



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THE OTHER SIDE
NOVEMBER 6-12, 2016

MAIN POINT

Serving Jesus often means reaching people who are different than us.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. **What are some ways we segment and divide ourselves as people in our culture (i.e., ethnicities, social class, etc.)? Which of these are particularly relevant right now?**
2. **Which of these boundaries are we called to cross in order to take the gospel to those who need to hear it?**

Leader: Jesus intentionally ventured to the other side of the tracks. His ministry often defied the social and religious conventions of His day, to the dismay of His disciples and the religious elite. Boundaries that were understood and held up by Jewish religious society were stretched and broken by Jesus in His mission to bring people back into a right relationship with His Father. The driving force behind Jesus' earthly ministry was the pleasure of God in mission, no matter where that mission took Him.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> JOHN 4:1-26.

Leader: Jesus and His disciples left Jerusalem for Galilee, traveling by way of Samaria because it was the shortest route. Some Jews in those days frequently avoided the Samaritan route because they considered the people in the region to be unclean, based on the practice of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles in that region. Rather than go around, Jesus traveled through Samaria. It's important that we feel the weight of the social "rules" Jesus broke in doing this. Imagine we, as believers, slowly and intentionally traveling thru neighborhoods filled with refugees who have completely different convictions than our own. Imagine how some Christians might view our actions, not to mention how those foreigners might perceive us!

3. **Why was Jesus unconcerned to travel through Samaria even though it would put Him into contact with "unclean" people? Describe the woman Jesus met in this passage. What stands out to you about His interaction with her?**

- 4. Read Luke 5:31, 19:10; Mark 1:14-15, 10:45. What do we learn about Jesus' sense of mission from these teachings? How does this relate to Jesus' encounter with this Samaritan woman?**

Leader: Jesus never did anything by accident. His travel plans were intentional. While some more religious and “observant” Jews would have avoided Samaria, Jesus knew that unclean Samaritans needed the grace of God every bit as much as religious Jews. Jesus initiated the conversation with the woman for one specific reason—to teach her about who He was and what He offered. Jesus could tell she had a spiritual thirst that He alone could satisfy.

- 5. What things in this woman's life posed as barriers, preventing her from believing in Jesus?**
- 6. What did Jesus' words in verses 17-18 help the woman understand about her spiritual need? What did they help the woman understand about Jesus?**
- 7. Jesus knew everything about this woman, yet still loved her? To what degree do we, as individuals and as a church, mirror Jesus' attitude?**

Leader: Jesus invited her to be honest with Him about her situation. The woman was caught in a deeply questionable lifestyle, but the way she was living did not incite Jesus' condemnation. Instead, Jesus called her into a relationship with Him. In His teaching and mission, Jesus alienated far more religious people than people who knew they were sinners. Meeting people where they are without condemnation is the best way to put ourselves in a position where people are willing to hear from us. Jesus knew this woman's decisions; yet instead of being shocked and repulsed by her situation, He used it to lead her to find fullness in Him.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:27-42.

- 8. How did the disciples respond when they found Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman? Contrast this with the response the woman had after her conversation with Jesus?**
- 9. Between the woman and the disciples, who showed a greater understanding of Jesus' teaching and mission?**

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

Leader: Frequently throughout the Gospels, the disciples demonstrate their inadequate understanding of Jesus' mission. However, the Samaritan woman understood the essence of Jesus' mission right away and it drove her to share that mission unashamedly with others. Jesus' revealing her sin to her did not lead to distress, but to repentance. Jesus desires His followers to share His mission in the places He has given them influence, which is exactly what Jesus would tell His disciples to do before He ascended to heaven (Matt 28:18-20). Jesus loved His disciples and this woman in spite of their failings.

- 10. From the example of the woman at the well, what can we learn is a proper response to the mission and teaching of Jesus? What is the connection between the teaching of Jesus and the mission of Jesus?**

Leader: The teaching of Jesus is not a means to an end with us, but to work through us. Teaching leads to mission and mission leads to teaching. In many churches today we treat discipleship and mission as though they are separate, loosely connected things. Jesus' life shows us that the distinction between these two things is not as clear and defined as we like to make it. The woman heard and then she shared, which led others to consider the claims of Jesus and see that He was the "Savior of the world" (v. 42). As disciples under the authority of Jesus, we call people into similar relationships with Jesus that we have found in Him. Once the teaching and mission of Jesus become the focal point of our hearts, we find God's purpose for our lives.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 11. Where might the mission of God be calling you to stretch your own boundaries and live outside your comfort zone?**
- 12. How can we be intentional about regularly encouraging one another to go "to the other side" for the sake of telling others about life with Jesus?**
- 13. What difference will it make in your everyday encounters with other people if you begin to see them as desperately thirsty people in need of what Jesus offers? Upon what specific relationships in your life does this shed new light?**

PRAYER

Thank God for His rich and undeserved mercy. Praise Him for the grace He bestows upon us every day. Ask for the help and conviction to live every day as a response to the grace you have been shown in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

MEMORIZE

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 Christ?” ³⁰
They came out of the town and made their way toward him. — John 4:28-30

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

JOHN 4:1-42

4:1-26. The Pharisees had investigated John the Baptist’s credentials; now they were looking into those of Jesus. As Jesus left Jerusalem he chose to go through Samaria. This was atypical for a Jew, the usual route was down to Jericho and then followed the Jordan River back to Galilee. As Jesus and the disciples journeyed they came to a stopping point around noon. Jesus stayed at a well while the disciples went into town to get food. At the well Jesus encountered a woman. Typically women gathered their water in the morning when it was cool, this woman was at the well in the middle of the day. She was avoiding the other women for some reason.

