

The Shameful Woman's Simple Message Saves Many

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[0 : 00] Good afternoon everyone. It's lovely to see you all here. Please do grab a seat. If you've not got a Bible, you can get one at the door easily enough.

And let's gather together and we'll start our talk today. Also, on your seats, you should all have one of these. These are just lovely little Christmas cards that on the back tell you about the lunchtime carol service, which is happening on the 18th.

So that's two weeks today. Two weeks today? Yeah, two weeks today. It would be wonderful if you could invite people along to that. It's just a great opportunity to invite people who don't know Jesus yet to hear more about him and hear what Christmas really is about.

So please do keep that in mind over the next couple of weeks. Today we're continuing our studies in John. And we're in chapter 4 again, which is on page 889 of the Blue Bibles you should have with you.

Page 889. And we're going to be reading from verses 27 through to 42.

[1 : 10] But as you turn that up, let's pray together. Our Lord and Father, we thank you for your word, that you speak to us today through it.

Please work your spirit in us to help us to dwell richly in it, making us good listeners and doers of the word, gladly serving you in our daily lives.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So John chapter 4, verse 27 through to verse 42. Let's read together. Just then, Jesus' disciples came back.

They marveled that he was talking with the woman, but no one said, what do you seek, or why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into the town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.

Can this be the Christ? They went out of the town and were coming to him. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, saying, Rabbi, eat.

[2 : 22] But he said to them, I have food to eat that you do not know about. So the disciples said to one another, has anyone brought him something to eat? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Do you not say there are yet four months then comes the harvest? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.

Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, one sows and another reaps.

I sent you to reap that for which he did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word.

[3 : 28] They said to the woman, it's no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the savior of the world.

Amen. Sometimes a promise can seem just a little bit too good to be true. When I was about seven years old, one of my best friends at school, a boy called Gary, told me that for his birthday, he was going to take the whole class go-karting.

And for a seven-year-old boy, it doesn't get much better than that. I was excited about it for months. I think he told us in the January, and his birthday is in July, so we had a long time to look forward to it.

And July came, July went, no-go-karting party. I'm still very bitter about it to this day. If I meet Gary again soon, I'm genuinely going to bring it up with him.

We've all had promises that are just a bit too good to be true, that don't quite go the way we wanted them to. And because of that, we can be quite skeptical of promises.

[4 : 39] When someone promises us something big, we instantly hit the brakes and think, not too sure about that. I'll wait and see how it turns out. And today, as we dig into John, we're going to hear Lord Jesus make a promise, and we're instantly going to think, I'm not too sure about that.

I'm going to wait and see how this pans out. And I'll let you in on the promise right now. We're going to hear Jesus say that people you know are ready to become Christians.

People you know in your life, in your neighborhood, maybe in your family, are ready to become Christians. And we're going to be tempted to doubt that.

But let's hear what the Lord Jesus says. Now we're into our third week with this Samaritan woman. And we've been through quite a lot with her.

We've taken three weeks to do it, but for her, it was probably just a five or ten minute conversation. We saw her two weeks ago asking for the living water that Jesus offered her. And last week, we saw that Jesus offered her the opportunity to become a true worshiper of him.

[5 : 49] And this week, we see her become a great witness to him as she goes back to her town, to the people who know her. Well, let's dig in as we see firstly the shameful messenger and her simple message in verses 27 to 13.

The disciples are quite shocked by Jesus talking to this woman to the point they don't even ask about it. They're probably so worried about Jesus talking to this shameful Samaritan woman on his own in broad daylight where anyone could just come along and see them hoping that it wouldn't turn into a scandal.

And as they do that, the woman runs off in verse 28. She's had this earth-shattering conversation with Jesus and she's gone back to her town. But as she's left, John includes a little detail about her water jar.

She came to the well for the sole purpose of getting water. I mean, what other reason would you go to a well? And she leaves her water jar behind. John doesn't want us to think that she's just forgetful.

He's not just including this for a quirky little detail so we know it's true. But he's wanting us to remember what Jesus said earlier in their conversation. Earlier in the chapter, in verse 14, Jesus offered this woman living water.

[7 : 11] His living water that leads to eternal life. And John wants us to see that she's leaving her jar of literal water behind. She's not interested in it anymore because she's drinking the living water now.

She's trusting in Jesus so she's drinking the water that leads to eternal life, not just temporary satisfaction. That's why she's left her water behind. So what will she do now that she's drinking of this living water, now that she's showing the first signs of faith in Jesus?

