Change in Ministry Practice – As was mentioned in our last time together, Jesus' ministry was increasing while John the Baptist's message was waning; he had fulfilled his purpose. John proclaimed the coming Messiah, identified Him as Jesus, and was satisfied with just fading into the background as the masses turned to Jesus. I wonder if John the Baptist knew what was coming and that his stand against sinful behavior would eventually cost him his life?

2. Coming Trouble (1-3) In chapter 4 verses, 1-3, followers of John and many others came to Jesus to be baptized, an outward sign of an inward change and desire to be obedient to God.

Jesus, in verse 1, was aware that His popularity had become an ever increasing problem with the Pharisees, the religious leaders of His day. John's ministry was in obvious decline but now Jesus had become even a greater threat than His predecessor. At best John the Baptist was an Old Testament-like prophet who had come in the power and spirit of Elijah, just like the prophet Isaiah had predicted. This Jesus claimed to be Messiah, the Son of God, God in human form!

John the Apostle made an editorial note in verse 2, to point out that it was the disciples who were doing the baptizing and Jesus the preaching. To avoid conflict at this point Jesus pulled up stakes in Judea and moved back north to Galilee. He chose to leave rather than confront and prove Himself to the religious elite. He also left in order to meet with a woman of less than stellar character as she was ripe for conversion. Encounters with the Pharisees always ended badly. He made them look foolish which served to cement their opposition and they began to form plots to kill Him.

B. Opportunity in Respite (4-6)

1. Historical Background (4) – Verse 4 is short but loaded with culture and history. In the Old Testament, when the Assyrians conquered a country, they would take most of the population to another quarter of the world.

When Israel, the ten tribes to the north, were conquered by the Assyrians (II Kings 18-19), most of the inhabitants were removed from their ancestral lands to other parts of the world. To replenish the population left behind, the Assyrians brought in other captives from other conquered lands, pagan in nature who intermarried with the remaining Jews. Thus they were considered as **“half-breeds”** by the **“pure”** Jews to the south in the nation of Judah. These **“good-for-nothing ethnic mutts”** manufactured their own form of worship of the Jewish God. You can see the conflict in the Old Testament books of Nehemiah and Ezra. The land of Samaria had developed a culture and religion of their own which in some manner mirrored the Jews. We will see this later on in our study of chapter 4. But because of the physical, religious and cultural perversion, the Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans. To do so would render one **“ceremonially unclean.”**

2. Travel Route (5) – So distasteful were the Samaritans that the good Jew went way out of his way around Samaria when traveling north to Galilee.

The far shorter and direct route went straight north right through the heart of Samaria. So in verses 5-30 Jesus broke through religious, cultural, ethnic and racial prejudice in His encounter with this Samaritan woman.

3. Situation (5b-6) - In verse 5, on His journey to Galilee, Jesus came near to the Samaritan city of Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. As in most cities in that arid locale, the well was an important source of life rendering water as well as a social meeting place. The well was located on the outskirts of town, under a shade tree at a fork in the road. The well had been in use for hundreds of years. It had originally been discovered and developed by Jacob. It had been used as the main source of water for both man and beast. There was no spring which fed the well, but rather it was an underground cistern which gathered rain water. It had a narrow opening and a winding stair case down to the water level, sometimes over 100 feet down the stone steps carved into the rock.

In verse 6, it was about noon time so He was weary from His journey. The terrain was somewhat rugged along the road, under a hot unrelenting sun; Jesus paused for a respite in the shade by the well about noon time. Thus the stage was set for an eternal appointment.

I don't believe in chance meetings. God brings people in and out of our circle of influence for specific purposes, that we might share and model the effect of Christ in our lives or in some cases for the purpose of discipleship. I made friends in seminary with a certain man who was in the same situation I was, married with kids, and we worked at the hospital

together. We became friends for a season because we served as support for each other. These people may be pleasant or a source of conflict, but there is a reason.

For example, I don't believe in love at first sight, but definitely interest at first sight. As a lowly freshman in college I was exposed to a pantheon of single young ladies. Although I wasn't looking for a wife, I was indeed seeking companionship. In the first weeks of school, one particular woman caught my eye. I made several inquiries, but she like me, was a freshman and thus unknown. My friend Dana was a distant relative, but he had never met her before, so I was on my own. I was never suave or smooth, or a ladies man, so I plunged ahead and introduced myself and in the process made fool of myself. A life-rendering, life-long relationship began. As we shared our stories, I learned she was semi-engaged to boy back home and was intent on spending a year at college and then returning back to Bozeman, MT. I on the other hand had a different kind of distraction prior to coming to college. I had to choose between a 1969 American Motors, American Hurst Edition car and a burning desire for more Biblical knowledge.

This special edition car had a high performance small block 390 V-8, racing cam, a high rise manifold with a holly 950 double pumper four barrel carb,

traction bars, headers and a long list of other performance options. The crown jewel was a Hurst four-speed transmission with a line lock. If you need clarification talk to me after the message. I was in love and had the money in the bank so I had to make the choice since I couldn't do both. It was either school or instant death. I chose school and God brought into my circle of influence the love of my life. Both of us looked at events that could have derailed any thought of a relationship. God had ordained a divine appointment. It wasn't a chance meeting, but one destined to be a lifelong association. God brings people into our lives for a reason. Jesus brought this woman into His life for a reason, to grant her eternal life as she was in desperate need.

