



---

## Into the Neighborhood 5 – Jesus and the Woman at the Well

Scott McElvain

This morning, I'm excited to bring to you the message from John Ford. I have quite thoroughly enjoyed this sermon series as we've been going through *Into the Neighborhood*. Our main passage that we derive this series from comes from John 1: 14, which says, ***The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*** We have been working through Jesus' interaction with various people and seen the way in which he loved his neighbors.

Today, we are going to look at John 4 with Jesus and the woman at the well. If you have your bibles, I encourage you to open that as we will be reading the majority of this text this morning. I want to share with you that the McElvains are excited because on June 6, we'll be moving into a new house, so we are super excited about that. That will mark the fifth house in 365 days that the McElvains have lived in. So, we are glad this adventure is coming to an end here. I can only move Hot Wheels cars so many times. They are everywhere. I keep finding them. And I'm glad that it's coming to an end.

The exciting part of that has been in those five different moves, we have had the opportunity to get to know quite a few new neighbors, to meet and develop new friendships and relationships with the people that God has divinely appointed us to be situated and living next to. This series couldn't have come at a better time for us to be challenged and to peer upon Jesus and the way in which he interacted with those around him.

I love sports. I'm a big sports enthusiast. I used to play some. I don't anymore because every time I do, I get hurt, so I stopped doing that. But I love watching sports. I love the Chiefs. I love me some Jayhawks. Jayhawk basketball, not football. Nobody likes Jayhawk football. And I like the Royals when they're good. I'm just being honest. When they are good, I will watch them, so once every 33 years. Big Royals fan when they're good. But I also want to admit – and it comes as great shock to many – as much as I love sports, I dislike sports movies. I find them to be so cliché, so predictable. In fact, I would say that they are the Hallmark movies for men. I do have to give credit where credit is due. My wife came up with that point. So, thank you, Nicole. But I do find them quite predictable.

There are exceptions to this rule however there are some movies and some series that I do find enjoyable and fulfilling and entertaining. One of those is a show called Friday Night Lights. Maybe many of you know about it or have seen it become a major motion picture. I enjoyed Friday Night Lights. Friday Night Lights chronicles the season of the Dillon Panthers, a Texas high school football powerhouse led by none other than Coach Taylor. Coach Taylor is a good man, a good husband, a good father, and does right by his players.

The motto, the battle cry of the Dillon Panthers is a saying that says, "Clear eyes, full hearts, can't lose." I think the writers of Friday Night Lights did a great job of taking this motto – Clear eyes, full heart, can't lose – and writing it into the embodiment of Coach Taylor. He is a coach that desires to see things for what they are, to see things clearly in the midst of the chaos, of the pressures of being a high school football coach and seeing and working with these young men. He is the embodiment of loving his players the right way, with a full heart, deeply caring for them more than winning. I think the writers did a great job of Coach Taylor being the embodiment of that.

As much as I believe Coach Taylor inhabits that motto, when I read John 4, I see Jesus as the ultimate embodiment of a clear eyes, full heart kind of life. So, as we read through John 4, I hope that you begin to maybe ask yourself these questions: How does Jesus see this woman at the well? How does Jesus perceive this woman he meets? How is it that Jesus loves this woman? What is Jesus full heart for this Samaritan woman at the well?

As Christians, we are to imitate Christ. We are to see the way in which he interacts and converses with these people and we are to imitate. In the sports analogy, we are watching the game film of the best and we should imitate and look to copy the way in which he sees people and loves people.

Let's jump into John 4 and then we will begin to discuss it. John 4 - ***Now 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), 3 he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. 4 And he had to pass through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.***

***7 A 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.) 9 The 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.)***

***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 nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."***

***13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but 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." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."***

***16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 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 now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you***

*say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” 21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 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 is seeking such people 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 (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”*

A long interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. And there are many things that I think we could camp out in today and spend our time in this conversation, and it would be very worth of our time. But I want to focus, again, in the way in which Jesus sees the Samaritan woman and the way he loves her with a full heart.

One of the challenges that you and I often face as we read through scripture, is that we often come to the text with a modern perception of the passage. We filter it through being in our day and time and our culture. One of the things that we must often do, that we must challenge ourselves to do is to begin to see the scripture in the context and the historical timeline that it was placed. For if we do that, we will find that this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman should not be happening.

Jesus is interacting with a person that he should not, by cultural norms and barriers that are presented. By all accounts, he shouldn't be having this conversation. Why is this so? Three barriers were in the way to which everybody would say that Jesus should not be speaking to this woman. The first barrier being the cultural and ethnic barrier. The second one being the religious barrier. The third one being the gender barrier.

