

#13 – John 4:15-30

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 II

Prop: In Jn. 4:1-45, Jesus **I. Avoided Religious Conflict – 4:1-6** and instead had an **II. Encounter With The Unlovely – 4:7-26**, followed by an **III. Call to Service – 4:27-45** and many in our own circle of influence are ripe for spiritual harvest.

Intro: In the first section of this passage we saw that Jesus chose to reach out to a person in desperate need and avoid the fruitless attempt at convincing the religious establishment that He indeed was the Christ. Jesus never had a good outcome as far as conversion went, when dealing with people who did not perceive their need of a Savior. **“Save from what?”** There was no perception of need, but rather a desire for more, whether it is money, power, respect or fame. Many religious people have given over to one of the three categories while others have given over to all three of these snares and thus **“ship-wrecked”** their faith. One such form is the wealth, health and happiness theology.

Why would Jesus waste His valuable time on a worthless woman?

She had no money, no social standing, a dubious reputation; she was a waste of His time.

He should have stayed and met the religious leaders head on, in full public view, that all may see His power of healing, and hear the authority of His words. To instead spend valuable time with a piece of society that had been labeled as human trash; it doesn't make sense in our own minds.

Aren't you glad that God deals with us one on one, and meets us right at the point of our need? Jesus also loves and cares about those who have been cast aside by society, and are far from God; as believers so should we.

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Transition: The conversation continued in verses 15-26 as Jesus pursued this with His dialogue, beginning in verse 15.

II. Encounter With The Unreputable – Jn. 7-30

A. Banter Over Water (7-14)

B. Religious Issues (15-20)

1. Personal Need (15) – In verse 15 the conversation between Jesus and the woman continued. She did not yet fully perceive the correlation between the physical water which she needed and the spiritual water offered which would satiate the thirst within her soul.

The woman was enamored by the possibility that she would no longer have to suffer shame which she came to the well in mid-afternoon to avoid. But beyond that she didn't understand, nor fully perceive that Jesus could deal with the infinitely greater need of her heart. At this point the tenor of the subject changed.

2. Personal Condition (16-18) – In verses 16-18 Jesus exposed the woman's personal life using divine knowledge. In many such cases personal sin was an issue never brought up, but here Jesus did so, His purpose was not to embarrass her but to bring light to her dark situation. The full disclosure made it known to her that Jesus was able to bring cleansing and restoration to her life and soul.

Yes we all need Jesus in our lives, but we also need to hear the call for confession, the need for personal repentance from sin in our life and ask God to forgive our sins. **“I need Jesus to sort out the mess of my life, issues that resulted because of sinful and bad choices.”** But one also needs to seek forgiveness of sin and then ask Jesus to enter our lives to not only forgive but also to remove the guilt, shame and stain of our sin.

Transition: In verse 16. Jesus opened the secrets of this woman's past and offered her new spiritual life.

The disclosure must have been pointed, yet presented without condemnation as Jesus exposed her sin in verse 18 without any added comment. There was no diatribe about her past nor words of disapproval or disgust. Her answer in verse 19 was carefully crafted to reveal no more information than absolutely necessary.

My brother Bernie is married to a lawyer, one of the top litigators in the Chicago area. Bernie has learned over the years when he was caught doing something he ought not to be doing, nothing really bad, but when confronted by his wife his practice was to never offer any more information than absolutely necessary.

This woman took the same pathway. She didn't deny the words of Jesus, but stopped in revealing her whole life story. Jesus, in verse 18 went much further, using divine power to reveal her true situation. She had had five husbands and the one she was presently living with was not her husband. She was a woman who had been around the block once or twice. She had some tough mileage on her. Jesus exposed her sin and her present lifestyle.

3. Misdirection (19-20) – In verse 19, now exposed, the woman showed some knowledge of the difference between the religion of Samaritans and

Jews. The question she posed was one which had been argued over and over again for centuries.

In verse 19 she gave credit where credit was due and called Jesus at the very least a prophet, one who could perceive peoples' lives and personal material, almost like a psychic. So to misdirect Him she asked a difficult question about religion.

Many years ago I went to a summer Bible camp as a high schooler. Personal evangelism was one of the topics of a week-long study. We were instructed on how to do a **“cold”** presentation of the gospel; to people we didn't know. We practiced on fellow campers who raised questions or situations we might encounter and how to handle them. To try what we had learned, the entire camp group was booked on a ferry ride across Puget Sound and was instructed to attempt cold contacts.

As a high schooler I was more interested in the girls in our group and just having fun. Sharing the gospel was not on the list. But I watched one of the instructors make a cold contact; he even bought the **“victim”** a cup of coffee and sat down at a table on the open deck. I was close enough to hear the conversation and just as we had been taught, the man raised many of the same questions we had learned in class. The youth pastor answered the

man's questions as best as he could yet deftly turned conversation back to the unbeliever and his personal condition.

