

I invite you now, to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the Gospel of John, Chapter 4, verses 1-18, 28-30, 39-42. This can be found on page 752 in your pew Bibles. We continue the "Made for Mission" series today. Scripture reveals who is our mission.

Our Fathers Word

1 The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I 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 won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

The Word of God for the people of God

Sure, I avoided her. Most people do. I would even look away making sure I never made eye contact if she walked by. I wasn't the only one, anyone who knew her did it. Not only *that*, mean, rude or degrading comments were made at her expense all the time. I guess we were all judging her. What does she expect, isn't that what someone like her deserves? She made it all so obvious. She mostly kept to herself when she wasn't out running around on her husband. She was an outcast of our town.

Not too long ago though, because of *this* woman, something incredible happened in my life. She came into town more excited than we have ever seen her. She gathered a large crowd as she ran into the center of the town shouting for people to follow. Her boldness and sense of urgency was apparent. Obviously, there was *some* significant change in her, but *what* could it possibly be? She told us about this man we just had to meet, because she thought he might be the Christ. She insisted we followed her, as she led us to him.

Curiosity alone, or perhaps intrigue forced me to follow this woman we have avoided for so many years. Something was definitely stirring inside my heart. We finally understood her excitement once we arrived at her destination, Jacob's well. Sitting there near the well was the man so many were talking about, Jesus of Nazareth.

We knew it was Jesus because as soon as we came up to him, she yelled to us, "Okay everybody! This is Jesus! He's the man I have been telling you about. He told me everything I ever did and He has the words of eternal life." Well, by his looks, he appeared to be just an ordinary man. Then he spoke.

It was like nothing any of us had ever heard. My excitement was just like the rest of the crowds, as my throbbing heart felt like it was beating out of my chest. Jesus then healed a small boy brought to him from the crowd. He was paralyzed, and with the simple touch of Jesus' hand, the boy jumped up and walked around.

Then, an incredible thing happened to me. *I gave my life* to Jesus! My relationship with Him is the best thing that ever happened to me. It was the best decision I ever made. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think, what if she never told us. What if she didn't share her story and invite us to meet him? **PAUSE**

Welcome to week four of the Made for Mission series. Praise God for His amazing grace. Amen! Grace so amazing, that he has a purpose for all of His children. Let's recap what scripture has revealed through our series so far.

We are *all* called. No matter *who* we are, *where* we are on our journey of life, or *what* we have done, God has *called us* to live out a *purpose*, He has planned for our lives. Our mission is Jesus' mission. It's to grow in a loving relationship with God and to introduce Him to others. Jesus revealed the urgency of His mission. We must act now, it's priority number one in our lives. Following Jesus, following His will, putting Him first.

We discovered last week that *our message* is ***our personal story***, how God's grace touched your life. How God's love changed you! How God's goodness intersected your life and touched your soul. How God's gift of Jesus moved your heart! Where ***you*** have met Jesus in your struggles. Your *message* is *your life* with Jesus.

God's amazing grace has called us all into a loving relationship with Jesus, filled with grace, love, peace, joy and God's blessings.

He has given the salvation plan of Jesus Christ to people who were most certainly headed for death and eternal suffering separated from our Father in heaven. The Gospel of Jesus is *in us* as we live our life on mission with our risen King Jesus. But who do we tell?

Who is my mission? Hopefully at this point you are nodding your head, yes, follow Jesus! Your heart is over-flowing with the love of Christ, and you are excited to tell your story to whoever will listen. You are ready, willing, and following Jesus. But are you supposed to just walk up to *random people* to share with? How do we discern who God is connecting with through us? If God has placed **you specifically** into someone's life so that He may reach them through you, how do we identify that connection? We will answer those questions shortly.

There may be some of you who identify yourself as the one we are called to minister to. Your life as a Christian is still so new that this all seems a bit awkward, or even challenging to you. Just understand that Jesus' mission is as vitally important through you as anyone else. It's impossible for any of us to say we are a follower of Jesus if we ignore God's calling to love and witness to others.

Jesus doesn't need us to tell him who we are, or what we believe. (Jn 2:23-25) *Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.*

God knows our heart and our mind. Jesus knows all people and he knows what's inside them. God will use *who* He chooses, *when* He chooses, *where* He chooses to use them. He is using *you*, right *now*, here in our community of love.

Jesus reveals to us in his mission, the variety of people God can work in. Listen to the next verse, (John 3:1) *Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.*

Jesus has a conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus, a very religious man. A man from the Sanhedrin, who supposedly understood all things relating to God, or so he thought. However, Jesus corrects his thinking about the beliefs he had. The time and location of this encounter is no coincidence, it is placed here in scripture intentionally by the author John. Placed just prior to today's scripture story with the Samaritan woman at the well.