Cultural and ethnic. It was mentioned in the scripture: ***For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*** Why is this so? You see, Jews saw Samaritans as half-bloods, not of a full Jewish bloodline. Our Old Testament history describes and accounts that the people of Samaria were taken captive by the Assyrians. And in this captivity, these Samaritan Jews began to intermarry with these Assyrians. And Jews saw the Samaritans as half-bloods, looking down upon them.

The religious barrier that existed in this conversation that Jesus doesn't care for but moves forward is the barrier of religion. The Samaritans knew their Old Testament, they knew the Torah, the first five books, however, in their intermarrying, they continued to take on the culture and the traditions of the Assyrians, which included the false gods that they worshipped. So, Jews saw them as being of a half-blood as well as mixing false religion and ideas and gods with the Jewish tradition.

The gender barrier that existed. It was not normal for a man to be speaking to a woman in public in this nature. They were not seen that way. This was, by all standards of the culture, wrong. Jesus sees all of these barriers and chooses to disregard them.

One of the most impactful books in my spiritual journey that I've never read... Let me say that again. One of the most impactful books in my spiritual journey and relationships with this Lord, I've never read.

How can this be so? When I was senior and I was graduating, my father put together a box full of books. This box was to be the beginning of my Christian library, filled with dictionaries and commentaries that some of which I use today. In fact, I used them in preparation for this talk. There were some other books in there and one of the books that was in that box was a book entitled *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. This book sat on the floating shelf above my bed. I would lay my head down at night and that wood was faced this way for me to stare at and look at. As I began to ponder what this upside-down kingdom was – never being moved to read it – I continued to see the ways in which Jesus came to establish a kingdom that was very different than what the religious leaders of the time had thought he was planning to establish. Jesus' upside-down kingdom in which he came to serve, in which he came to speak truth and life into all people. It is in this conversation that we get the picture continuing to do such in which he breaks down the barriers that all people of that time would have said, "Jesus, you shouldn't be having this conversation with this woman." Don't take my word for it, take the disciples and their reaction as they come up upon this conversation.

We read in John 4: 27 – the disciples, coming back from gathering food, walk into this and what happened? **27 Just then his disciples came back. They marveled...** They were shocked, they were appalled **...that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"**

You see, Jesus sees this woman very differently than even the disciples. I love how one commentary describes Jesus in this conversation. He is the hound of heaven. He is crossing barriers, he's walking across invisible lines to save the lost. He is the hound of heaven.

I think we can look at life in several different ways. Maybe one way you see life is just a random chance, a game of Yahtzee. How ever the dice rolls and falls is however my day will be. I shake the eight ball – "Is today going to be a good day? Or is today going to be a bad one?" Life is but a game of chance, happenstance. Or you can see it as God, sovereign over all things, clearly orchestrating divine appointments.

You see, that's what I see in this text when I read John 4. Why I see that is because of four things. Jesus was on mission to meet this woman. He was headed for a divine appointment with the woman at the well. We read in the text that Jesus had to pass through Samaria. You see, the Jews had such a low view of Samaritans that they often would take a longer route around Samaria to avoid them and interactions with them. We've talked about those people that when we see, we often walk to the other side of the street, hoping to dodge a conversation or interaction with them. Maybe you've felt that when you're at Walmart and you see somebody in the aisle that you don't want to talk to, so you go over and hang out in the car department for a couple minutes. These guys did not like the Samaritans so much so that they would travel a different way in their journeys.

Jesus, however, did not. Jesus, at this moment, sent the disciples for food. I don't see that as random. I see that as Jesus knowing that the disciples, if this interaction were happening with them, would have a furrowed eye brow. They would change the conversation and the emotion that was being had between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

Jesus also chooses to meet this woman at Jacob's well. She clearly knows some of the scriptures and the history behind Jacob's well in which they have that short dialogue about where one should worship and temples. Jesus chooses to meet her at a place maybe of common ground. What little the Jew and the Samaritan would have in common, he chooses to meet here there.

And finally, a small detail, but with significant importance, Jesus meets her there at midday, in the heat of the day. You see, the well was a social gathering place.

I liken it to the modern way that ladies go to the bathroom together. I still don't understand this phenomenon, I still don't get it, but when we're out together and one goes, they all go. Fellas, you know what I'm talking about. You've experienced this. When they come back, everything is changed. We're going on a different vacation, we've got a Walmart pick up to make. Everything is changed. I don't know about you, but I don't talk in the bathroom. It's not what I'm doing. So, if you see me, don't talk to me in the bathroom. It's kind of awkward.

