

**03.08.26 ~ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**“One Woman’s Testimony”**  
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Words to Ponder**

**John 4:19-30** <sup>NLT</sup>

Pew Bible 925

<sup>19</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. <sup>20</sup> So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. <sup>24</sup> For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus told her, “I am the Messiah!”

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, “What do you want with her?” or “Why are you talking to her?” <sup>28</sup> The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, <sup>29</sup> “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” <sup>30</sup> So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

**Leader: These Are the Words of Jesus.**

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Words of Instruction**

**John 4:31-42** <sup>NLT</sup>

Pew Bible 925

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.”

<sup>32</sup> But Jesus replied, “I have a kind of food you know nothing about.”

<sup>33</sup> “Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other.

<sup>34</sup> Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. <sup>35</sup> You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup> The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! <sup>37</sup> You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it’s true. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”

*Many Samaritans Believe*

<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” <sup>40</sup> When they came out to see him, they begged

him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, <sup>41</sup> long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. <sup>42</sup> Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Leader: These Are Words of Evangelism.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

**Please pray with me:**

Forgiving Lord, thank you for our worship time together so far this morning. We are grateful for a chance to gather and your reception of us no matter how we arrive, distracted or focused, weary or rested, guilty or contrite. Like the woman at the well, we go about our daily business praying for redemption and needing your presence in our lives. On this third Sunday of Lent, we ask for the boldness of this woman. We ask for strength to advocate for more women’s voices in pulpits to declare your Gospel truth to those who seek you. Let us reflect on our own faith this season and your Word; as we do so, let us boldly tell our own stories of faith, surrender, and conversion. Help us to nourish the roots of this church, reinforce the stable trunk of our personal faith, while preparing ourselves for new branches of faith and fruit to grow this spring. Speak through this message and messenger as we explore our theme. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

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Here comes the sun! It’s Daylight Savings Time! Please have patience with some of the church clocks because they might not have been moved forward yet! I hope you enjoy the extra daylight! This has been another challenging week in our world, so I thank you for your prayers for our country, the Middle East, our military personnel, leaders, and for this church.

You are probably quite familiar with the woman at the well story and its introduction, but let’s do a quick review. The woman at the well in John’s chapter 4 is never named, but we know she is from Samaria, the central hilly region of ancient Palestine. It is situated about 33 miles north of Jerusalem and 20 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea, in the West Bank area. Jews had overtaken Samaria in its history (see 2 Kings 17) so there was animosity between residents, so normally Jesus would never

have spoken to this woman. She was an outsider who had been married too many times and was now living with a man, unmarried. She came late in the day to avoid the social shame she felt and was surprised to meet Jesus there. She did perceive this man, Jesus, as a Jewish prophet, but that is all she knew of him. Against all social norms of that day, they chatted at the well. He was so insightful about her own life that she forgot to give him the water she had drawn for him and although Jesus had asked her for a drink, he ignored his personal thirst and needs to minister to her soul.

In the verses prior to our passage, Jesus tries to help her understand his power; how he is living water (*hydor zōn*, the Greek literally translated “running water” as in a brook or a stream). With him she would never thirst again, he would provide all she ever needed. We know that means eternal life and freedom from her sexually sinful past, but can you imagine her initial confusion? Jesus also confronted her religion; Samaritans worshipped different gods, material things, and had different holy places from the Jews that Jesus assured her they could not understand. Also, Jesus explained that this people would not be the salvation of mankind; only Jews descended from Abraham and living through Jesus could save humankind. However, both Samaritans and Jews believed a Messiah would come, so she was enthusiastic when he responded that HE was the Messiah! To summarize, she started to believe what he had told her and went to tell the people about her experience with this “prophet” who was the Messiah!