Jesus engaged the woman in a conversation. First asking for water, then offering her living water. Living water meant that she would never thirst again. She asked Him how he could give living water, asking if He was greater than Jacob who dug the well. Jesus was referring to eternal life, however the woman wanted a water that kept her from going back to the well.

Jesus changed the conversation asking to speak to the woman’s husband. She did not have a husband, in actuality she had been married five times and was now living with a man who was not her husband. Her motive for coming to the well at noon was made clear. She sensed Jesus was powerful and wise, so she asked Him about the correct place of worship. Jesus changed her way of thinking by telling her that soon God would dwell in people, not temples or mountains. Everywhere would be a place of true worship. After hearing this the woman knew He was the Messiah, Jesus confirmed it.

4:27-30. The disciples had been in town buying groceries during Jesus’ conversation with the woman, but now they returned. Since it was midday, they urged Jesus to have some lunch. The conversion of the woman described in verses 27–30 and the personal concern for Jesus’ nourishment expressed by the disciples was followed by personal control that Jesus asserted over the disciples’ confusion regarding their mission that day. We’ve already noted why the disciples would naturally be surprised to find him talking with a woman. But spiritual sensitivity and a sense of courtesy overcome their natural Jewish revulsion at this predicament. We can only imagine what Judas thought on this occasion.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

A change in the woman is noted by several important elements of verses 28–29. First, she had come to draw water, but she was so excited that she abandoned her water jar. Second, she rushed back into town and exclaimed the revelations of her personal life when, just a short time ago, she had come to the well alone, quite likely as a social outcast. Third, on the basis of Jesus' omniscience, she raised the question of whether the Messiah had come.

Some question has been raised about the translation of people in verse 28 and the corollary pronoun they in verse 30. *Anthropos* is the common word for man. Perhaps that pushes the woman's past just a bit too far in this story. If it means men only, she may have contacted the elders of the city on what surely was for Samaritans the most touchy theological point of all. More than likely however, *anthropos* means people in this context, since Greek contains a more specific term for adult males.

4:31-34. John introduced the story of Jesus' disciples' perception in v. 27, and returns to it in v. 31. In the present story, the task of the Gospel writer was to help the reader understand how Jesus brought His disciples to accept the universal nature of His mission sufficiently so that the impact of both the confession and the sense of community as evident in the concluding verses of this pericope (4:39- 42) might be perceived by later readers. The means used to achieve that goal is the discussion over food followed by Jesus' sermonette on the harvest (4:31-38).

The major concern of the disciples in the story was their search for food—undoubtedly kosher food. So their invitation for Jesus to eat is a reflection of their concern. By contrast, the primary focus of Jesus was hardly on food; it was the search for people. Accordingly, Jesus responded to their request that He should eat by indicating that He had a source of food that was unknown to them.

The disciples' questioning among themselves (4:33) introduces another case of Jesus' double-level language resulting in a misunderstanding (cf. the woman at 4:11). Moreover, it confirmed Jesus' statement to them that they did not know (a familiar theme) what He was saying. The follow-up statement that Jesus' food was doing the will of the One who sent Him reasserts the theme that Jesus was on a mission as an agent of God doing the Father's will. Moreover, Jesus' comparison here of food to the will of God is quite consistent with the message from the first temptation in the Gospel of Matthew (4:3-4). Bread is there contrasted with the word that issues from the mouth of God when Jesus obviously was hungry, having fasted for the long period of forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4).

4:35-38. The sermonette here is built around two pithy statements that are almost proverbial in nature. The first concerns the timing of harvest. Some interpreters have thought that the iambic-like meter suggests a Greek proverb behind v. 35. Others have thought that the four months is a chronological reference indicating the season when Jesus was speaking. Perhaps the most defensible view is that the text represents a general Palestinian proverbial statement concerning the time between sowing and the earliest point of harvest. The value of the last view is that it opens the way to Jesus' subsequent exegetical commentary, which takes issue with the statement by pointing out that it was already harvest time, and the disciples should have been ready for it (4:35). As such, any time can be understood as harvest time.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

The second proverbial statement is one sows and another reaps (4:37). It was normally applied in the ancient world to distinguish between the fortunate and unfortunate (e.g., Mic 6:15). The perspective thus was normally depressing in that planters were not reapers (cf. Lev 26:16; Deut 28:30; Job 31:8). The same perspective is present in Jesus' parable when the master condemns the man who was given only one talent (Matt 25:24-26). Jesus, however, turned on its head the negative perspective that might be understood in the background of the maxim. Instead of dividing the planter and the reaper, He united them. His perspective was that both participate in the results of their work.

Accordingly, both here experience joy. But Jesus did not end His statement there because His primary concern was not merely sowing. His basic concern was reaping. The evangelist understood this concern of Jesus, and therefore he highlighted reaping in the mission directive of Jesus to the disciples (4:38).

4:39-41. We already know the woman had a change of heart and mind that indicated new birth. She had gone back to town to announce her meeting with Jesus. John reported that many Samaritans believed that day because of the woman's testimony. But since this is one of John's key words, he wanted to emphasize what actually happened in that town. Preliminary faith that rested on the woman's testimony became solid faith after the Savior had stayed there two days and proclaimed his message.

How did Jesus witness? He was friendly; He asked questions; He showed concern for human need; He faithfully explained the Scriptures; and He emphasized good news for thirsty people. Witnesses aren't responsible for converting people; their task is to tell the truth about what they know.

4:42. The corporate announcement at the end of the passage is nothing less than dramatic: we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. Remember that world (kosmos) is one of John's key words, appearing 185 times in the New Testament, 105 of those in John's writings. Earlier the discussion centered on two sites of worship, Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim. Then the talk turned to the coming Messiah, surely still a localized expectation related to Samaritan theology. Now, after two days with Jesus, these new converts understood the gospel very well.