

Gospel of John - episode 8

Chapter 4

Welcome to our sharing on St. John's Gospel. I now want to go into Chapter 4, and it's a completely new stage in the ministry of Jesus. It's quite a leap to go from chapter three to chapter four, because in chapter three, we're dealing with the Sanhedrin through Nicodemus, and we're dealing with the Jewish people. In chapter four, we're dealing with the Samaritans. And this is quite a surprise, so, the heading I want to give to this chapter is that Jesus is offering new life to everyone, to all the world. As we set out with Jesus to go to Samaria, we have to remember that Jesus is gradually revealing Himself. I want you to notice that the whole dialogue, the last in the chapter three was with one person - Nicodemus representing the whole Jewish situation. Here it's with one person representing all of Samaria. In chapter five, it's going to be with one man representing all of that situation as well. So, Jesus has been in Judea and he's had very mixed results. Some people believed in him while some people rejected him completely. They were impressed by the signs. Now, each time we come into an area where we're dealing with the chosen people - the Jewish people, we're going to be hearing all the time that they are impressed by signs.

But when you come to the Samaritans, the Samaritans don't ask Jesus for a sign. They accept Jesus as He is. The incredible thing is that Samaria becomes a model as to how to receive Jesus, a terrible scandal as far as the Jews are concerned! Some of the people in the Judean areas were also quite hostile to Jesus. You will expect that Samaria will be hostile, but that is not so. The amazing thing is that John doesn't deal with Jesus's Galilean ministry. He's gone into Samaria. Where's all the ministry that Jesus did in Galilee? Where's all the miracles in Galilee? The reason why John doesn't do that is that the Synoptics have already done it, so he's not going to repeat it. But we do realise at the very beginning that the Pharisees are on his case and they're not going to leave him alone, just as you know from the Synoptics as well. Let me read the first few verses for you. When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and baptising more disciples than John, though in fact it was these disciples that were baptising, not Jesus himself, he left Judea and he went back to Galilee.

This meant that he had to cross Samaria. Now, if you have a map, you'll realise he doesn't have to cross Samaria. He can go up north and across into Galilee. But he decides to take a completely different route that will take him through Samaria. It was not a geographical necessity that made Jesus go through Samaria, it was his Father's Will. Again, we have to make sure that we read this on the right level so that we know what's going on. As soon as we get to Samaria, we're going to meet people who are considered heretics, they're considered unclean, they're considered unfit to come to the temple, and so on. What is the Lord doing going there? And it's even more incredible. He's going to have an encounter with a woman. Now, in our modern age, we don't think that that's absolutely outlandish, but in those days it was. It was unheard of that a young man - Jesus was only 30 - would have a conversation with a woman by herself, whether it was in the middle of the day or the middle of the night! And even though it was in the open, in the public, everybody would suspect it.

We have to ask, what is John saying to us? Now, I've tried very hard from the very beginning to tell you that we are saturated in the Old Testament if we have to understand John. I need to take you back to Genesis and to the realisation that there was a couple in Genesis. We met them in chapter two, Adam and Eve, and we met the new couple in chapter two of John as well, Jesus and Mary. It was the woman in the first couple that instigated the man to actually bring down the human race. She didn't realise that's what she was doing, but she instigated the man to go against God's Will. And so, it is important for Jesus to come to the woman and to ask the woman, will she enter into the kingdom of God and will she allow him to take her onto this new level? And will she become a missionary to take his message to the ends of the earth? The answer to all those questions is going to be 'yes', and it's going to come from the most unlikely person you could possibly imagine, because Jesus is not going to approach a saint; he's going to approach a sinner, a heretic, and a woman.

And in all of these levels, as far as the Jews are concerned, this woman is a 'no-go'. We are confronted all the time by that message from Isaiah that God's ways are as different from ours as the heavens are from the earth. I told you already several times that as we go through the Gospel, you have to remember what was said before to understand what is being presented now. We've just come out of chapter three where Nicodemus was 'properly born' through circumcision into the Covenant of Moses. He had the 'proper' privileges of a son of Abraham; he had the whole of the scriptures; he had the privilege of going to the temple, and he had all the advantages. The person that Jesus is going to speak to now has none of these advantages. She's not 'properly born'. She doesn't worship in the right temple. She's worshipping in a heretical temple on Mount Gerizim. In the worship that she's giving, she doesn't really know who the God is that she's actually worshipping, although she does worship; so, there is ignorance of God and confusion of religion here. The woman seems to have all the disadvantages on the planet.

