

Drinking with the enemy

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 November 2019

Preacher: Andy Ritson

[0 : 00] Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. It's really lovely to see you all. This afternoon, we're going to be in John chapter 4.

So if you do have a Bible, it would be really tremendous if you could have that open at chapter 4. If you've got one of the church Bibles, you'll find that on page 888. And as you turn that up, let's just recap for a moment where we are in John's Gospel and what questions have been raised and what questions have been answered so far.

A few questions have been answered in John's Gospel. The first question that's been answered is this. Has the Messianic Kingdom arrived?

And the answer to that question was an irrefutable yes. Back in chapter 2, when Jesus turned the water to wine at the wedding of Cana, he was intentionally fulfilling all Testament prophecies about the Messianic Kingdom coming, showing that it has indeed come with him arriving in the world.

So yes, the Messianic Kingdom has arrived. The second question that he's answered is this. How can a person enter this kingdom? And that question was answered through his interaction with Nicodemus in chapter 3, wasn't it?

[1 : 24] Jesus said that a person must be born of the Spirit and washed clean in order to enter God's kingdom. Even the greatest religious teacher out there, the religious elite, had to be washed clean and made new if they would have any hope of entering this kingdom.

And that answer was then reiterated again last week when Sam was leading us through the rest of chapter 3. There was lots of discussion about the baptism of John, which was a washing, a cleansing from sin, washing people clean that they might enter this Messianic Kingdom.

Now the next question to be answered this week is this. Who can enter this Messianic Kingdom? And that's what we're going to look at today.

So if you have your Bibles open in front of you, we'll read from John chapter 4, verses 1 to 18. Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there.

[2 : 54] So Jesus, wearied as he was from the journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.

Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 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. 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.

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? Are you greater than our father Jacob?

He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever.

[4 : 12] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. 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.

Jesus said to her, Go call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, You're right in saying I have no husband, for you've had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.

What you have said is true. The first six verses of this passage set us up for a very interesting encounter.

Jesus leaves Judea and heads up to Galilee in the north. Word was getting out that he was baptizing more disciples than John, and not wanting their two ministries to be set against one another.

Jesus moves on and heads up north, so the two ministries can peacefully work side by side. It's important to note that this move from Judea to Galilee was in no way influenced by fear of the Pharisees, who are mentioned in verse 1.

[5 : 38] Throughout John's gospel, Jesus repeats again and again, as we'll see in coming weeks, that he is the one in charge, and he will not have his life taken from him by anyone who is jealous of him, but rather he will give his life freely when he chooses to.

So John and Jesus separate for ministry reasons, not out of fear. And on his way up to Galilee, Jesus passes through Samaria.

You'll notice, verse 4, that it says that Jesus had to pass through Samaria. Now, much ink has been spilled on those two words, had to.

People want to highlight that this encounter with a Samaritan woman was a divine appointment. They say that Jesus would naturally have gone up a Transjordan route to Galilee, rather than passing through Samaria, because that was apparently the normal route people would take. But sadly, that's actually not the case. Jesus takes the most direct route there and the most sensible route there. But that doesn't mean that this encounter isn't a divine appointment.

[6 : 53] It is. But it's worked out through very ordinary means. Anyway, Jesus travels north and finds himself in a village called Sychar.

It's a six hour of the day. That's midday. And understandably, Jesus is wearied from traveling and sits down beside Jacob's well.

Even in these first six verses, there are subtle signposts of what is to come in this encounter. So far in John's gospel, there's been a lot of talk about water.

Water imagery has been everywhere, hasn't it? Ceremonial washing vessels have been filled with water and then turned into wine. Nicodemus has been told that he must be born of water and the Spirit.

And last week, there were lots of baptisms happening, washing away of people's sins. And unsurprisingly, perhaps then, Jesus now finds himself sat beside a well.

[8 : 00] We're to prepare ourselves for more talk of water this week too. But there's been another subtle theme that's been undergirding these first four chapters of John's gospel too.

And that is the theme of marriage. Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding. Jesus takes on the responsibility of the groom at that wedding and providing wine for the guests.

