



Sermon, Sunday July 10, 2022

“Who Is this Woman?”

By Bob Carl

SCRIPTURE: John 4:7-26 ⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” ¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband,’ ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” ¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

First, a word about today's message. Like all good orators I reserve the right to revise and extend my remarks. So, what you hear may not be anything like what's on the screen. This may not have anything in common with the screen text.

It might not sound like I am capable of coherent speech. Boy, I hope that is wrong.

This is my favorite story from the Bible...longer than any recorded with the disciples, pharisees or the Sanhedrin. And Jesus is talking with a woman who is not related to him. She is a Samaritan and he is a Jew; they normally wouldn't have talked much at all. But this is Jesus and he isn't that impressed with the religious rules that get in the way of reaching people who need to hear the message that he has for the world. He refuses to obey rules that are meant to keep the rulers in power. And here he has the chance to annoy two sets of religious leaders, the Jews, with their laws about whom to talk to, and also the Samaritans, who have the rules but aimed at everybody else.

This woman is at the well in the middle of the day, probably to avoid the gossiping neighbors and their self-righteous view of her life. Now, being married five times isn't likely to get you much good press in any part of the world. But when you're in the middle between two groups, looking to be more sanctimonious than everyone else especially those people just across the street, you know those people. The ones with a common ancestry as us but who fell away from the true religion, those who have tried to nullify our proper view of God and his relationship



with humans. These are the people who tried to make us and our lives miserable, the true followers of the true way, the laughingstock of the entire known Earth. The very idea of those hypocrites thinking that they are better than all of us. Like they are better than anyone else.

Oops, got off on a rant there.

This Samaritan woman seems to be going to some lengths to stay away from the neighbors. She may have grown tired of the whispers and sideways glances of others. Maybe she has spoken about others the way she finds herself talked about. Maybe our Samaritan friend has seen her own hypocrisy and regrets those words. Then she encounters a Jewish man at the well.

OK, he won't speak to her. Religious rules and all that. But he does speak to her, telling her about her past, husbands, lovers, and the current live-in. But not in a condemning way, but, just matter of fact. Establishing his bona fides, she now is quite interested in what and how much he knows.

He lays out what a shambles her life has become, stuff that her friends don't even know about her. Maybe she has done things that she won't share with any human, that deep dark stuff she tries to forget about. This man, a Jew, wouldn't, couldn't, know, but he does. Then it dawns on her, the Samaritans speak of a messiah. Is it him? Not a Jew. The elders and priests have often talked of the coming Savior, the one to save all believers. But surely not some ragged, unkempt Jew?

It is too good to be true, but it must be.

She runs back to her neighborhood and tells everyone to come and see, the messiah. Come and hear how he has been sent from God to save all of humanity.

When she gets back to the well with the crowd they hear Jesus preach like the priests have tried to, with authority, with love and respect. The way that human preachers always try to and fall short, because they are only human. Jesus converts many to the way, when he finishes the disciples return. The new members greet them as old friends, and the disciples ask Jesus " Who was that woman?"

To which Jesus replies "A stray returned to our flock."