It would seem as if God wouldn't waste his time on a person who was going nowhere. On top of all this, her life was chaotic. She'd been through five husbands. It seemed that she didn't mind repeating the mistakes she made before, because each time she would fail with one relationship, she'd go straight into another one. That is quite common, actually. Her knowledge of God is incomplete; her experience of the scriptures is incomplete. Incomplete because with her people only had the Torah; they don't even have the prophets; therefore, they don't have all the teaching that prepared for the Messiah. What John is doing is creating a question in our minds. I keep telling my students that the more questions you ask of the scriptures, the better you will do. If you can't think of any question, go and read it again. You should be thinking of questions. The question that should be raised in your mind at this point is, 'are these deprived people in Samaria at a disadvantage with regard to the gift of salvation and to the Messiah?' In other words, does God distinguish between the orthodox and the heretical? That's a very important question for religion.

The answer is 'no' on both sides, in other cases. God does not think the way we think. God doesn't come to us because we're right. He doesn't come to us because we're holy. He comes to us because we're His. He doesn't save us because there's any advantage on our side, none whatsoever. He saves us because we are His. He brought us into being and He wants to give us the fullness of life. Everything is on His side. And the amazing thing is in chapter four, we will meet two people, the Samaritan woman, and we will

meet a man who may, in fact, represent the Gentiles. And in either case, we are meeting people who are quite open and they will have a personal contact with Jesus, and they will make their decisions on that personal contact, not on what anybody else says. So, there is groundwork being made here for all the missionaries who are going out into the new countries, taking the message of Christ in John's Church, telling them, don't judge anybody. Every human being is a child of God and the Lord wants everybody to be saved, so do not look at any disadvantage that the person has. That's not a disadvantage at all.

In fact, all the advantages that Nicodemus had were disadvantages. And St. Paul said that in his letter to the Philippians that he now considers all the advantages that he had as a pharisee to be disadvantages because they kept him away from Christ for so long. So, in actual fact, it's Nicodemus that's handicapped and not the woman. Let's do a tiny bit of revision before we go on. Jesus alone can provide the only birth that matters. It actually doesn't matter where you were born. It doesn't matter the way you were born. Because we can say that some children are born illegitimate. That's not going to make any difference to him. If you're alive, if you're a human being, you're a child of God no matter what way you came here. As the Word Incarnate and as Wisdom Incarnate, Jesus alone can provide true knowledge of God. He's going to give that directly to this woman and to the man whom he meets. We've already been told in chapter two that Jesus is the new temple and that he is the place where we will all have access to God.

So, the woman is going to hear that her problem about worshipping on Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem, where she's not allowed to worship, is obsolete; it's past tense; that the Lord has moved on and done something completely new, and we learned at the end of chapter one, that Jesus is the fulfilment of Jacob's ladder. Therefore, all commerce with God is through Him, with Him, and in Him as our one and only Mediator. We have learned also through John the Baptist, that Jesus alone can give us the gift of the Spirit, so, it doesn't matter whether you have advantages or disadvantages. All that matters is that you actually come to Jesus. Let's read another few verses.

On the way, this is verse 5, "Jesus came to a Samaritan town called Sychar. It was near the land that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus opened the conversation and said to her, Give me a drink. His disciples had gone into the town to buy food, and the Samaritan woman said, What? You a Jew? Ask me a Samaritan for a drink?"

I'm going to stop there because we have a long journey to arrive back at that point. John loves giving us symbols and images that make us go back into the Old Testament and look for the foundations. Here we're going to meet the flat water of the cistern and the bubbling living water that Jesus is going to offer this woman. It's going to be actually quite important. As far as Jesus is concerned, the old water of the Old Covenant is gone stale, we don't need it. There is a new water that's bubbling up to eternal life that Jesus is offering, and this woman - like anybody else - doesn't know where this water will come from, so he is going to have to reveal it to her. If you go back to the Synoptic Gospels, the choice that was given to the people of Israel was the old wine or the new wine. And we've already covered this that many of them didn't want the new wine, they preferred the old wine; the Synoptic Gospels deal with that. Luke 5:39 tells us that anybody who's been drinking the old wine doesn't want the new.

