

August 8, 2021
La Jolla Christian Fellowship
The Jesus Challenge: Ep.1 - The Great Conversation
Pastor Jim Smith

SERMON NOTES (John 4:1-42)

Biblical principle #1 - Fulness of life - and eternal life – is not an app, membership or *religio* pattern of beliefs/observances for meriting God's favor. This "grace & truth" (John 1:14) life comes through a *relationship*: God's love – offered in the teaching, sacrifice & example of Jesus.

Biblical principle #2 – Jesus *challenges* us to deeper life with Him – fully *knowing* what that daily Olympic event means. He empathizes, tested in every way we are – yet unbroken, sinless, present (Hebrews 4:15-16, 12:1-3). As our priest, coach, example we joyfully follow. A lesson:

"Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman is a model for ministry... We discover three qualities which faithfully enable others to become bearers of eternal life: a) to listen with Hope, b) to confront with Love, c) to reveal with Faith." – Henri Nouwen (see I Corin. 13:13)

Verses 1-14 Jesus Listens With Hope. Going north from Judea to Galilee, many Jews bypassed Samaria, avoiding estranged relatives. But Jesus "had to" pass through. At a Sychar well he met a woman who, asked for water, deals identity politics: "Who do you think you are?" A "high noon" outcast, her surprise and sarcasm reveal a wounded person. *Conversation not promising.* But Jesus cares, and in **hope** uses the everyday to offer Good News: "God has a gift for you. I'm the living water delivery man." Recalling their shared ancestor-hero Jacob (Gen. 33), she's attentive: "Sir, who are you, really?" Jesus *extends the opportunity*: You can become a "spring of living water welling up to eternal life." Her choice: "Sir, I'm ready for best next steps..."

"Our surrounding culture brainwashes us... What the gospel does is to administer a sharp jolt, to shine a bright light, to kick-start the brain, and the moral sensibility, into working properly... Jesus saw straight to the heart...Give up stagnant water and come." - N.T. Wright

Verses 15-24 Jesus Confronts With Love. As with Nicodemus ("You must be born again" Jn 3:3) and the Man at the Pool ("Do you want to get well?" Jn 5:6) Jesus' word addresses the woman's core next-step realities: "Go, call your husband." This confrontation is not for his own sake, but her own. The "I have none" honesty invites Jesus' "truth shall set you free" (Jn 8:32) word of knowledge re her relational guilt, shame and fears. *Caring dialogue.* Moving from oppression to liberation, she responds to divine grace and **love**: "Sir, you're a prophet." Seeking true worship and hungry for growth, her questions start with "either-or" cultural options. Jesus is the Way.

Verses 25-42. Jesus Reveals With Faith. "You long for the Messiah? That's Me!" Addressed by Christ not as stranger but neighbor, The Woman – "fog lifting" with heart/soul/mind/strength energized – **faithfully** tells those in her town about Messiah being revealed: "You come" – and they do! Meanwhile, Jesus explains to confused disciples 1) why he's so fulfilled talking with a three-strikes "loser" (Samaritan woman with a past) and 2) why fields sown with news of God's Kingdom for all promise *fruitfulness*, drawing sowers and reapers *together* in joy. The people proclaim, via her witness: "We've heard for ourselves, and know this one really is the Savior of the world!" (v. 42) Identity: We're children of God carrying in us a gift unto eternal life. Vamos!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: 1) Past conversations vital in your spiritual growth? 2) Which of these three practices is most challenging? Why? 3) Which of Jesus' titles do you prefer as GoodNews?

SCRIPTURE READING: John 4 (selections) *On the worship folder and via Jeff on the screen*

"Jesus 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 about noon. When a Samaritan came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' His disciples had gone into town... [challenging conversation]... Jesus declared, 'A time is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth – for these are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks out. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.' The woman said, 'I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am He.' [challenging conversion]... 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?!' So they came out of the town and made their way toward him..."

CLOSING PRAYER/BLESSING/CHARGE by India Kern (adapt as Spirit-led)

"I thank God today for His word, the example of our Savior Jesus & this amazing woman and Pastor Jim's message. Now as we move from this service of worship into serving through being and sharing God's good news, if led extend your hands and receive a blessing. It's drawn from our Lord's own words in Luke's Gospel, chapter 4. 'May the Spirit of our Lord be upon you, and anoint you to share good news with the poor, freedom with those who are bound, new vision for those blinded, releasing the oppressed and offering these times the Lord's grace and favor to those whose lives you touch. Amen.'"