



John 4:1-14

We are not going to deal with all the details or theological implications of the text

- We are talking about what it means to live life on mission

To be on mission is to be sent

- To have been giving a special assignment
- We cannot live missionally until we recapture our sense of sent-ness
- John 17:18 and 20:21

Since we are sent by Jesus in the same way He was sent by the Father, Jesus becomes our model for being on mission and in motion...

The basis for all mission is humility.

- By basis I don't mean the underlying support or foundation or cause (that is Jesus)
- But rather, the system or principles according to which an activity is carried out
  - The principle of humility

The reason we are able to say this is because of The Incarnation and what Philippians 2 says about it. That Jesus **gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being... he humbled himself.**<sup>1</sup>

There is no Missio Christi without humility

- There is no mission for you and me without humility

What we have in **John 4** is really the first time that the mission of Christ plays out in a one on one interaction

- The first time that we see Christ intentionally seeking a person out
- **Verse 4**
  - Actually He did not have to—and was expected not to
- And yet, according to the text, it was necessary
- KJV (**he must needs go through Samaria**)
  - **εδει**  
[... it is necessary from the nature of the case](#)
  - Why was it necessary according to the [nature of the case](#)?
    - Was it geographic or theocentric?
    - Was it pragmatic or purposeful?

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 2:7-8 (NLT)

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

“Seeking” connotes that something is not readily accessible or attainable.

When we are told that Jesus came to seek and save the lost, it is not that the lost are hard to find, but that there are **barriers** that keep us from coming to God.

- Obviously, the primary and ultimate one is sin
- But there are certain barriers that have to be dealt with in order to even get the Gospel to someone so that the sin issue can be dealt with

Missiologists and missionaries are always trying to figure out how to deal with cultural barriers, language barriers, worldview barriers, etc

We deal with some of the same things in our own immediate contexts

Jesus is dealing with some serious barriers in seeking to offer this woman eternal life:

- **Racial issues, religious issues, gender issues, identity issues, sexual issues**

What all of these become are barriers to keep this woman from ever even hearing the Gospel

- We are surrounded by these same issues everyday

She was a Samaritan, Jesus was a Jew = racial and religious barriers

Samaria—A region between Jerusalem and Galilee on the west side of the Jordan River

- Samaritans as a people group still live in this area which makes up part of what is now known as the West Bank

Deep-seated racial tension

- Over 500 hundred years of hostility (we can't even imagine that)
  - In 721 B.C. the Assyrians swept through Israel, the **N. Kingdom**, and took the inhabitants off to Assyria
  - During their years in Assyria many Jews intermarried with the Assyrians and Cuthites
    - IN 587 B.C. Babylon took the people of the **S. Kingdom**, Judah, captive to Babylon.
    - But in Babylon there was no intermarriage happening
    - When they returned they were still of pure Jewish blood
      - As a result they rejected the Jews to the north as “**half-breeds**”

They were **not only racially compromised but religiously** (mixed Judaism with pagan influences)

- The Samaritans were considered permanently unclean by pious Jews
- Cf. verse 9 (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Both sides hated each other

- Samaritans hated the Jews:
  - Luke 9:51-56 (They did not receive Him—calling down fire)
- The Jews hated the Samaritans:
  - Jewish Rabbis said:
    - Let no man eat bread with the Samaritans, for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine's flesh
  - Cf. verse 9 (Jews have no dealing with Samaritans)

- A popular prayer: [And Lord, do not remember the Samaritans in the resurrection!](#)

This **racial, geographic and religious tension** didn't just seethe under the surface—it reared its ugly head throughout history

- **300 years** earlier the Greeks had used Samaria as a base for their control of Jewish lands
- **In 128 B.C.** the Jews had destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim
- **A few years** before the birth of Jesus the Samaritans invaded the Jewish temple and scattered bones throughout it on the eve of Passover (Jewish Independence) thereby defiling the temple grounds and making it impossible for the Jews to keep the feast.
  - **This is like some real modern-day middle-east drama! (Cf. Israeli—Palestinian)**

