

Caring and Sharing

In the *Gospel of John* chapter 4, there are two amazing stories taking place. The first of these involves Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and takes up the first 42 verses. The second story is that of Jesus miraculously healing the son of an official in Galilee, and runs from verse 43 through the end of the chapter. In a sense, this chapter is a synopsis of the ministry of Jesus while He was on the Earth, for in it we can see how He went about caring for and sharing with those around Him. When you think about it, that is exactly what the gospel message is all about. That is why Jesus gave the Great Commission in the first place when He said, ¹⁹***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*** (Matthew 28:19-20 [ESV]) If we care enough about those around us we will share the good news of the gospel of salvation found in Jesus Christ!

John makes a very interesting statement in John 4:1-4 (ESV) when he tells us, ***¹Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus Himself did not baptize, but only His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴And He had to pass through Samaria.***

In order to temporarily avoid friction with the Pharisees, Jesus left Judea and began His journey to Galilee. It is at this point John informs us that Jesus ***“had to pass through Samaria.”*** This has often puzzled commentators because of the ambiguity of the statement. What does John intend by the phrase ***“had to”***? Geographically speaking, it is quite obvious that Samaria is sandwiched between Judea and Galilee. Some contend, however, that Jewish hatred for Samaritans ran so deep that they would have purposely gone out of their way to avoid Samaria when traveling north or south. Josephus contradicts this idea, however, in stating that the Jews, despite their animosity, would take the more direct route. Thus, it very well might be that the reference here is merely geographical. Jesus had to travel north and Samaria happened to lie in the way. Others, though, read more theology into the verse. That is, Jesus ***“had to”*** pass through Samaria because He had a divinely established appointment to keep in His meeting with the Samaritan woman. This fits well with John's emphasis on Jesus' self-consciousness of carrying out the His Father's divine plan (see John 2:4; John 7:30; John 13:1; and John 14:31). It could be simply an example by John of Jesus' willingness ***“to do the will of (God) Who sent”*** Him (John 4:34 [ESV]). While it is difficult to be dogmatic about it, it is quite probable that John, in making a geographical reference, also alludes to the divine appointment that Jesus had to keep. And when one reads the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, as well as the reaction His disciples have when they find Him speaking to her, it seems that the meaning of Jesus having to pass through Samaria is that

of mercy in caring for this woman, and desiring to bring the His gospel message of salvation to the Samaritans.

The beginnings of the Samaritans are usually linked with the city that bears that name. Samaria was founded about 875 BC by the Israelite King Omri. The land, which was located on a hilltop, was purchased from and named after one Shemer (1 Kings 16:24). Following the Assyrian conquest in 722/721 BC, many committed Israelites were banished from the land and later replaced by Gentile foreigners. Some of the Jews who remained eventually compromised their unique religious heritage. Thus, a syncretistic religious system developed, one which incorporated both Jewish beliefs with those of paganism.

Even a cursory reading of the Gospels reveals the tension that existed between these two groups. From the beginning of the first century AD they were regarded as being on a level with the Gentiles in all things ritual and cultic. After the Exile, Jews returning to their homeland viewed Samaritans with great contempt. They would have been viewed as compromisers, Jewish half-breeds, if they did (as commonly held) merge Judaism with paganism. But either way, we have evidence to support a legitimate stance of separation by Jews from Samaritans. This is evident in John 4, and it is due (primarily) to Jewish recognition of Samaritan errors concerning religious tenants and customs.

