

“Come and See: Living Water for the Outsiders”

Bible reference *John 4:5–42*

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.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Creator, and from Jesus Christ, the living water. Amen.

There is a pattern in the Gospel of John.

People meet Jesus, and they misunderstand him.

Nicodemus comes by night, a respected religious leader, and he can't make sense of Jesus' talk about being “born from above.” The disciples hear Jesus speak about food and harvest, and they assume he's talking about lunch. The crowd hears about bread from heaven, and they think about bakeries.

And then there is this unnamed Samaritan woman at a well. She misunderstands Jesus too—but unlike many others, she keeps talking. She stays in the conversation. And by the end of the story, she becomes the first evangelist in John's Gospel.

The text says, “Jesus had to go through Samaria.”

Geographically, that wasn't true.

Most Jews avoided Samaria completely. They took the long way around to avoid contact with people they considered religious outsiders, ethnic half-breeds, and theological enemies.

Jesus had to go through Samaria

because

God so loved the world

But John tells us this journey was necessary—not geographically, but theologically.

Jesus had to go through Samaria because *God so loved the world*. Not just the holy. Not just the respectable. Not just the insiders. The world.

And in this story, the “world” looks like a Samaritan woman with no name, drawing water in the heat of the day. This woman stands at the edges of everything. She is a Samaritan—an outsider to Jewish religion. She is a woman—in a man's world. She has a complicated life story. She is unnamed—so easy to overlook. In the eyes of society, she is a nobody. And yet Jesus sits down beside her well. He does not preach at her. He does not shame her. He does not avoid her.

He asks her for a drink. This is one of the most beautiful details in the whole story. Jesus is thirsty. The one who offers living water cannot draw water for himself. He has no bucket. He depends on her. The Messiah is tired, hot, dusty, and in need. And the outsider is the one who has what he needs. This is the mutuality of the gospel.

God does not come to us as a distant ruler, but as a vulnerable traveller at a well. The living water of God begins with a simple human need: “Give me a drink.” The conversation unfolds slowly. At first, she sees only a thirsty Jewish stranger. Then she calls him “sir.” Then she wonders if he might be greater than Jacob. Then she calls him a prophet. Then she wonders aloud if he could be the Messiah.



Her faith does not arrive fully formed. It grows in stages. And Jesus is patient with her. With Nicodemus, the religious expert, Jesus is sharp and confrontational. With this woman, he is gentle and nurturing. Because faith often begins with confusion. With questions. With half-truths and misunderstandings. And that’s okay. At one point, Jesus says,

“Go, call your husband.”

We have often turned this into a morality tale. We’ve called her immoral. Loose. A serial divorcée. But the text never says that. In that culture, women did not have the power to divorce. More likely, she had been widowed or abandoned multiple times. Her life was shaped by forces beyond her control. Jesus is not shaming her. He is naming the truth of her life. And here is the miracle: When she is fully known, she is not rejected. She is not condemned. She is not dismissed. Instead, she becomes a witness.

The one who thought she was a nobody becomes the first apostle to her people. The conversation shifts to theology. She asks the question that divided Jews and Samaritans for centuries:

“Where is the right place to worship? Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem?” And Jesus says something radical: “Neither.” Neither this mountain nor that one. Not here, not there. Because God is not confined to temples or borders. God is spirit. God is truth. God is present wherever people encounter the living Christ. For a first-century audience, this was revolutionary. And for us, it still is.

God is not trapped inside church buildings. Not limited by denominational labels. Not contained by national borders or cultural traditions. Wherever people thirst for justice, mercy, and truth— there is the living water of God. Then comes the turning point. She says, “I know that Messiah is coming.” And Jesus replies: “I am.”

This is the first time in John’s Gospel that Jesus openly reveals his identity. And he does it not to a priest. Not to a Pharisee. Not to one of the disciples. He reveals himself to a Samaritan woman.

To an outsider. To a nobody. Because in the kingdom of God, the nobodies become somebodies.

When the disciples return, the woman leaves her water jar and runs back to town. The jar represents her daily burden— the endless, repetitive, exhausting work of survival.

And she leaves it behind. Because she has found something more important.

She goes to her community and says, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done.” Notice what she does not say. She does not say, “He told me everything I have ever done... and judged me.” She does not say, “He told me everything I have ever done... and condemned me.”

What she means is: “He told me everything I have ever done... and loved me anyway.”

And that changes everything. Here’s another remarkable detail. She doesn’t speak with absolute certainty. She says, “He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” It’s a question, not a declaration. Her faith is still forming. Her understanding is still growing. And yet she becomes a witness. Because discipleship is not about having all the answers.

It’s about inviting others into the encounter. “Come and see.” The townspeople come. They meet Jesus. He stays with them. And then they say something extraordinary: “This is truly the Saviour of the world.” In John’s Gospel, that title appears only here. And it comes from the lips of outsiders. Not from the religious authorities. Not from the disciples. From Samaritans. From the people who were supposed to be outside the story.

Because in the gospel, the outsiders often see what the insiders miss.

So where are we in this story?

Maybe we’re like the disciples—confused about what really matters.

Maybe we’re like Nicodemus—respectable but stuck in old frameworks.

Maybe we’re like the Samaritan woman—feeling like nobodies in someone else’s story.

This text is good news for anyone who has ever felt invisible, unwanted, or out of place.

Because Jesus goes where he “has to” go. And that place is always where the outsiders are.

He crosses boundaries—religious, cultural, gendered, political— to sit beside us at the well.

He meets us in our thirst. He knows our story. And he offers us living water.



Who are the Samaritans in our world?

And are we willing to go where Jesus goes?

The gospel asks us two simple but unsettling questions: Who are the Samaritans in our world?

And are we willing to go where Jesus goes?

These questions speak to the values that we discerned as a congregation over a year ago.

As I reflected on this biblical passage for today our value of 'diversity and inclusion' came to

mind. Back in 2024 our focus was very much on women's ordination. I wonder what this value of diversity and inclusion calls us to now?

What does gender equality and cultural diversity offer us as a community? And so again, I ask the two questions that the gospel poses:

Who are the Samaritans in our world? And are we willing to go where Jesus goes? Because Jesus does not build communities by drawing lines. He builds communities by crossing them. He breaks down exclusiveness. And he creates belonging.

At the heart of this story is a simple invitation: "Come and see."

Not "come and agree." Not "come and be perfect." Not "come and have your theology sorted out."

Just: Come and see. Come and encounter the one who knows you completely and loves you anyway.



Come and see

Come and drink from the well that never runs dry. And then—like the woman at the well—leave behind whatever holds you back and invite others into the same living water. Because the Saviour of the world is still sitting beside wells, still crossing boundaries, still asking for a drink, and still offering life to anyone who is thirsty. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>