That's exactly the situation that Jesus actually met among the Judeans, but here, when you come to the subject of living water, the Old Testament spoke quite a lot about living water. For example, Proverbs 13:14 tells us that the wise man's teaching is a life-giving fountain. They understood that if you went to the scriptures that were inspired by God himself, and that if you studied the scriptures and you took them to heart and you tried to live them, that you were imbibing this living water coming from God. And that Wisdom itself imparted life to you. The Prophet Isaiah, chapter 55:1-3 invites everyone to come and drink of this living water: "Oh, come to the water, all you who are thirsty, though you have no money, come. Listen to me, and you will have good things to eat. Pay attention to me. Listen and your soul will live." Now, that living water was coming from the scriptures; when you read and study and pray the scriptures, this living water of grace is actually given to you. The Book of Sirach, Chapter 24:29 says, "that they who eat me will hunger for more, and they who drink me will thirst for more."

Knowing this about the holy scriptures, we will participate with Jesus as he reaches out to quench the thirst that is in the human race. The thirst that's in the human race is the thirst for the infinite; it's a thirst for God. It's a deep thing, deep within our being. So, when this conversation starts between Jesus and the woman, we're going to find that both of them are thirsty! He is thirsty for souls and she is thirsty for God. When those two thirsts meet, something wonderful is going to happen. The water that Jesus is going to give, the teaching that Jesus will give is going to be on such a higher level than the Old Testament that it's going to actually satisfy the soul. And so, while Sirach would say, yes, you will hunger for more and you will thirst for more, that's not going to be the case with Jesus. Because Jesus's living water is the whole gift of Salvation. And he's going to give us... we first of all have the living waters of the scriptures of the Old Testament. Then we have the living waters of the revelation of Jesus himself and of the Gospels.

Then we have the grace that Jesus is pouring out for us to come into repentance and conversion. And we also have the gift of the Holy Spirit. The whole thing is this wonderful, overflowing gift of God, and Jesus is the one who has come to dispense this wonderful gift from God. We have to wait until chapter seven for Jesus to give us the invitation that we read in Isaiah. When Jesus will say in chapter seven, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me". Now, we're going to see that this woman comes to Jesus. But at what level is she coming to him? You see, there's different levels. Is she coming to a young man who is 30 years of age and he looks grand and he's out there in the open and he's available? Or is she coming to her Saviour? There are different ways you can come to people. Jesus says, "if anyone is thirsty, let them come to me. And let the person come. If they come, let them actually drink. Because Scripture says, out of their own hearts will flow fountains of living water". In other words, you will receive so much from Him that you will have more than enough to give to everybody else.

John says, of course, that he was speaking of the gift of the Spirit that was going to be given after his Resurrection. This living water is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We now come to this dialogue between Jesus and the woman. Let's come and look at what we actually get in the text. Jesus opens the conversation. Now, why does Jesus open the conversation? It's because Salvation comes from God's initiative, it's not from us. He begins everything. But before we start the conversation, I want to say something quite shocking. That is, if you go back to the Book of Exodus, Chapter 33:20, God the Father said to Moses,

one of the greatest men who ever lived, and probably the greatest man among the chosen people, God said, "You cannot see my face, for a man cannot see me and live". What we're going to see here is that this Samaritan woman who has all the disadvantages, who has no right according to the Jewish people to come into the presence of God, that she has a conversation with God face to face! God incarnate. It's an incredible thing. The 'I am not' of the sinner meets the 'I AM' of God. This is the wonder that you're meeting with here, and I'll bring it out several times so that you deal with it.

Jesus is going to explain in chapter five: you see, we have to go back and forward in John's Gospel to try and understand the fullness of what we're dealing with at any one place. In chapter five, he's going to say, "As the Father raises the dead and gives them life so the Son can give life to whoever he likes". Here is this person who would not seem to be the right person to come at all, and yet the Son will choose to give her life. It's absolutely amazing. He also says in John 5:30, "I don't come to do my own will, I come to do my Father's will". Therefore, this dialogue that happens between Jesus and the woman is wanted by God, the Father. The revelation that is given to this woman and to all of us through this woman is actually wanted by God because Jesus will only do what His Father wants. The word, of course, tells us that Jesus came to save sinners. If Jesus came to save sinners, he can't just go and approach saints because the saints don't need them, it's the sinners who need him.