Samaritan religious views were partially Judaistic. They sometimes agreed yet often conflicted with conservative Judaism. The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, was received as canonical, but the remainder of the Old Testament was rejected. Samaritans also set up their own priesthood, while rejecting the Jerusalem counterpart. Furthermore, they apparently anticipated the coming of a **"prophet like Moses"** as stated in Deuteronomy 18:18-22, the so-called "One Who restores" or "the One Who returns." But perhaps the clearest difference between Samaritans and Jews concerned the location of worship. The Samaritans erected a temple about 400 BC on Mt. Gerizim, and although it was later destroyed by the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus (second century BC), it remained the focal point of Samaritan religion. Thus, a rivalry of sorts existed between Gerizim on the one hand and Jerusalem on the other. The Samaritans, following the traditions of their fathers, looked to Mt. Gerizim, while the Jews looked to the holy city Jerusalem. This foundational rift led to great antagonism between the Samaritans and the Jews and lies behind the woman's statement in John 4:20 (ESV), ²⁰**"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but You say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."** Of course, Jesus settles the issue, once-and-for-all, in stating that the Samaritans (however genuine their religious convictions), were basically ignorant, while **"salvation is from the Jews"** (John 4:22 [ESV]).

Jesus was no trumpeter for politically correct thought or speech. He did not hesitate to draw a line in the sand, so to speak, and stated resolutely, to this Samaritan woman, to correct her wrong understanding, **"salvation is from the**

Jews.” What the Samaritans had done by corrupting their Jewish heritage and incorporating paganism into their worship of God was wrong, and Jesus corrected this woman.

This was not the first time Jesus had “told it like it is.” On another occasion He emphatically stated, ³⁰**“Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters”** (Matthew 12:30 [ESV]). It is only through our acceptance of Him as our Savior in obedient, saving faith that we have any chance of coming to the Father. And if we are not with the Father then come Judgment Day we will be cast into outer darkness where ²⁸**“In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out”** (Luke 13:28 [ESV]).

Jesus shares with us how we can come to the Father. He says in Matthew 7:13-14 (ESV), ¹³**“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”** Jesus is the narrow gate to the Father, for as He tells us in John 14:6 (ESV), **“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** Once again, Jesus makes no bones about it. No one comes to the Father except through Him. He did not stutter, He did not stammer, He was not the least bit unsure of Himself, He was not the least bit politically correct and saying that there are many pathways to God. On the contrary, He was very exclusive in His statement. He says there is only one path to the Father, and it came with a narrow gate, and He is that gate! And when it comes to matters of doctrine involving lost souls, we must do no less than Jesus, and hold fast to **“the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”** (Jude 3b [ESV])

Jesus corrected the Samaritan woman, but He did more than that in His discussion with her. He shared with her His gospel. He told her, 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 is seeking such people to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and Truth.”** (John 4:23-24 [ESV]) Remember, this woman had been hung up on the proper place of worship: Was it in our mountain here in Samaria, or was it in the Temple in Jerusalem the Jews used where people should worship God? And Jesus rightly told her, “It is neither in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim that matters. Place doesn’t matter! What matters is Me! You must worship the Father in Me!” That is what is meant by, **“in Spirit and Truth.”**

We have already seen how Jesus said the He was the Truth in John 14:6. So how do we get in Jesus? How do we get in His Spirit? Let’s read a few more verses in John 4 (ESV) of this remarkable story to see if any further clues are

provided for us to know how to get into Christ. Beginning with verse 5, John writes:

⁵So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

Okay, so Jesus was journeying by foot, and it was about noon. He naturally is tired, proving that He was, indeed, Son of Man, and subject to all the needs in His physical body that you and I have. In fact, He was hungry, tired and thirsty, and so weary from His travels that He was unable to draw water for Himself. It is at that moment that a woman arrives. John continues,

⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus 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."

Did you hear what Jesus just told this woman? He said He was the gift of God! Mankind's oppressor is Satan, the "**god of this world**" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and "**the prince of the power of the air**" (Ephesians 2:2). Just as Pharaoh would not acknowledge Joseph as Egypt's benefactor, Satan would not acknowledge the authority of Jesus Christ, and he sought to displace Jesus and set himself up as lord of all. Satan despises those who are made in the image of God, and Jesus told us that Satan was "**a murderer from the beginning**" (John 8:44). How was he a murderer? He was a murderer because in the Garden of Eden it was through the lies of Satan that sin was brought forth. And death for all of mankind followed sin. Jesus is the remedy for sin, and that is why He told the Samaritan woman He was the gift of God! He overcame death and was raised victoriously back to life, the Living Water. Continuing in John 4,