And last week, John referred to Jesus as the bridegroom and himself as the best man. And here, we have Jesus sitting at Jacob's well.

Where did Jacob meet his wife, Rachel? by a well. Abraham's servant found a wife for his son Isaac at a well.

Moses met Zipporah, his wife, at a well. In all these occasions, the men traveled to another country, another region, and found a woman sat at a well who they ended up betrothing themselves to.

[9 : 07] So it's interesting here that we find Jesus traveling to somewhere considered a foreign region and meeting a woman at a well.

These opening six verses seem to whet the appetite for an interesting encounter indeed, where to expect more talk about water and washing, and perhaps even talk about a betrothal.

And I think that's exactly what we find in the following verses. Let's look at verses 7 to 15 first of all, and look at this water theme first.

Our first point for today is this, Jesus drinks with the enemy. Verse 7, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman who has come to draw water from this well.

You might think that phrase drinking with the enemy is too strong. And if that's the case, then let me tell you how Jews thought about Samaritans.

[10:10] Jews thought Samaritans irreligious, ethnic mongrels, and political rebels. When the Assyrians invaded Israel back in 722 BC, they took many of God's people captive with them and took them away.

There, in captivity, those of God's people who were taken intermarried with the Assyrians, adopted some of their religious practices, and thus were no longer considered truly Jewish.

Rather, they were perceived as being a warped parody of the real thing. So the Samaritans who lived in this area in Jesus' day, in this town, Sychar, were the offspring of those who had got into bed with Israel's greatest enemy.

They were perceived by the Jews in much the same way as those women were who slept with the Nazi soldiers during the war. It was shameful in Jewish eyes to be a Samaritan.

In Jewish eyes, Samaritans weren't just the lowest of the low, but they were their enemy. And that's why the Samaritan woman is so shocked that Jesus even speaks to her in verse 9.

[11:28] No Jew would speak to a Samaritan and certainly a Jewish man would never dream of doing that. And this woman, she wasn't just a Samaritan, no, she was an outcast from the Samaritans.

She was a bottom feeder of this nation of ethnic mongrels and political rebels. And we know that because women don't usually go and collect their water in the middle of the day at the sixth hour. In Middle Eastern culture, the women would go first thing in the morning to collect their water and they would chat to the other women as they drew the water up. But not this woman.

She was so notorious in this town, Sychar, her shame was so isolating that she is out drawing water at a time of day when she knows that nobody else will be around to heap scorn upon her.

And that she can just imagine how irritated and annoyed she must have been to have encountered of all people a Jewish rabbi at the well at this time of the day when she was trying to avoid everyone.

[12:40] She stands before someone whose history says would condemn her more than anybody else in the world. She must have been cursing her luck. drink. And yet Jesus doesn't shame her, does he?

Surprisingly, he offers this woman who's considered an enemy a drink. Though Jesus starts off by asking her for a drink, he tells her in verse 10 that if she only knew who was speaking to her and the gift of God that was available to her, then she would be the one asking him for a drink and that he would grant it to her.

He has living water on offer, not just usual water. Now some of these words will be very familiar to some of us and thus I think we might miss the astonishing nature of this interaction.

Is it not incredibly rare to see this kind of behavior that Jesus exhibits in our world today? You might rarely see someone give an enemy a fair hearing perhaps or even at a stretch forgive an enemy at a distance but you don't normally see people considered enemies sharing a drink together.

You don't see one of the party willing to bless the other, wanting to bless them with a gift of God to give them the most precious thing that they have on offer to them.

[14:16] Where have you seen that in the world? You just do not see it. But yet that's exactly the kind of behavior Jesus exhibits here. That's exactly what's on show. When Jesus talks of giving her living water it's code for him giving her the Holy Spirit who will cleanse her and make her new.

And as we'll see that's exactly what she so desperately needs. Jesus makes the exact same offer to this Samaritan woman who is considered an enemy of God's people as he did to Nicodemus back in chapter 3 who's the teacher of the people of Israel.