As I've already told you in chapter two, that the problem about the temple of God in Judea, in Jerusalem, was that God was hidden behind three veils. Nobody could approach His Presence in any real sense. What John is trying to get across to us is this – there are a lot of shocks here in this chapter - is that God has broken out of his maximum-security prison in the temple, and he says, 'I'm going to the people you won't allow the people to come to me. They're my people. You might not like them. They may be your political enemies or your social enemies or your personal enemies or whatever, but they're my people'. When we get to the second half of the Gospel, the beloved disciples are going to discover that we have no enemies. Everybody out there - no matter who they are - are the children of God and they deserve to be given the living water of grace, the whole lot of them. Let's tell you about where Jesus went to. You're told in verse 5 that he went to a town called Sychar. Now, most of the scholars agree that this Sychar is the ancient Shechem, the place where Abram landed before he became Abraham, when he arrived in the land of Canaan for the first time.

He pitched his tent in Shechem which was beside a place called the Oak of Moreh. At the Oak of Moreh God, the Father came to Abraham in a vision and said, 'You can have all of this land. I will give it to your descendants'. But the people living in this particular land now are the Samaritans; they are not the original children of Abraham. So, the children of Abraham despised the people who are actually living here. It was in this place, in Shechem, that Abraham built his first altar to God. In Genesis 33, when Jacob came back from living in Haran - which is in modern-day Syria - he also came to this place, Shechem, now called Sychar. He pitched his tent there, and he also built an altar to God there. For the people to survive at the time of the Patriarchs, the Patriarch had to dig a well to try and find water, otherwise the people couldn't stay there. The well that Jacob built in this place is still famous to this very day. I myself have sat on the side of this well and looked down at the bubbling water still there at this very, very deep well.

The well of Jacob became one of the landmarks in the area; the landmark told everybody what territory they were actually in. We are told also that Jacob had given this particular land to his son Joseph. Therefore, the Samaritans are living in a very precious place - a place that's really sacred to Abraham and his children. It's just that their origin is unfortunate because at the time of the disintegration of Israel into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom was eventually sent out into exile - into Assyria - and never came back. They were replaced by five tribes. These five tribes brought their own false gods with them. After a few months of living in the land - you'll find this in 2 Kings 17 - they began to become sick and they sent a message back to the King of Assyria saying, 'The God of this land doesn't like us because we're getting sick'. They then had four idols and Yahweh; they had five husbands! The one you have now is not a husband. That's my introduction to our next session.

INTERVAL

In our last episode, I introduced you to John, Chapter 4. We're going to give a good deal of time to this wonderful text. I tried to show you the significance of the setting in which this event actually takes place. I told you that Sychar was the ancient Shechem. It was the place where Abraham offered his first altar to God at the beginning of salvation history, and it was where his grandson, Jacob, also offered a sacrifice to God and made his first altar to God. Both Abraham and Jacob are the beginning of the story of the whole chosen people of God. Here, Jesus, at the beginning of the story of the re-creation of the human race and the story of salvation, associates himself with the founders of the people of God. John is trying to tell us that this is the new beginning, that God is doing something completely new. It was Jacob's dream that his children and that his descendants would become the people of God. Here Jesus sits by Jacob's well, and he is associating himself with Abraham, Jacob, and with Joseph, because that's what John says here in verse 5.

"He came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph". Now, why would he bring in Joseph? It's because Joseph was the first saviour figure in the Bible. John is saying, the person that Joseph actually pointed to is actually here. The dream that Jacob had for his people is going to be fulfilled. He's going to be killed.... so, it is a very important point to talk about the well. The next thing that you have to say is since we are associating Jesus with the Patriarchs in the Book of Genesis, that wells were very important places. In the ancient world, wells were the places where people actually met. Therefore, it was the place for social gathering. Many marriages were contracted at wells. We have three famous ones, two in the Book of Genesis and one in the Book of Exodus. Genesis 24:11-17, we have the story of Rebecca who was found at a well and her marriage to Isaac was contracted at the well. Rebecca was a very important person in the history of God's people.

In Genesis 29:1-21, we have the story of Rachel. Also, she was met at a well. Jacob met her at a well, and she was going to be associated with Jacob in his ministry. We have Exodus, chapter 2:15-21, where Moses met Zipporah, his wife, at a well. In each case, the woman was going to be associated with this man of God in his ministry. Doesn't that make you look at this text differently? You have the gracious man of God sitting at this well and the most unlikely woman on the planet coming to meet him. When you look at the wives of the Patriarchs, they became the four mothers of Israel. So, who is this woman going to be

a mother of? We'll hang in there and you'll see. You also find that when you look at Moses's wife, Zipporah, that she was the daughter of a Midianite priest and she was a foreigner. Also, when you look at Joseph's wife, Asenath, she was the daughter of a pagan priest in Egypt and a foreigner. Now that prepares you for the fact that Jesus is moving out towards what the people of Israel would call foreigners and people who were unacceptable to them.