¹¹The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are You greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

David wrote in Psalm 42:1-2 (ESV), ***¹As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.***

When we ask the Savior to transform our hearts and minds, expect mighty things to happen as a result! The Living Water Himself will infiltrate the inner core of who you are. He will wash and cleanse you to make you new and complete in Him. It is in this sense that we will never thirst again, for we will be filled with His Holy Spirit! And it is when we come to Him in obedient, saving faith that we receive the Holy Spirit. As Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost at the birth of the Lord's church, it is when we repent and are baptized we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ***³⁸Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.*** (Acts 2:38-39 [ESV]) When we submit to baptism we put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Only those who are in Christ are free from the bondage of sin, for only they drink of the Living Water. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:1-2 [(ESV), ***¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.***

As Israel was in bondage to Egypt, we, too, are in bondage to sin. We are slaves to sin until Christ frees us. Paul wrote, ***¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*** (Romans 6:17-18 [ESV]) The Hebrews writer declared, ***¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*** (Hebrews 2:14-15 [ESV]) So we see that sin is a bondage that brings death. And since ***"all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God"*** (Romans 3:23), we are all subject to death. But those who have come to Christ in obedient, saving faith have no fear of death for only they are promised eternal life that flows from the Living Water of Jesus Christ!

It was not in God's plan for mankind to remain outside His fold. That was what Jesus was telling the Samaritan woman at the well. He wanted her to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth! He wanted her to be one of His! Paul speaks of the eternal plan of God to save mankind from its sins by stating, ***³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, ⁶to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.***

(Ephesians 1:3-6 [ESV]) Because of our Savior's great love for us, Jesus suffered death and carried our sins with Him to the cross of Calvary, defeating Satan and death in the process and securing for us the hope of reconciliation back to the Father: ¹⁹***For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,*** ²⁰***and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on Earth or in Heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.*** (Colossians 1:19-20 [ESV]) It is only through Jesus Christ that one can proclaim victory over death: ⁵⁵***“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”*** ⁵⁶***The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*** ⁵⁷***But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Paul wrote, ⁸***For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,*** ⁹***not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*** ¹⁰***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*** (Ephesians 2:8-10) Obedience is biblically linked to our salvation as is made abundantly clear in many passages of Scripture (John 14:15; Romans 2:8; Romans 6:16). Paul taught that our obedience to the Lord releases us from sin whereby we can become servants of righteousness, as we saw earlier in Romans 6:17-18. Therefore, one who is being obedient is not engaging in a "works-based" form of salvation, but is simply following the word of God. Only those who obey the Lord have the hope of eternal salvation: ⁹***And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*** (Hebrews 5:9 [ESV]).

When Adam disobeyed God, sin came into the world (Romans 5:19). Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Death came into the world by sin and all have sinned (Romans 5:12; Romans 3:23). Therefore, God demands punishment for sin and there is only one punishment: death. The disobedience of everyone on Earth is what caused our Lord to endure humiliation and is what put Jesus on the cruel cross of Calvary. Jesus suffered and died in our place so that we could have a chance at life. That is His Living Water and that is worshiping the Father in Spirit and in Truth. That is coming to the Father through Jesus. Without Jesus, we would all be doomed to everlasting separation from God. Following every commandment of Jesus and the will of God perfectly could never accomplish that. Nothing we could do could ever repay God and Jesus back for what they had to do so that we could escape the death we earned with our disobedience. In order to work our way to Heaven, we would have to be able to place God in our debt. When a worker earns a wage, the employer becomes indebted to the worker and owes him the recompense for work performed. What could we possibly do to make God owe us anything? By being obedient to the will of God, we are simply doing what we are commanded to do. We are only obeying the Master.

Caring and sharing. That is what Jesus was all about. That is what He wants for us. To care enough about others that we will share Him with them!