**Racial and religious issues/hatred = barriers (people these days will not cross them—sacred)**

- This is a huge issue in our communities here on the coast of California
- The Hispanic population and Catholicism
  - Don't look at each other, don't go to the same places
  - Going to their places—just to start chipping away at the wall (1989 and the Berlin wall)
  - Learning Spanish—just to be able to connect

The **gender issues** were very real in this context as well

- It was totally socially inappropriate for a man to talk to a strange woman, especially in an uninhabited place
- The culturally expected behavior would have been that on seeing the woman approach the well Jesus would withdraw to a distance of at least 20 feet, thereby indicating that it was safe and now appropriate for the woman to approach the well<sup>2</sup>
- Men definitely did not speak to women about theological matters<sup>3</sup>
  - In fact the Mishna (Jewish oral law) said, "[He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at last will inherit Gehenna.](#)"<sup>4</sup>
- This was a very real gender issue in that culture
- Cf. verse 27
  - **His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman**
  - **Gender issue are different/weird in our culture—sex changes and the Olympics**

There were also some **identity issues** here

- It was noon and the woman was coming to the well alone
  - Women usually drew water in groups<sup>5</sup>
    - For propriety sake and in order to lift the heavy jars onto their heads
  - Women usually drew water in the morning or evenings<sup>6</sup>
  - That fact that she came alone and in the middle of the day suggests that she was looked down upon as **a woman of low reputation** in her community ([See 4:16-19](#))
    - You would not have to of been a prophet to figure out that this was a "bad woman"
      - And she knew it
    - She felt the pain of having to go to the well alone every day (knowing all the other women were together)
      - That feeling of rejection, shame, being second best (identity issues)

And that **feeling of brokenness**

- Clearly she was relationally and sexually broken

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2008), 202-3.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament—John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 149.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2008), 203.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. 24:11; Ex. 2:16; 1 Sam. 9:11

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 24:11; 29:7-8

All of this: The racial, religious, gender, identity, relational and sexual issues would have been barriers to keep this woman from interacting with this man at the well

So, this man had to approach things very carefully

- She saw Him and thought of all sorts of reasons why they wanted nothing to do with each other

The basis (mode of operation) for all mission is humility

Jesus does not walk into this interaction, seek to break down these barriers, by positioning Himself as the leader of a world-wide revolution

Jesus steps in to it having just been rejected (vv. 1-3), making Himself a minority (v. 4) and being tired, thirsty and... needy (vv. 6-7)

Think about this:

- **He knew what it like was to be rejected and pushed out of the crowd**
- **He went where he would be the minority that was discriminated against?**
- **He allowed himself to need the person he was seeking to minister to!**

Because of this positioning (some circumstantial, some intentional—but all providential)

- Jesus breaks hundreds of years of barriers and bitterness with **just 4 words**
- **Give me a drink** (v. 7)

Here is a profound theology of mission:

- Jesus humbles Himself to the point of needing her!

"Jesus does not establish his initial relationship with her by explaining how she needs him and his message. That will come later. Rather his opening line means, 'I am weak and need help! Can you help me?'"<sup>8</sup>

Jesus said that He came as a servant (**Mk 10:45**)

- He was truly a servant because he put himself at the mercy of those he came to save!
- **To serve from a place of power is not to be a servant but a benefactor<sup>9</sup>**
  - That is why Christ came as a babe and not a king (he is both the Lion and the Lamb)

Jesus attempts to build this into His disciples

- The first mission trip He sends them on He instructed them not to take a multitude of supplies—no bread, no bag, no money (See **Mk 6:7-13**)
- **They were to in anyway be in need of the people to whom they were sent!**

It is not a contrived strategy it is an authentic humility

- Humility is the basis of mission, but humility has to be learned (Scripture and God)
  - Daisy Love's circumstances humbling us (learning to need)

Here is why this is so imperative for our lives

- **To the outside world we look like a Jewish rabbi did to a Samaritan adulteress**
- There are several reasons why (in their minds) we don't like each other

<sup>7</sup> See also Luke 9:51-56 where Jesus and the disciples are not welcome in Samaria

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2008), 203.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel T. Niles, *This Jesus... Whereof We Are Witnesses* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 23-27.