Regardless of our role or status, regardless of where we are in our walk with God, we can all struggle with issues involving our faith. The Pope, the UMC Bishop's, our district superintendent's, our pastor's, laity, all human, all imperfect. All struggle at one point or another with matters of faith, or in their personal walk with God. *All* liable to sin, *all* needing the Salvation of Christ, *all* needing to be ministered to by Jesus, through us.

Jesus departs from Nicodemus, now turning his attention to his mission with a Samaritan woman much further down on the religious scale. What is Jesus demonstrating to us here? The profound point that everyone needs Jesus. No one is off limits to God. We must not only share our story where God *has* us, but where God *sends* us.

(John 4:1-6) *Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John — although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.*

Once again, geography, where Jesus went, helps us to understand this passage and *who* is our mission. He left Judea to go to Galilee. There was a centuries-old feud between the Jews and the Samaritans. The quickest way from Judaea to Galilee was a direct route that lay through Samaria, using that route the journey could be done in three days but few Jews ever took that route. The region of Samaria was so despised by the Jewish people that they often took a very roundabout route to get into Galilee, this alternative route avoiding Samaria took twice as long.

So then, Jesus had to pass through Samaria if he wished to take the shortest route to Galilee. But we must understand, as Jesus continues on his mission to make disciples who will tell their story, he resolved to take this route *not* due to geographical considerations, but rather by the fact that there was a needy soul in Samaria He could help. A needy soul destined to be a disciple of Jesus. His mission takes him to Jacob's well. Where Jesus sits alone, to rest, and to wait for the woman he has intentionally traveled out of his way to meet.

(John 4:7-14) When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

As the Lord Jesus was sitting by the well, a woman came out from the village to draw water. Noon was a very unusual time for women to go to the well for water; it was the hottest part of the day. Sychar, where she stayed, was more than a half a mile away, and there was a well there. So it's a mystery why she would have chosen this well, at this time of day.

Perhaps its due to the fact that she was an immoral sinner, an outcast of her village, and she chose this time out of a sense of shame because she knew there would be no other women there to see her. Women, who drove her away from her village well, so she had no choice but to come here to draw her water. Of course, the Lord Jesus knew all along that she would be at the well at this time. He knew that she was a soul in need, and so, His mission was to meet her, to rescue her from her sinful life, and to make her a disciple. In this passage, we find the Master Soulwinner at work. As we move closer to the answer of our question, "Who is my mission?" it's interesting how this woman was viewed by those in this scene.

The woman must have viewed herself with guilt and shame. Coming to the well at noon, avoiding everyone for a moment of peace. Jesus however, in contrast, viewed her with His heart, not his eyes, and he knew she was worth all the effort to meet. He knew she was worth the danger of crossing social barriers. (John 4:15-18)

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.

"He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

So many sermons have been given focusing solely upon the woman's sinfulness and shame. The culture of her time was a predominantly male-centered culture. Men wielded all the power, while women were reduced to second class citizens. They were even viewed as property in many situations. Just like so many people, she carried a lot of regret from her past. Never forget that no matter how great our sin is, God's grace is greater, as we are about to see.

It was common for men to freely indulge in promiscuity, while women were held to a higher standard. Husbands could easily divorce and send away his wife with a simple certificate if he so desired it. While the obvious view that she is a charlatan could be our conclusion, it may not be the case here. Because of the predominately male-controlled culture, her story may be completely different.

Could it be that she was the victim here, and Jesus knew it? Everyone looked down upon her with an unforgiving judgmental heart, when it was *grace and love* and forgiveness she needed. The amount of bitterness and anger she harbored must have been unbearable. Being put through the ringer by multiple men she understands what it is to feel pain and loss.

Reduced to an outcast of her village, scorned by so many, she remains hopeful that things will soon change. Jesus knows us, and he knows what's going on inside our heart and mind. No one could see what Jesus saw in her, because they all looked upon her judgmentally with their eyes, not lovingly with their heart. Outcast, rejected, unloved, scorned and hated by many, and yet she keeps hope, not giving up. Then one fateful day, she meets Jesus. She gives her life to him, follows him on a life of mission, and tells others how God changed her life.

The best part of the story? She is ready, willing, and following Jesus and then what? Let's take a look.