End of verse 28. She went away into the town and said to the people, come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?

She's gone back to her town and is telling everyone about this incredible encounter she's had with the Lord Jesus. She's sharing her experience of him.

She's all of a sudden gone from being a shameful woman to an evangelist. It's life-changing. But let's just pause for a second because as always in this Samaritan woman's story, who she is really matters.

[8 : 24] She's the woman of shame who's been married and divorced five times and is currently living with a guy she's not married to. She's the kind of woman who, if your son brought home to meet you, you would do everything you could to get her out of the door and out of your son's life.

You don't want him mixing with types like that. She's a woman of shame with about the most colorful past you could imagine. And her people would have made sure she knew that they disapproved of her.

That's why she was getting water at the well in the middle of the day, remember? Because she didn't want to be seen by anyone at all. She wanted to be as far away as possible from anyone who knew her so that she wouldn't be constantly judged and reminded of her sinful past.

But after meeting Jesus, instead of actively avoiding people she was afraid of, she's totally changed. She's a new woman who in verse 28 is actively seeking people out. She's off straight away into the town so she can share the news of this astonishing encounter she's had with Jesus. It's incredible to see the change in this woman.

[9 : 38] That she's gone from being a social hermit to someone who is seeking people out to tell them about Jesus. God really will use anyone to share the good news of his son.

And what does she tell them? What's her message? She says, come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? And that's it.

It's so simple, isn't it? Come and see him. The man who has clearly got something special about him. Come and see him. No big gospel explanation.

No fancy apologetics talk. All they were to do was to come and see him. That's it. She's had her whole life turned upside down in the space of one conversation.

So she is desperate for everyone else she knows to meet him. The man who is the Christ. Who's going to make everything the way it was meant to be. And what's the result?

[10 : 45] Look at verse 30. They went out of the town and were coming to him. They've heard the testimony of this woman who previously they would have been so judgmental of.

And amazingly, they listen to her. They don't dismiss her despite her past. But something happens that means they're on their way to meet Jesus. Her simple message is working so far as they're on their way to meet him.

But we don't hear what happens next just yet. The narrative is broken up so we can hear this conversation between Jesus and his disciples in verse 31 to 38 where we see the hope of the harvest.

As all this is happening in the town, the disciples are fantastically clueless. They're not thinking about all the evangelism that's happening and how this woman's life has been changed.

They've got far more pressing, far more spiritual and holy matters to worry about. Lunch. In verse 31, they're urging Jesus to eat.

[11 : 50] But Jesus says no because he's got a job to do. Verse 34, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Jesus isn't worried about the food. He's got a far more pressing matter at hand. He's doing the will of God the Father and that's all he's focused on. He's not bothered about his lunch.

So what is this job? What's so important that you can just forget about lunch? That's what verses 35 to 38 are all about. They're explaining what his job is.

It's easy for us to get tied up in knots when Jesus speaks like this. We can get caught up in all the details and get quite confused. But the main point here is quite simple. Jesus is telling his disciples that there's usually a delay in between sowing a seed and reaping the harvest.

But since Jesus has come, the harvest is ready to be reaped right there and then without delay. He repeats a common phrase at the time to them.

[12 : 56] Verse 35. Do you not say there are yet four months then comes the harvest? There's usually a delay between sowing a seed and reaping the harvest.

You don't tend to see people sow a seed one minute and then by the time they've turned around the plant has grown into a perfectly ripe mature plant ready to be picked and put on the dinner table. It takes much longer than that.

You sow the seed. You wait some time. You tend to the plant. You wait some more. It rains. You wait some more.

The sun shines. You wait some more. And then you do some more waiting and then finally the harvest is ready. But Jesus says to the disciples in verse 35 look lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.

The fields were white for harvest meaning that they were ready to be reaped. Ready to be taken in there and then. No waiting. No delay. Dinner was ready.

[14 : 07] As the farmers looked out they would know that if their crop had a distinctive kind of white hue to it that it was ready to be brought in. So if the fields were white the harvest was ready you could bring it in.

And at the end of verse 36 the sower and reaper are rejoicing together. It's quite a funny scene where the sower is like sowing the seed and the reaper is right there behind them on their tail breathing down their neck reaping everything that has just sprung up straight away as it emerges as

a perfectly full and mature plant.