We are told that Jacob's well was very deep. It was about 100 feet deep and it still flows 4,000 years later. I had the privilege of sitting on the side of Jacob's well, looking down at this bubbling water and realised I was sitting in the same place that Jesus had sat 2,000 years ago! It was a very moving experience to have. You look down into this well and the water does look as if it's bubbling up from a very deep source. Jesus is going to say to all of us that He is the source of the living water and that His waters will bubble up to eternal life. John is very meticulous the way he does things. He goes to the trouble of telling us in verse 7, that it was the sixth hour. Well, the sixth hour is midday. Why would John go to the trouble of giving you the timing? I'll give you two reasons for one now and one later. The one now is that in the sixth hour in Israel, the sun is at its zenith; it's directly overhead. John is saying to us that this is the full revelation of God to us. Everything up to now was the time of the patriarchs; this was the dawn of a New Era.

As you go through the history of Israel, it was moving up towards the midday, and now it is midday. We now have the full revelation. The prophets had part of the revelation, but this is the fullness; Jesus is the light of the world. He is the Sun of Justice beaming down upon us. We are going to have that given to us in chapter 8:12, and chapter 9:5. He is the full revelation of God. The letter to the Hebrews tells us that in chapter 1:3, "he is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature". Jesus is the only one who can explain the Bible to us and tell us what God meant when he said something. Because the Bible tells us lots of things, people need to know just what is being said. Since Jesus is going to speak to this foreigner, to this outsider, to this sinner, to this person who is utterly despised by the Judeans, it speaks volumes to us about the fact that God does not think the way we do and that his ways are as different to ours as the heavens are from the earth, as Isaiah has told us in chapter 55:8-9.

John tells us very gently then that a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus opened the conversation. Now, a Samaritan woman coming to draw water, the first thing you have to say there is that women normally went to the wells early in the morning and in the evening just before sunset, and they went together in groups for safety. To have a woman coming in the middle of the day all by herself, you have to ask the question as to why she is doing it. If you have ever been to the town of Sychar, as I have, the well can be seen from the town itself. Therefore, a young man sitting by a well in the middle of the day and this woman comes out all by herself, you do have to question her motivation. But if she is coming looking for a young man, she's going to be cured as soon as he opens his mouth, and she reacts with complete disgust. You are a Jew! There's nothing worse. It was the last thing on the planet she wanted to meet at the well. She wanted to meet somebody who is obviously much more to her liking!

It's wonderful the way the providence of God actually works. She appears to be coming to Jesus with wrong motivation, and if she is, Jesus only has to open his mouth. She hears the accent and she knows that she is dealing with someone she doesn't want and someone that she hates. The Jews and the

Samaritans hated each other, wouldn't even walk on the same side of the street with each other. What we are going to learn here is that God doesn't look at the faulty motivation that sent you to Him. He is going to look at the fact that you did come. That's the important thing. 'If you come'; you might go to church, for example, and have wrong motivation. If you come, He will actually work with you. God loves us infinitely, you see. We don't understand His love. Now, unlike Nicodemus, this woman has nothing but disadvantages on her side. Nicodemus had all the advantages of being a Jew and properly born into the children of Abraham and so on and so forth. This woman is a half-Jew. About 500 years earlier, when the Northern Kingdom was conquered, the people of the Kingdom of Israel had been taken out into Assyria, and they never returned.

They were replaced by five tribes. I've told you this before, but I just want to remind you again. These five tribes had brought back their own gods with them. Then eventually they asked for the God of Israel as well. They had been through five husbands. You'll find this in 2 Kings 17:24-41. Now, the question that's going to come up is, 'who is your true husband?' I've told you in earlier episodes that the God of Israel was called the Husband of his people, and they were His wife through the Covenant. The subject is going to come up, who is your true husband? In the eyes of the Judeans, this woman is a heretic, she is unclean. At the time of Jesus, the Gentiles were allowed to go into the outer courts of the temple, as I've already told you. But the Samaritans were barred even from walking up the steps; they would have been killed on sight. This woman is the definition of an outsider, of someone who is not wanted, someone who is just hated for being who she is. Isn't that interesting? Because Jesus is going to be killed by the Judeans for just being who he is also!