II. Encounter With the Unreputable – Jn. 4:7-36

A. Banter Over Water (7-14)

1. Opening Line (7-8) – In verse 5 it was noon and Jesus was tired; in verse 7, a woman came to draw water for household needs. A woman, water jug in hand, came to draw water from the well and there sat Jesus waiting. As she approached the well, Jesus made a simple request of the woman, **“Give Me a drink.”** It meant two trips down inside the well cavern and in reality was a major chore.

Since the well was at the fork in the road outside of town, the disciples went on into the village of Sychar to buy some food at the local food bazaar which was part of every town. So Jesus was alone with this woman of ill-repute, risking guilt by association.

2. Inquiry of Encounter (9) – In verse 9 the situation gets good. She was a woman and a Samaritan to boot. In that ancient culture women were considered property and thus were treated as such. Being a Samaritan made her doubly odious to Jews because of her heritage. The Apostle John added the note: **“For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”** Another factor will be mentioned in detail next week, but suffice it to say she was not a woman of good character. That was why she came to the well in the heat of the day to be alone, apart from the local gossip circle of ladies who came in the cool of the morning to draw water.

3. Spiritual Truth (10) – In verse 10, Jesus took a common need and taught spiritual truth to this woman. She and Jesus, at beginning of the conversation, were not on the same page. Jesus offered her a gift of eternal life and if she believed, she could draw life from this gift. As a drink of water sustains physical life, this drink provided by God would produce and sustain spiritual life within her. The second point was that she had to ask for this gift, which Jesus would freely give.

The same offer is present in our day and age. The power and the offer spans over 2,000 years without any loss of power. Jesus offered to change this woman's life and He offers to change our lives as well.

4. Spiritual Awakening (11) – The woman began to awaken spiritually as she was beginning to get the picture here in verse 11. Jesus took a common interest, a need for physical water and turned it inward to the thirst within her soul. However from her view point the only water available was 100 feet deep in the rock, accessed only by narrow steps cut into the wall. Jesus had nothing to draw water with, and thus her question **“Where then do You get this living water?”** Her obvious need was water and she needed she took Jesus to task in verse 12. The first question was one with an obvious answer **“Are You Greater than Jacob who gave us this well, and drank from of it himself and his sons and his cattle?”** This well had been in service a very long time and it had continued to provide water. Jesus however wasn't speaking about the obvious.

5. Point of Connection (13) – In verse 13, the woman was thinking of the longevity of the well in the ground and Jesus dispelled her argument that a drink from Jacob's well would meet the physical need for a time. Then He spoke of a spiritual thirst in verse 14 which would have eternal benefits.

6. Spiritual Truth (14) – (1) “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; (2) Not only that: “But the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

The point is clear. First of all the water of truth which Jesus offered will continually satiate one’s heart. Secondly, not only will it continually quench but it will come from within by the presence of the Holy Spirit who produces eternal life.

We find a woman in desperate need of spiritual life. She met with Jesus by a divine appointment, who broke through all ethnic, religious, cultural and racial barriers. He spoke to her because she was in desperate need. Her life was a disaster; her faith in her god had provided her nothing. She was as social outcast in a distressed state. Jesus offered her eternal life which would have life rendering effects in her life immediately and in the end would grant her eternal life.

Some of us here today are in desperate need. We have tried solutions to our issues, but they do not work. Many of us are stuck still trying the same old practices which continually disappoint. In the midst of our despair Jesus offers abundant life for the present need which will end and begin anew with eternal life.

Some of us find ourselves as present day Pharisees. We have lived a good life, by our own standards. We do the right things or at least we think so and thus we perceive that we have no need. Those of us who find ourselves in such a predicament are in the most dangerous of all positions. This woman knew she was in need, but we, comfortable with our life cannot see the desperation of our situation. Only Jesus gives life. Only He provides eternal life. What is your situation and what do you need to rectify the problem? Is your journey one of continual futile struggle, hoping that you might be good enough to garner God's favor? Only in Jesus do we find hope and peace in a troubled world of sin and death. Jesus opens His arms wide: **“All you who are weary and heavy laden, come to Me and I will give you rest.”** **“Cast all your worries and care upon Him for He cares for you.”** Jesus has done all the work, paid the penalty for sin and offers eternal life. All He asks is that you surrender to Him and ask Him into your life. What could be easier? The choice is simple: surrender and receive Jesus who offers life, purpose and meaning, and eternal life or to continue to live in sin and shame, devoid of any hope for the present or eternity? The choice is yours to make!

“Desperate Need” – Part I – Jn. – 4:1-14

- In Jesus’ case He avoided the coming conflict between Himself and the Pharisees.
- He had a pressing divine appointment.
- Jesus had a divine assignment.

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