(John 4:39-42) Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Jesus makes a disciple that is ready to share her story, what God did for her. She shares her story, and invites the town into a relationship with Jesus, and a revival takes place. For two glorious days with Jesus, two days filled with the presence of God leading Samaritans to salvation. We can never predict the impact God is going to make through us.

How could this have possibly happened? An outcast woman despised by the town, avoided by most, returns home into a town that rejected her, and she asks them to follow HER to meet Jesus. How could this have happened? It's the same as the exiled, rejected, naked crazy man with an impure spirit running around in caves, God desires a relationship with **all** of His children. God has a purpose for all of his children.

God has plans for his children that He has worked out in advance. When you follow Jesus on a life of mission, he will be there with you. Leading you, and guiding you, providing for you, and protecting you from evil. He is our greatest strength! You can do **all things** through Christ, who strengthens you!

God has made you precisely like you are, unique in your own way, chosen, set aside, for a *purpose*. He has given you your home, your church, your jobs, your friends, all that you have knowing you love Him, you love your neighbor, you share Him and all that he has done for you, with everyone you meet.

That as you share your story about how God's grace has impacted your life, how the love of Jesus and your relationship with Him has moved your heart, your witness to them could be the message that they are waiting to hear. A message about a calling to a purpose. A calling to a mission. A calling to follow Jesus.

So Who is my mission? Going back to our questions, are you supposed to just walk up to *random people* to share with? Yes! If that's what God has put on your heart. How do we discern who God is connecting with through us? No discernment necessary, God wants a relationship with everyone. Share with everyone. If God has placed **you specifically** into someone's life so that He may reach them through you, how do we identify that connection? Open your eyes and open your heart. If they are standing in front of you, they need Jesus.

Tell your family, tell your co-workers, tell your friends, tell the clerk in the checkout lane at your grocery store. You never know when someone is waiting for the message God has you there to give them, so that they will be drawn into a relationship with Him, and follow Jesus.

Our Samaritan woman shouldn't be looked upon with eyes and judged like the rest of the world would do. Charlatan, Godless. We should look upon her with our heart like our Lord Jesus does. See her like we see ourselves, sinners who need Jesus. Just like so many other people God will use you to love. The Samaritan woman was one special disciple, and one of the most surprising and dynamic leaders in the Bible.

Jesus mission of making disciples resonates through scripture. Our Lord makes it clear that we are to have the mercy, the grace, the love of God flowing from within us to **everyone** we meet, **they** are our mission.

Listen to this powerful story about a recruit who knew who his mission was, this was told by author and speaker Tony Campolo.

A young man enters into recruit training at Paris Island, with hopes of becoming a marine. Shortly after entry he became the focus of all the other recruits, because he was just a bit peculiar. He quickly became the target of ridicule and pranks for those who enjoyed bullying. There was an air of aggression, as the platoon's meanness seemed to increase daily. It seemed as though many went out of their way to humiliate him. The pranks just kept getting worse.

Then one day they plotted the ultimate prank, intending to really scare him as they took a disarmed hand grenade and tossed it in front of him pretending it would go off. Everyone was in on this prank, as they prepared for a good laugh.

"Live grenade!" Cried out as the hand grenade was thrown into the middle of the floor. Another warning was yelled, "It's a live grenade, it's a live grenade! It's about to explode!" With the grenade now laying at his feet, they fully expected the young man to hysterically run and perhaps jump out an open window nearby. Instead, the young marine fell on the grenade, hugged it to his stomach, and yelled out, "Run for your lives! Run for your lives! You'll be killed if you don't!" The other marines froze in stillness and shame. They realized that the one they had scorned was the one ready to lay down his life for them. And so it is with Jesus.

So who is your mission? Everybody! But primarily, just like our young marine recruit, with the people where God has you, right now.

LET US PRAY

Heavenly Father,

We bless you Lord, as we love you with all of our hearts, minds, and our soul.

Thank you for sending Jesus our Lord, and for your plan of salvation.

We pray father that you will give us your eyes for the lost.

Place within us mercy and love for others that will encourage us to seek them.

Let your message of salvation ring through our testimony as we share with them

how you God have a purpose for them, and a future in heaven with them.

We affirm Lord, that you can do the impossible. We pray for the release of the captives, release them from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

By your power, strengthen them to resist the temptation of the evil one,

strengthen them to stand in opposition to everything that the power of darkness is doing to prevent them from coming to salvation.

We pray as the Holy Spirit works in the lost through us, they will seek to know God,

And they will confess Christ as Savior and Lord and turn from sin.

May those we minister to *yield all* to follow Jesus and grow in Him.

AMEN