The well was a social gathering place. Women used to, first thing in the morning, in the cool of the morning, go out and gather water and converse and be in community. They would do it as the sun went down as well. You see, the Samaritan woman was so ashamed of her immorality, of her adultery, that she wanted to be in a place where nobody else was. She wanted to avoid those kinds of conversations. She was so ostracized by her community that they wanted to have nothing to do with her. I know that feeling of sometimes I just want to be alone. And yet, in her desire to be alone, she meets the Messiah. It's a divine appointment. Jesus is on mission, the Hound of heaven, to speak with this woman.

I want to pull back for a quick second and go to John 3, which Adam Donyes touched on and spoke about Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus, the religious start if you may. Tim Challies presents us with a great reminder to the contrast of Jesus' interaction in John 3 with Nicodemus and who he is interacting with in John 4.

Tim Challies says this, *"It's difficult to imagine a greater contrast between two persons than the contrast between the important and sophisticated Nicodemus, this ruler of the Jews, and the simple Samaritan woman. He was a Jew; she was a Samaritan. He was a pharisee; she belonged to no religious part. He was a politician; she had no status whatsoever. He was a scholar; she was uneducated. He was highly moral; she was immoral. He had a name; she was nameless. He was a man; she was a woman. He came at night to protect his reputation; she who had no reputation came at noon. Nicodemus came seeking; the woman was sought by Jesus."*

Jesus clearly sees the Samaritan woman in a different way than even his disciples, even the people of that day. Jesus' ministry is for all. The spectrum between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman is vast, but here Jesus, in the upside-down kingdom he is looking to establish, is seeking and speaking to the Samaritan woman.

In our household, we have seven, five, and two, so we read many, many children's books to which there are many great ones, but I recommend one that is one of our favorites. It's entitled *You are Special by Max Lucado*. It is such a great book with so many great truths in it.

In the Cliff Notes version of this book, it is a story about Wemmicks, dolls made by the hand of Eli. These Wemmicks walk around with stars and dots, handing them to each other. They give starts to those who are pretty and beautiful and smooth edges, have tons of skill and by all accounts are popular. Wemmicks give black dots to those who are not.

The main character of our story is Punchinello, a Wemmick who only receives black dots for he has rough edges and little skill that people value. One day, Punchinello runs into another Wemmick named Lucia. Lucia has no starts and no dots, and he is intrigued by this. "How is it that you have no starts or dots?" She replies, "I go to see Elli every day." Intrigued enough by this, Punchinello decides to go visit Eli in his house. In this interaction with Eli, Eli smiles at Punchinello. He communicates his love for Punchinello. Punchinello is sad the he only get dots. Eli describes how his love for Punchinello comes not from what other people believe but that Eli created him. His value is in being in the creation of Eli.

I don't know about you, but it is too easy to not make the connection here. The connection that the Samaritan woman would be the Wemmick with all these dots, and that Nicodemus would have been the modern star getter, dressed in stars. You see, Jesus cares not about the stars and the dots. He sees the Samaritan woman in a very different way. He cares for her in a very different way. Jesus not only sees the Samaritan differently, but he also sees her greatest need. Jesus sees her greatest need. With clear eyes, he sees the pain and the hurt.

I must confess, I see need all the time. People on the side of the road. People needing help. My wife around the house, my kids with an encouraging word. I see need all the time. I see friends headed down a path of destruction, engulfed in sin. I see need all the time. And I recognize that I am, more often than not, not willing to jump into it, to help with the need that God has placed in front of me for those he has placed around me.

I think that in this moment, we see that Jesus' love for the Samaritan woman moves him to action. To put it another way, Jesus' full heart for the Samaritan woman moves him to act on her greatest need. The best part about that is her greatest need is him. He is the living water. You see, all of our souls, before Christ, are thirsty for water that would quench our souls to bring refreshment and rest and peace. Our hearts are at war and longing and yearning for that refreshment of living water. Christ is the solution to that. She is blinded by this. She sees Jesus speaking in earthly terms. "Yes, I want water. Give me water that I don't have to come back to this well to get." But Jesus is speaking in spiritual terms, eternal terms. He says, "I am the living water."

We all have chosen to try and find water holes and streams and brooks of water that we believe would bring refreshment and satisfaction and contentment and peace. I think the evil one is really good at whispering these lies that popularity and relationships and money and sex will bring that to you.