I can't remember the end results, but that was in God's hands. As King Solomon said: **"Nothing new under the sun!"**

The woman at the well did the very same thing. She asked a prickly theological question about worship and the place it should be conducted in verse 20. It had been an age old battle between Jews and Samaritans.

The question was about location of worship. One would have to go back centuries, all the way back to when the 12 tribes split after the reign of King Solomon. Political differences split the nation. Ten tribes to the north formed the nation of Israel, while the two tribes to the south formed the country of Judah. The leaders of Israel, well aware that the center of worship was the temple in Jerusalem, in Judah, formed their own place where sacrifice was to be offered. It was to prevent good Jews in Israel from going to Judah for worship. Samaria became Jerusalem to the ten tribes to the north. Samaria also sat on a hill in the north country where the Samaritans were to worship and offer sacrifices. With this background the age old question was about who was right. Give her credit as she was well informed about the issue between Jews and Samaritans:

“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you people (Jews) say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Who is right and who is wrong?

Transition: Although the question asked by this woman at the well was intended to get Jesus off track, He answered the question then turned His attention back to her. In this section, verse 21-26 Jesus answered two question about worship and about His identity

C. Burning Question (21-24)

1. True Worship – In a few simple verses Jesus changed the paradigm for worship. From the time of Moses and the tabernacle, then the temple, the worship of God was to be performed in a prescribe place in a strict manner. When the temple was built, the place became permanent in Jerusalem. Jews came from all over the world to offer sacrifices of tithes, offering of animals and grain to God for various purposes, according the Law of Moses. In verse 21 Jesus changed the format of worship: **“Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.”** When Jesus went to the cross, He became the ultimate sacrifice for sin and was raised from the dead as the sign of the Father’s approval and acceptance. There was no longer a need for Old

Testament sacrifices. People could worship God and be accepted anywhere, anytime.

For many years, phones were tied by a cord to a wall or table set with a rotary dial. It was technological wonder when touch tone phones arrived on the market. In Winona Lake I discovered yet another advancement in technology - cordless phones which allowed me to wander without the hassle of a cord, but it had a limited range. Then there came a huge leap with cell phones and suddenly the world became connected. The same thing happened here.

Don't misunderstand me, coming to church is important, but I don't have to come here to speak with God. There is no call waiting. I don't have come to church to be close to God nor receive His blessing. Church is for our benefit, not necessarily God's profit. We come to worship together, have fellowship, receive affirmation, and connect and to hear God's Word.

2. Truth of Past (22) – In verse 22, Jesus settled the issue, point blank:

“You worship what you do not know; we (Jews) worship what we know (is true), for salvation is from the Jews.” Jesus spoke of Himself in that He was born as Messiah of a Jewish mother.

3. True Worship (23-24) – In verses 23-24 Jesus brought back into focus that true worship is an issue of the heart. God does not desire form or function, but a pure, humble and obedient heart. **“Man looks upon the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart.”**

Behavior is important but it must be an outplay of what has taken place on the inside. Change must take place from the inside out, not the outside in.

In verse 24 Jesus presented God as Spirit, and if we seek to worship Him we must do so in spirit and in truth. It must be from the heart.

C. Verification Required (25-26)

1. Deflective Question (25) – You have to give this woman credit. At this point Jesus’ words were merely an opinion, not truth. He most certainly offered some new ideas about worship which gave probable cause to think and ponder. But there was a question about His authority to teach such things. In answer to Jesus’ words, she deferred to the Messiah and **“when He comes He will settle the matter and teach what was true.”**

2. Boom! (26) – In verse 26 Jesus dropped the bomb! **“Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’”** She deferred to the Messiah and Jesus simply moved from the place of prophet to one of Messiah, the Living Word of God, and God in human form. She had spoken face to face with God and in

an instant her life was changed for all eternity. Next week we will see how that changed her life and how it should change ours.

Jesus met this woman at the point of her need.

He persisted through all her maneuvers to sidetrack Him and gave her the opportunity of receiving eternal life, **“living water.”** As will become apparent in the final section of John chapter 4, she received the gift of eternal life and the results were spectacular in the final section of chapter 4.

Unbelievers need to receive the gift of eternal life. All God wants in return is your sinful, pitiful life; all the pain and suffering. He will bring order to our lives; give us purpose and meaning with end the result of eternal life forever in the presence of God. The alternative is eternal death, forever separated from the presence of God in a very, very unpleasant place.

For us as believers, we need to understand the choice that Jesus made, to tangle with the religious leaders or reach out to the needy. We shouldn't choose one or the other exclusively, but be ready to share our good news, as each encounter is a divine appointment.

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