But God thinks differently to us. We will read in 1 Timothy 2:5 that "God wants everybody to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth". Now, the disciples only discovered that when they saw how Jesus dealt with things. We then come to the fact that Jesus is talking to a woman, and the woman had huge disadvantages because in the time that this woman was living, all women had a very low status in society. They were not considered capable of debate, let alone theological debate! They were considered to have lesser intelligence than men.... even though all men came out of women, I don't understand the logic, but never mind. If a woman took a vow, her husband or her father or her brother, or even her son, could cancel that vow. A woman had very low status. What is happening here is that God is doing a new thing. God does not think the way we think. He does not act the way we act. Isaiah had told them in Chapter 43:18-19, "Listen, there is no need to remember the past. There's no need to recall what happened before. Look, I am doing a new thing. Even now it comes to light. Can you not see it? I am making a road in the wilderness and paths in the wilds".

Now, you know from the testimony of John the Baptist, in chapter one of this Gospel, that John said that he was the voice in the wilderness, that Israel itself was the wilderness, and that Jesus was making the new path. If you go to Isaiah 35, you will read that the new path is the path of redemption. Isaiah 35 really encapsulates the Gospel in a few verses. It's really wonderful. So, Jesus is doing a new thing. He is going to cut through all the social conventions of the time, and he is going to push aside the laws of ritual purity. You find him speaking to this woman with respect. You find him speaking to her as a child of God. You find him speaking to her as a person of dignity in her own right, regardless of the fact that she is a sinner

and her life is chaotic. He also spoke to her as a person capable of debate and theological debate, and he allowed her to come to her own conclusions. Here was Jesus setting down the marker for the Church.

This is how you deal with the children of God, male or female. Everybody has to be dealt with respect. Not only that, but Jesus left her completely free to come to her own conclusions, and the beautiful thing is that when she ran back to the town of Sychar to tell her people about Jesus, Jesus did not say to her, 'now, excuse me, but this is the way you do it. This is what you say to people when you're approaching them, and this is what you say about me'. He didn't. He gave her no instructions. He let her be herself. He let her do it her own way. He totally respected her. She was there as a person. And this is the model that Jesus is giving to his disciples. In all of this, what Jesus was doing was liberating not only this woman, but all women socially, and spiritually. This woman embodies in her own life the problems of her society, just as we found that Nicodemus encapsulated all the problems of the Judeans. We are going to find the same thing in other examples that come in the future.

What Jesus does here is that even though she did embody all the problems of her people, he actually transforms her into the first Christian missionary! It's an incredible sight to see that, that he would do that. And as I said already that he didn't tell her exactly what to say or do, which is important. Jesus opens the dialogue because salvation comes from God. It comes on his initiative. It's not from us. We cannot actually bring it on. We can't deserve it. We just need it, but we don't deserve it. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink". This is a perfectly obvious way to start a conversation if you are sitting by a well of living water. But it's a strange thing that he would ask her for something, but we have got very used to this. If we go to Mass, we bring him a few drops of wine and a few bits of bread and he gives us back his own being. He asks us to be involved. He doesn't dictate to us. He actually wants us to participate. He said to her, 'Would you give me a drink?'

She said, "What? You a Jew? And you asked me a Samaritan for a drink?" It was unheard of. That a Jew would even talk to a Samaritan. Jesus pushes aside all of the prejudices that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. He said to her, now he's speaking at his own level of above, and she's coming to him from this much lower level and he's going to have to raise her up to his level, as you have seen in all the sessions we've done already. What he says to her is totally fascinating. He is talking to a woman whose life is chaotic: "If you only knew what God is offering to you, if you only knew who it is who's talking to you, and the person who said to you, 'Give me a drink, ' if you only knew him, you would be the one to ask and he would give you living water". That's really fantastic! What Jesus is saying to her is, look beyond the physical thing that's here in front of you. Look beyond the accent that tells you that I come from a place you don't like. Look beyond your prejudices and see if you can discern the person who is here....