Being married five times in this Biblical context is not as bad as we assume or how this story has often been used in the church. Widowhood

was common because many women married so young. Divorce to gain social status was also common, as were legal arrangements for women living with men not their husbands. Jesus neither condemned nor condoned her behavior. He simply met her where she was in her life and offered love, grace, forgiveness, and eternal life. That is the Jesus we all worship, right!? Not the angry punishing God of many Old Testament stories. Her experience with Jesus is not only valid but inspiring. She sacrificed her already tarnished reputation to go public about this man she met! Her confidence to testify reminded me of the women at the tomb after Christ's resurrection. They ran to tell the story and so did she! We know this because she left her valuable and necessary (for survival in the desert) water pitcher behind at the well.

Now, enter the disciples. They sensed some type of transformation or event had occurred. Jesus was tired, hungry, and thirsty after his encounter but would not eat what they offered him. This allowed for a moment of instruction: “<sup>32</sup> . . . I have a kind of food you know nothing about.” The disciples and others like John the Baptist had sown some seeds about faith in Christ, and what baptism meant, but they had no idea what was to come. Jesus gave them the concept and name of harvesters and reapers to illustrate that the crops were nearly ready. His ministry of three and a half years was bearing fruit, but it needed harvesting. Or to put it another way, get with it guys, my earthly ministry is almost at an end. Harvesting was a time for celebration, so Jesus stayed here with these disciples for another two days. Many more people in the area became believers because of this woman's testimony and experience with

Jesus' compassion and wisdom, but also because she planted the seed and then they went to hear Jesus speak himself.

Hearing about another's faith is a good first step (isn't that why we come on Sundays?), but digging into the Words of Jesus for oneself is the best way to cement your relationship with Christ. Jesus' healings, revelations, and transformations from the Scriptures are often through people you wouldn't expect, even people like yourselves! You may not think you are called to be an evangelist or prophet, but Jesus uses the unlikely but committed believers to share his story. The disciples were shocked to see that Jesus chose her to help spread the word, yet that is our teaching moment too. Jesus allowed and encouraged **women** to carry the word of his being the Messiah plus his own resurrection evidence to others! For this Baptist Women in Ministry month of Advocacy, we are grateful that this church's legacy builders employed women as ministers—through music ministers' proclaiming the word, ministers and teachers of students and children, deacons, lay leaders and now as Senior Minister. Please pray for the churches who have not heard these Scriptures or answered Christ's call to follow his example.

This chapter in John has numerous messages: serving the marginalized and outcast, Christ as transformer, Christ as living water, the disciples' misunderstandings, harvesting, reaping, sin, forgiveness, redemption, spreading the Gospel, Messianic calling and power, her evangelism, the disciples' evangelism, and ours. All this was to grow the kingdom yet also broadened his public exposure leading to the prophesied persecution that led to the cross and to our salvation. Through this woman's enthusiastic and courageous testimony in her hometown, more

were converted and more came to hear Jesus and were saved. It did, however, make Jesus more visible and vulnerable. Let us contrast this story with Nicodemus' discretion, going to Jesus at night. He had more social status to lose than she did, of course. But this woman's shame of sexual sin was healed; she had to tell others this good news! Nicodemus of last week kept his transformation private for awhile due to his prominent position, but I kept thinking how many more he might have saved had he shared his story. What about you? Are you demonstrating your faith or telling your story to others? Or are you staying private out of humility, shame, or uncertainty? Jesus shared his good news with the woman, she planted the seed of faith with others, Jesus watered it, and the disciples harvested the fruit. Which stage are you? I will pray for your courage to share your personal faith story. Amen? Amen! ||

**Please pray with me:** Dear Lord, we thank you for your son, Jesus. Help us to digest these words and remember them. Let us be open and willing to share our faith stories with others. Strengthen the roots of our faith, share the glory of Christ, and let us plant seeds of it with others this season. May our spiritual practices be disciplined and informing, while our energies and missions be multiplied through your resources and community collaborations! Bring peace to the middle east we pray and safety to those we know and love. We pray in the holy name of Jesus, Amen.