And perhaps unsurprisingly the Samaritan woman just doesn't pick up on this. How could this Jewish rabbi be offering her that?

A woman like her. Surely she of all people is beyond the pale beyond the generous gift of God.

She gets the wrong end of a stick doesn't she? Verse 11 she says sir you have nothing to draw water with and the well is deep where do you get this living water?

[15:32] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself as did his sons and his livestock. She still thinks Jesus is talking about regular water.

And if that is the case then things don't look great for Jesus do they. He's in no place to offer anything. He doesn't even have a bucket to draw water up with.

He can't offer anything more than Jacob did her forefather. At least Jacob dug a well and provided Samaritans with real regular water. At first glance it looks like Jesus can't even offer that to this

woman.

Let alone something more substantial that he claims. This living water that he's talking about. So Jesus is more explicit.

Verse 13 Jesus said to her everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

[16:38] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Jesus couldn't be much more explicit could he?

He's not offering her regular water. He's speaking figuratively. He's speaking about offering her eternal life. Jesus is indeed greater than Jacob their forefather.

He has a greater gift to bestow upon a Samaritan woman than Jacob did. Something far more satisfying than normal water. Something that isn't gained by using a bucket but rather freely given, freely granted.

As it's living water, the Holy Spirit comes and cleanses even the most notorious of sinners from guilt and shame and makes her new.

That's what he's offering. It's an incredible offer. And yet sadly this woman, whether out of lack of understanding or complete disbelief, still misses the point, doesn't she?

[17:53] Verse 15. Sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water. The penny still hasn't quite dropped but it will do eventually.

You have to come back next week to see that when Stephen leads us through the rest of the passage. So that's our first point. Jesus drinks with an enemy. But even more surprisingly than that, even more staggering and amazing than that, is that Jesus betrothes himself to the enemy.

The narrative seems to take a bit of a turn, doesn't it, in verse 16. The conversation moves on from the topic of water onto the Samaritan woman's marriage.

lack of marriage. Verse 16, Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband.

Jesus said to her, you're right in saying I have no husband. For you've had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.

[19:10] Whether culprit or victim, this woman is an adulterer. The man she is currently living with is not her husband and she's had many men before him.

Considering that and the social rejection that she's experiencing in this town, I imagine that she's not just a victim. But that's not the main point. The main point we're to notice here is that this woman has been looking for satisfaction by joining herself to various different men.

She was thirsty for water earlier in a chapter, but her relationship history shows her that she was thirsty for something more meaningful too. Looking for love, looking for acceptance, and never finding it in men.

And yet here, she meets someone who loves her, loves her without her makeup on, you could say. Not in a romantic way, of course, but Jesus exposes her heart.

He rips back the facade, exposes her, warts and all, and still offers the most gracious gift to her, this living water, and in so doing is offering himself to her.

[20:30] When Jesus offers her this living water, shorthand for this deep cleansing that comes by being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he's offering to join himself to her.

For it is the Spirit of Christ who comes and makes his home in a sinner. The Holy Spirit washes sinners clean by joining them to Christ, their Savior.

And in that joining, all their sin is then owned by Christ, and all Christ's perfection is then passed to them. It's like in a marriage ceremony when a couple says, everything I have I give to you, and with all my earthly goods I do thee endow.

When Jesus pledges to give us his Spirit and that cleansing we need, that is what he's saying when he says, everything I give to you I endow, I give you, but it's cleansing that you so need.

But when we respond to him in belief and faith, all that we have to pledge him in return is our sin and our shame and our guilt.

[21:43] But Jesus does so willingly. Such is the love and kindness of Christ. The kindness and the love of Jesus displayed here is absolutely astonishing.

He crosses the greatest divide. He shows absolutely no prejudice at all. There are no boundaries to his love, not even the greatest of enemies.

He doesn't just share a drink with an enemy. He joins himself to his enemy that he may take their debt on himself and endow them with internal life.

So what does this mean for us? Well, first and foremost, I think we're just meant to be amazed at the Lord Jesus, are we not? You will never see behavior like this anywhere in fallen humanity.