But they rejoice together because the harvest is ready to be reaped. They can celebrate as their labour has borne real fruit and can enjoy that together. But of course this isn't purely talking about crops.

This isn't really about food. Jesus is speaking symbolically of sowing the seed of his word the gospel and reaping the harvest of eternal life of people responding to him and his word in faith. So he's not saying that the disciples should get out into the fields and grab their lunch. He's saying that there are people out there who are ready to hear the gospel and respond in faith.

[15 : 25] Because Jesus had come because he had ushered in his messianic age there would be no delay in reaping that harvest and people responding in faith. And I should say that doesn't mean that everyone you will ever evangelize to will respond in faith.

Jesus says more than that more than he does in this passage in other parts of the Bible about sowing seeds. But that doesn't take away from what he is saying. That there is a harvest to be reaped and that people will respond in faith.

We can sow the seed and share the word with real hope that people will respond in faith as they are presented with the Lord Jesus. Because the harvest is ready.

It's there to be reaped. And this conversation happens at a crucial time. We've left the Samaritan woman sowing the seed with her neighbours who are now coming to see Jesus.

We've heard him say that sowing the seed will bring a real harvest of faith. He's made a big promise there. Let's now rejoin the Samaritan woman in verses 39 to 42 where we see the shameful messenger's simple message saving many.

[16 : 39] This sinful shameful woman has been telling her neighbours all about her encounter with Jesus. She shared her very simple straightforward testimony that really didn't contain much content and her people decided to come and meet Jesus for themselves.

The seed has been sown so what's going to happen with this harvest? Is it ready to be picked? Verse 39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. Jesus promised that the harvest was ready to be reaped and he is reaping it right then and right there. The Samaritans who were enemies of the Jews came to meet the king of the Jews and bow down to him as their saviour.

They even ask him to stay for a couple of days. They Samaritans ask Jesus a Jew to stay with them. It's culturally quite shocking but isn't it wonderful to see how God uses this shameful woman with her basic message to make his enemies his friends?

God really can use anyone to do his work. We often think that only the most persuasive or clever or holy or charismatic people will be good and effective evangelists but that's just not the case.

[18 : 05] If I were picking people to evangelize to my neighbors then someone like her a known adulterer would be right at the bottom of my list. But thankfully God's not bound by my sense of logic.

He's not bound by my sense of rationality and what's right. God can and will use normal sinful people who carry a huge amount of baggage with them to reap his harvest.

He's making his enemies his friends and will use sinful people like you and like me who ourselves embody the message of reconciliation and our own sinfulness to do it.

this woman as a messenger was really part of the message itself. She was a sinner. She was an enemy who had been made a friend telling others about him.

And as Jesus stays with the Samaritans in their town we see in verse 41 that many more of them believed because of his word. They said to the woman it's no longer because of what you said that we believe for we have heard for ourselves and we know that this is indeed the saviour of the world.

[19 : 18] The Samaritan woman was never the person they were to believe and have faith in. She was the sore telling people to come and see Jesus to see him. She was the introducer.

That's all she really did. She just told people to come and see Jesus to meet him to hear what he had to say. I've got a friend who is just really good at introducing people to other people.

If there's a new person at church she will spot them, chat to them and just introduce them to other questions, get them talking to each other. It's great for getting to know people but sometimes it can be a bit socially awkward.

It doesn't go spectacularly well every time. When I was a teenager and we all know how socially mature and capable teenage boys are, I was introduced to a family of 11 at the one time and there

were girls there.

What was I going to do with that? I had no idea what to do. I think I lasted about a minute and then just ran away out of pure awkwardness. I was clueless. But she just introduces people.

[20 : 24] Stephen, this is John. He met him. This is Anna. He met her. It's just brilliant for getting to know people and it's so simple. And that's what this Samaritan woman does.

If you met Jesus, come on, meet him. Hear what he has to say. That conversation resulted in them knowing that Jesus was the saviour of the whole world.

Their saviour. He's not just a prophet. He's not just the king of the Jews only. He's the saviour of the whole world. Even for unlikely people like those Samaritans.

Many of them turned to Christ because of this woman's introduction to him. And as we close, let's just think about how unlikely this was for the messenger, the message, and the many who responded in faith.

The messenger. She was a woman full of shame who knew and felt her own sin more deeply and painfully than anyone else would have. She actively sought to be away from other people so she wouldn't have to endure their judgment.

[21 : 35] But meeting Jesus meant that her life was totally changed. She'd drunk of his living water. She'd become a true worshipper and was now witnessing to him as being the saviour of the whole world.