The top 3 preconceptions outsiders have about us:

- Anti-homosexual
- Judgmental
- Hypocritical

None of these are good

- We can only begin to remedy these things (get in the conversation with them) through genuine humility

Most young not-yet-Christians **form their perceptions** of Christianity (Cf. Jesus) through conversations with other people—often with Christians<sup>10</sup>

- This means that we have a great opportunity and responsibility to shape those perceptions
- But we need to be in those conversation
  - That requires breaking some of those barriers

What we are talking about here is the ability to have genuine relationship

- There was no possibility of this without Jesus allowing Himself to be in the place of need
- “The only way to build love between two people or two groups of people is to be so related to each other as to stand in need of each other.”<sup>11</sup>
  - It's true—Think about a marriage. There is always mutual need.

Jesus did not need to have it all together here

- He is on a long journey and caught without a bucket (**any band of travelers would have had a skin bucket on a rope**<sup>12</sup>) at a well in the middle of the day when no one should be there.
- Some of His initial contact with Peter was similar (Lk 5:1-3)
  - **Jesus needed Peter and asked for His help**

“Jesus was ready to serve, and His self-emptying was so total that he needed to be served.”<sup>13</sup>

We do not have it all together all the time

- We do have a lot to offer—everything (living water!)
- But we also have a lot to learn

What this does for the woman is instantly elevate her sense of self worth

- Her dignity and strength is affirmed when she is put in the position of being able to give
- My recent project (got help from people not walking w/ Lord—put myself in need and debt to them)

Humility and mutual need move us from being perceived as making people our projects to demonstrating care

- Only **1/3** of all young non-Christians believe that Christians **genuinely care** about them<sup>14</sup>

Others would have struggled to be kind to this woman if they knew about her what Jesus knew about her

- Jesus knows all and loves us still
- Here is what Jesus knows, “Those who have been forgiven much love much” (Cf. Lk 7:47)
- A corollary to that might be “Those who have much to be forgiven of are in need of much love”

<sup>10</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Niles, 23-27.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament—John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 149.

<sup>13</sup> Bailey, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 68.

We do not need to tell them that we are not okay with their lifestyle (they know that—she knew that)

- Loving someone does not mean that we condone all they do
  - In fact, it is quite the opposite
  - Cf. Romans 5:8
    - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Somehow, we need to begin to understand and apply the fact that humanity never would have known or understood this amazing love of God unless Jesus **gave up his divine privileges; took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being... unless he humbled himself.**<sup>15</sup>

No one has ever seen God at any time, but Jesus (in the Incarnation) has explained Him to us. (Cf. Jn 1:18)

Jesus was **compelled to break barriers** that were normal for everyone else

- Can we begin to identify barriers in our context that keep people from hearing?

The nature of God (as a missionary God) and our being re-made in His image

- Forces us to do what other's avoid
- Jesus went directly into relational difficulties that others avoided
- **The love of God compels us** (Paul in 2 Cor 5:14)
  - What do we avoid that we need to go into?

The people that Jesus reaches are supposed to reach others

The Samaritan woman became a barrier breaker as well

- She went back into the city and told **the men** there about Jesus (v. 28) (**gender barrier**)
- Many believed because of the word of the woman (v. 39) (**cultural barrier**)
- They came to Jesus and listened to Him and many more believed (**religious barrier**)
- **... for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.** (v. 42)

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<sup>15</sup> Philippians 2:7-8 (NLT)  
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