He will bring her step by step to discern who he is. It's fascinating. And he said, 'If you really realised it, you would ask me for the most important thing in your whole life, which is this living water' - which represents the whole gift of salvation. The Samaritans were waiting for the Messiah. They had the Pentateuch, so they knew that Moses had promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-18, that God was going to send somebody to them like Moses. They knew that, and they were waiting, and they also knew it was the time for him to come. So, Jesus said, 'Take another look. Look beyond the flesh and penetrate the

mystery of my person. Then you will be able to make the request that you need to make'. Now, what we need to know is that this woman is thirsty, and I'm going to be talking to you quite a lot about her thirst. I'm going to hold this little container in my hand representing the thirst of her life. It is a tiny little water jar. This woman is thirsty, but she doesn't know what the solution to her thirst is.

She knows that if she comes back to this well, she will have to get more and more and more water. What she doesn't realise until Jesus tells her is that he also is thirsty! So, the subject is thirst; that is really interesting. His thirst for the salvation of souls and her need for God, which is a thirst as well, meet. When those two thirsts meet something incredible happens. The next time that John's Gospel will tell you that Jesus is thirsty and he will say it, "I am thirsty", will be at the sixth hour when he's on the cross! And this is the sixth hour. John is deliberately connecting these two events, and he is telling you that the gift that he is offering now, he will pay for at the sixth hour when he is on the cross. This is actually terribly important. The thirst of the woman and the thirst of the Saviour is actually terribly important. As we go through this text, you and I have to penetrate the mystery of the Person of Jesus. We also have to take our water jars and give him the old water of our lives so that he can give us this new living water.

You may think you have it, but sometimes our water jars are only one-third full. They are not completely full. Jesus wants to fill them to the brim as He did in chapter two, and He wants to give us the overflowing gift of new life. He doesn't want us to settle for half measures. So, if this woman perseveres with the challenge that Jesus has given to her, she will find her Messiah and she will find her Saviour, and she will find that her whole life is transformed. Now, this is an incredible privilege because this woman could never enter the temple of God in Jerusalem. She would have been killed. And yet she has God all to herself here by the well. We need to take this on board. She could not come to him in the temple. I dealt with that in chapter two, but he has come to her. You now see why He had to break out of what I call the maximum-security prison of the Holy of Holies, and come out to meet his own people. John is telling everybody, not only in the first century, but in all centuries, that if we enter into prayer, we can have God all to ourselves as if nobody else had existed, and that He will commune with us as if we were the only living being, and He will give you His highest and His best.

This woman discovered - and John wants all the rest of us to discover it as well - that Jesus deals with you as if you were the only person He created. When he's talking to you, nothing else matters. He gives you his full attention. Now, the woman has a problem, of course, which we will deal with as we go along. The problem is that she has been worshipping on the heretical Mount Gerizim. She's not allowed to go to the orthodox place in Jerusalem. Jesus is going to say to her, 'Listen, forget about both mountains; both mountains are obsolete! God is doing a new thing. There is going to be a new temple. It is going to be spiritual. It is going to be made up of the people of God'. Can't you see that the teaching of the early chapters are absolutely essential for understanding the later chapters? If you go to a chapter in John's Gospel and try and take it without all that has gone before, you are not going to get what John is saying because the material he has given to us is actually very deep. Jesus is saying that when you worship God in spirit and in truth, you can worship Him anywhere, anytime, under any conditions.

You can have God all to yourself on the top of a mountain, in the depths of the sea, or up in space, in the space station - it doesn't matter; He's everywhere. What Jesus is doing here is liberating religion. He is liberating all of us, not just this particular woman. The woman begins to realise that whoever this person is, he is a very special, and she immediately addresses him as Kyrie. Now, in my translation, they say 'sir', but the actual translation of Kyrie is 'Lord'. This woman rises to a higher level and she realises that she must forget about young men and her interest in men, and forget about the prejudices between Jews and Samaritans. That's all nothing to do with this. 'I am dealing with somebody that I should call Lord. I think that's fantastic'. So, she begins to dialogue with him. If he was only a Jew, then she could walk away and say, 'Oh, forget about it. I'm not going to give you a drink', but she has already been lifted up. When we come into the presence of the Lord, the Lord acts in us, and He is giving us what the church calls prevenient grace, the grace that goes before the grace you need, the grace that enables you to be able to come forward.

The Lord is doing that for all of us. He is giving us the grace, so, let us ask Him for the grace to be able to receive what He's offering in this text. Thank you for listening.