Absolutely no Christian is disqualified from witnessing to Christ. It's not only for evangelists, it's not only for ministers or missionaries or the people you think are the best at it.

It's for all of us. Evangelism is a team sport. If you trust in Jesus, then it's for you. We are all to look at this shameful woman in all her sin and shame and be challenged by her desire to share Jesus with them.

She wasn't weighed down by her baggage or her insecurities or her inadequacies, but went to her neighbours as a sower ready to reap the harvest that was there.

You might feel like you're not capable enough for evangelism, but there's no such thing as a Christian incapable of evangelism because we are not the people that our friends and our family need to believe in.

[22 : 49] We are not the saviour of the world, but we know him and we can introduce them to him. We're sowing Christ's seed and it's his harvest.

He is the Christ and he is the one they need to believe in. Let's think about the message. Well, her gospel sharing was just so simple.

She doesn't do a whole gospel presentation, she just tells them a one-liner that he could be the Christ, the one to make everything right. But her message, for all we think it lacks, was spot on. She simply introduced people to Christ. And that was the key first step in these people believing in Jesus. They were introduced to him by this woman.

They went on to have time with Jesus to learn more from him. But the key first step was her introducing them to Jesus. And you might feel like you don't have all the right words to say to your friends or your family who don't know Jesus yet, but that's okay.

[23 : 54] Because you just need to introduce them to him. They need to meet him. And they can do that in his word. You could be like my friend who just introduces you to different people.

Have you met Jesus? Do you know anything about him? He's changed my life. Would you like to read about him with me? We've got several carol services over the next few weeks and one in two Wednesdays time where your neighbors can come along and hear of the one who is the savior of the whole world.

You don't need to give them the full gospel up front. You just need to prayerfully introduce them to Jesus and then take it from there. The first step is simple.

Just introduce them. Ask them to come to a carol service. Ask them to come along, enjoy some mulled wine, some mince pies, and hear about Jesus who has changed your life.

You could also read through the word one-to-one with them. We've been preaching through John week by week, so I assume that you're all total experts on it by now. I'm looking forward to hear some of the commentaries that come out of you.

[25 : 05] But it just introduces people to Jesus, the savior of the world. Why not ask your neighbor if they'd like to read it with you? Or your sister?

Or your friend? Why not? Let's also think about the many who respond in faith. You might be thinking right now, well, that's all well and good.

I get that we're introducing people to Jesus. I get that, but my neighbor just won't want to. They've been going to church for years, and there's no spiritual life in them. They've had so much opportunity to respond to him.

How on earth is me telling them about Jesus going to change that? Or you might be thinking, well, I just know that my friend wouldn't want to. I invited them to that carol service last year, and they said no.

And why would I want to put myself through that embarrassment again this year, asking them? They're just going to say no again. Well, the Samaritans were about the most unlikely people you could think of who would want to come to Jesus.

[26 : 11] They were God's enemies. They knew all the religious stuff. They even had some of the scriptures, but they were his enemies. They were at war with him. And their messenger was a sinful, insecure, shameful woman with a message so simple you could hardly believe it.

We're so tempted to doubt Jesus' words, aren't we, that the harvest is ready to be reaped. We're so tempted to be skeptical and think this promise is just not going to pan out.

It's not going to happen. But what we see here helps us see the evidence of what he says. This weak messenger, her weak message, the people she preached to who really, you wouldn't think would become Christians.

The harvest is ready to be reaped. The fields are white for harvest. Jesus says that's true. And as much as we're tempted to doubt it, the fields are white for harvest.

They're ready. God is real. He is living. And he is working in the hearts of real people to turn them to him. The fields are white for harvest.

[27 : 28] People are ready to respond in faith. That's what Jesus promises us. So will you follow the Samaritan woman's footsteps and sow the seed?

who could you introduce to Jesus? Your friends? Your neighbors? Your family?

The fields are white for harvest. People are ready to respond to Jesus in faith. Will you introduce them to him?

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for the way you worked in this woman's life.

That you took her from a place of shame and redeemed her to yourself, making her a witness to your son. Please, Father, help us be more like her.

[28 : 31] give us hearts that are eager to share the news of your son. Help us in our weakness to introduce our neighbors to him. And we thank you that this work isn't in vain, because the fields are ready for harvest.

Help us to be people who sow your seed gladly. In Jesus' name. Amen.