



SERMON RECAP

MAY 10, 2026

6th Sunday of Easter
Called to build relationship
John 4:16-30, 39-42

If you could ask Jesus any question, what would it be? Take a moment and think about that. I think if I was able to come face to face with Jesus, I would settle the biggest debate I could think of - at long last I would find out which football team is truly his favorite. Every year I hear players and coaches thank Jesus for giving them a win. I want to know who he's actually cheering for.

In this story of Jesus and the woman at the well she asks a great question. She tries to settle a dispute that is even deeper than our football allegiance. In all seriousness, her questions gets to the heart of a rivalry that had plagued the children of Abraham for centuries.

This conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman was scandalous for several reasons. First, it was between a woman and a man. While this is not strictly forbidden, there is a taboo element at play. Second, it was taking place in the middle of the day, an odd time for a woman to be getting water. This was usually a morning task. The story reveals that she is probably ostracized in her community. It is entirely possible that having five husbands had nothing to do with her. She might have been widowed five times, but even if she was completely faultless, there would almost certainly be a neighborhood stigma on this woman.

Finally, it was between a Jew and a Samaritan. The woman speaks to this. She is shocked that Jesus would speak to her at all. There is a long and violent dispute between Jews and Samaritans that goes back as far as the first exile, when Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BCE. The remnant that stayed in the area after this defeat - while Judea held on for another couple hundred years - adapted different priorities, customs, and practices. Samaritans and Jews had common ancestry, but over several hundred years became bitter, sometimes violent enemies. When she says, "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem," she is getting to the heart of this split.

She is asking THE question of the cultural and religious wars of the time. "Where should we worship?" The Samaritans paid no heed to the Temple in Jerusalem.



Christ and the Samaritan at the well - Sant'Apollinare Nuovo - Ravenna, ca 500 CE.

Instead, Samaritans considered Mount Gerazim their holiest site. This is where Abraham brought Isaac to be sacrificed. It was also the place Jacob found a well and found his wife Rachel. This had been a site of a Samaritan temple, but it had been destroyed about 150 years earlier by Judeans.

This whole encounter takes place in the heart of the dispute between Jews and Samaritans. It is the site of their shared ancestry and it was the source of their greatest division. And when the woman asks Jesus about it, his answer is clear. It doesn't matter any more.

She wants him to pick a winner, but he tells her that neither the Jewish Temple nor the Samaritan mountain are where to find God. Instead, she has found God in Christ and the living water he offers. The culture wars are over. Christ unites.

Then she does another remarkable thing - she becomes the first evangelist. She brings the good news to her people, and they come and see for themselves.

But what does she tell them? Why is she so convinced he is the Messiah? "He knows me!" She says. He knows everything she's ever done, and still he offers her water.

Jesus didn't turn water into wine. He didn't walk on water. He didn't restore sight. He saw her - a woman that crossed every cultural, religious, ethnic, boundary. In this scandalous meeting in the heart of the greatest dispute they knew, HE KNEW HER. That was his miracle.

In our world today people are thirsty to be known. We are isolated, afraid of each other, and lonely. There is an epidemic of loneliness and Jesus sees you. Jesus sees everything you've ever done and offers you living water. You are seen. You are known.

And in this dry and parched land, the Church has something that everyone needs - not a miraculous sign, but the chance to be seen. See each other. Know each other. Reach out to those who need to be seen and known, and we will offer the living water to a weary and thirsty world.

NEXT WEEK:

Pentecost seeing God's vision and dreaming God's dream