You will never see a person offering a drink to an enemy, let alone betrothing themselves to them at a great cost to themselves and for their great gain and blessing. Never in this world.

[22 : 54] God's But secondly, it reminds us who this good news is for, who this messianic kingdom is opened up to.

We looked at John 3.16 last week and the message was that whoever believes in me shall have eternal life. Whoever.

It's an open offer. It's not a closed offer to just the religious elite, those who are in, like Nicodemus. In fact, Nicodemus wasn't naturally in at all, was he?

Everyone is in darkness and needs the light, whether they look upright and straight-laced on the surface like the religious scholar that's Nicodemus, or if they're absolutely morally deplete, rebellious mongrels like the Samaritan woman.

I think that should challenge us on how we think of people. If you've understood Jesus' testimony and believed in him, then you have been entrusted with a glorious message and a great gift that you have to offer other people.

[24 : 05] You have been given the key to the kingdom of heaven, and you have a responsibility to ensure that that key is offered to everyone. Regardless of class, regardless of religious background, or how messy their life is, it's to be offered freely to all.

Jesus crossed the most staggering of boundaries for the sake of the gospel, that people might be washed clean and joined to him. And he asks us today, will we do the same?

Will we do that this Christmas with all the opportunities that come our way? And what might that look like for you? Or perhaps it looks simply like not writing people off, which we're all so prone to do, aren't we?

Because you think that that certain person would never be interested in the gospel because of the conversations you've had with them or the lifestyle that they live. They're just too far gone.

Perhaps it might look like reaching out to someone who you know you're at loggerheads with.

Maybe you even consider them an enemy. For the sake of gaining an opportunity to share the Christ with them, why not reach out to them?

[25 : 23] If the light of the world is willing to offer forgiveness to the dark world that's rejected him, then we should be willing to offer forgiveness too, tearing down those most painful of walls that stand between us and other people for the sake of sharing the gospel with them.

Or perhaps you could invite everyone in your row of houses or the cul-de-sac or wherever you live, around for mulled wine and mince pies in the next few weeks before the Christmas events start off. Not just the people you know well, but those you don't know at all, and also those people who you know are just hard work and have a lot of mess attached with them.

For if Christ is willing to drink with anyone and give himself to anyone, then so must we to help them meet him.

All it takes is dropping an invite through the door and heating up some mince pies and mulled wine. It doesn't have to be fancy, does it? You don't have to give a big speech, give your testimony, just let them know that you wanted to get to know them a bit better and let them know that there's events on at church that you'd love them to come along to.

[26 : 38] And just imagine for a moment what an impact that might have if we all did that this Christmas. Teed ourselves up for a good Christmas, making sure all our neighbours had a chance to respond to the good news of Jesus, to drink this living water, to be joined to Jesus themselves this Christmas.

And if you're not a Christian and you're here today, well, Jesus would have you know that no matter what your background is, how much of an enemy you've made yourself to him, he's still willing to offer you the one thing that you actually need in this world.

You'll soon be bombarded by Christmas advertisements trying to convince you that their product is the one thing that you need that will finally bring you the satisfaction you need in this world.

Whereas the truth is, lasting satisfaction doesn't come through material things.

It doesn't come through relationships like the Samaritan woman. It comes from the deep cleansing that only Jesus can offer, who rids us of our guilt and our shame and our sin and joins us to him forever.

Only by being cleansed of our sin and guilt and joined to the one who made you and was willing to leave the glory of heaven to die on a cross for you and make you his own, will you ever find satisfaction in this life?

[28 : 09] So if that's you, please don't dismiss that offer this Christmas and come back next week to find out more. Let me pray for us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father God, we are truly amazed at the Lord Jesus.

We thank you that he is like no other human that's ever walked this earth. Thank you for the love and the kindness that he shows. And thank you that he is the one person in the world who's able to give us the one thing we truly need.

This deep cleansing from sin. Thank you that he's willing to drink with sinners like us and to give himself to sinners like us.

And help us not to be possessive of that, but help us to hold out freely to the people around us in these coming weeks. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.