Speaking of another great sports film that is one of my caveats, Space Jam, I think of this. In Space Jam, the Looney Tunes are fighting for their lives in a basketball game against the Monstars, right? Bugs Bunny comes up with this idea of Michael's Secret Stuff, this water that will make them play like Michael Jordan. They quickly find out that it was just water. It didn't do anything. And we often find ourselves, much like this woman, going to the wrong water hole, the wrong streams to find that living water.

Pastor John Piper says we get a small picture of the way in which the Samaritan woman has gone about trying to find that living water. In her marriages, in her adultery, she is seeking for her soul to find contentment in men.

I believe C.S. Lewis put this beautifully when he said, *"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."*

Our souls are thirsty. She is blind and coming into the revelation of who she's having a conversation with. She is beginning to see clearly. Think about it. In the beginning of it, she quickly recognizes that he's a Jew. Then this conversation about living water. Then she moves into "You must be a prophet; you know all of my dark secrets. You know me; you must be a prophet." Shortly thereafter, she comes to the Revelation that he is the Messiah, that he *is* the living water.

I close this morning with a clip from The Chosen, which I cannot recommend enough. It is one of those series that I'm often scared to watch for I know how much it moves me and shakes me. I play for you the last two minutes of the interaction between Jesus and Samaritan woman and I ask that you pay special attention to the way in which she leaves the conversation with Jesus.

[Video clip plays]

Samaritan woman: Why are you doing this?

Jesus: I have not revealed myself to the public as the Messiah. You are the first. It would be good if you believed me.

Samaritan woman: You picked the wrong person.

Jesus: I came to Samaria just to meet you. Do you think it's an accident that I am here in the middle of the day?

Samaritan woman: I am rejected by others.

Jesus: I know. But not by the Messiah.

Samaritan Woman: And you know these things because you are the Christ? I'm going to tell everyone.

Jesus: I was counting on it.

Samaritan woman: Spirit of truth?

Jesus: Spirit of truth.

Samaritan woman: It won't be all about mountains or temples?

Jesus: Soon, just the heart.

Samaritan woman: You promise?

Jesus: I promise.

Samaritan woman to the people: This man told me everything I've done. He must be the Christ. Come see the man who told me everything I ever did.

[video stops]

The picture of her running away and jumping is one I can't get out of my mind. Jesus sees the Samaritan woman differently. Jesus sees her greatest need and is the solution for it. Jesus is moved to a full heart for her because he desires to save her and provide her the living water.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I remind you that the good news of the gospel is just that: the good news. There are many people who need to hear where living water is found. There are many in your neighborhood and your workplace who are searching the wrong streams and watering holes for that living water.

We were at Big Air the other day. There was a 10-year-old running around from trampoline to trampoline, tracking down as many people as he could find to tell them and show them that he got the new iPhone. He was jumping, he was chasing them down. His grandma was there, and he was just so pumped he got a new iPhone. He came over to me and another dad and goes, "I got the new iPhone!!" I just said, "You're the man!" and he ran away.

I see that in the same way that he had good news and good news is meant to be shared. The good news us that God had a plan, and in that plan, he sent his son who died a bloody death on the cross. And through is death and resurrection, we are offered the free gift of salvation through faith that if we confess with our lips and our mouth and believe in our heart that Jesus Christ is Lord, we receive salvation, and our sins are forgiven. We don't stop there because we know that after that, we are able to have a write relationship with the God of Gods.

1 Peter 3: 18 – ***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...*** That Jesus might bring us to God that you and I, if you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, would be brought to God to enjoy him and glorify him all the rest of our days.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is no mistake you are in the neighborhood you are in. It is no mistake you are in the workplace you are in. God is orchestrating divine appointments and I pray that we might, looking at the Master, seeing the way in which he sees people, have the eyes of Christ. That we would have clear eyes and full hearts enough to move in and have conversations, explaining who the Messiah is and where living water comes from.

May we reflect, may we search our hearts for the barriers that have blocked us from these conversations. May we pray and ask for full hearts as we move back into our neighborhoods and back into our workplace today and tomorrow.

Father, we thank you. You are King of kings and Lord of lords. We thank you, Lord, that you came to save all, that the good news is for everybody. Lord, I pray that we leave this place with a fire in our belly to continue the great commission to make disciples of all nations. May we look at you, may we be transformed to be made more into your image to have your eyes, clear eyes, and your heart, full heart for those that you are orchestrating us to be interactive. We love you and thank you.

It is in your name we pray. And all God's people said... Amen