

Lessons from the Samaritan Well

John 4:1-4

Duane Matz

Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria.

The first word we see is "Therefore," in other words, because the Pharisees had gotten wind of Jesus' increasing popularity, He beat feet out of Judea and headed back to Galilee. So, let's talk first about God's timing. The world runs on His timetable and not our own. The Pharisees would get their hands on Jesus soon enough, but it would be on His schedule, not theirs.

These Pharisees were a jealous bunch and didn't want upstarts like John and Jesus ruining this good thing they had going with religion. And get this straight, it's not that Jesus is afraid of trouble, it's just that the time for real trouble had not yet arrived. We get a taste of their plans for Jesus soon enough in this Gospel of John. In Jn7:1 we read, *"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him."*

In 3 chapters we go from the Pharisees noting that Jesus' was gaining in popularity to "Let's kill Him!"

By the way, in this incident in John 7, I find it interesting that His unbelieving brothers urged Him to go to Judea! Listen to them beginning in Jn 7:3, *"His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. 4 "For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 For even His brothers did not believe in Him. 6 Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.*

It's not that they wanted to see Him killed, but more like they were seeking to force the issue in order for themselves to be convinced that He was the Messiah.

They had grown up with Jesus, and yes, He was extremely well-behaved (to put it mildly) but now all of a sudden, He's performing all these miracles and claiming to be the Messiah! "If You are the Messiah Jesus, show the world! Show us! Do your dog and pony show, then we will believe. It's just like those who passed by the cross as Jesus was being crucified, they all said, *"Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."* (Mr 15:32)

Listen to the answer he gave His brothers: *"My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.*

What a great response, especially as it concerns timing and salvation! Jesus had a specific time set for His purchase of salvation for mankind, it would come soon enough on the cross of Calvary "but your time, (His brothers time,) and our time too, is always ready!" The Lord could call us out of this world at any time! That's why the church shares the message of Christ. *"Repent and believe the Gospel!"* (Mr 1:15)

Today is the day of salvation! Don't dilly dally, don't be dragging your feet waiting for some supernatural proof. You have proof enough in the death and resurrection of Jesus! Repent of your sins that put Him on that cross and believe He is the Messiah and live!

Jesus said in Mt 16:4 "A wicked and adulterous generation (a pretty good description of society today) seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

And what was the sign of Jonah? God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and "cry out against it, for their wickedness had come up before Him," (Jon 1:2) If he would've carried a billboard, a sign, around Nineveh, what would've it said? It would've said, "repent or else!" My question to you and I is this, When are we going to leave mamby pamby land in the church and start talking about the sign of Jonah? Repent or else!"

2 Cor 6:2b says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Someone's time to be saved may be right now, here today! We don't know! That little placard of Jonah's saved an entire city! White are the fields! Share the news bad and good! Someone's time is always ready!

The Samaritan woman's time was ready, but even she needed to hear the bad news first. No Living Water for her until her sins were put before her by Jesus. She was an adulterer and a fornicator with five husbands and a live in boyfriend! Jesus told her: *"for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband;* (Jn 4:18)

Nothing "mamby pamby" there! Just the truth! She was a sinner in need of a Savior and Jesus flat out tells her in verse 26, *"I who speak to you am He."*

Is He speaking to you today? Hear Him! Believe Him. Receive His Living Water and wash away your sins ... or else.

Let's get back to the text and see what else we might learn. Look at verse 2. It's ALL in parenthesis! I know I've talked about this before, but we need to pay attention to parenthetical remarks found in Scripture.

Here's the thing about statements in parenthesis. They are not necessary to the text. You could read from verse 1 directly to verse 3 and nothing would be lost, but the Holy Spirit uses these remarks to pass along information He wants us to know.

In this case we are told as an aside, *"Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples."*

Okay, in verse 1 we are told that the Pharisees were noticing that Jesus was adding to His followers by baptizing, and the Holy Spirit reminds us through John that Jesus wasn't doing the actual physical act of baptizing, His disciples were doing that.

Why is this important to note? It's important because, the physical act of baptism (the application of the water and the Word) is always done by His disciples, His church, but the spiritual or supernatural work of baptism is done by Jesus. And all its benefits are bestowed on the recipient by Jesus!

So in a sense, Jesus baptizes, but He doesn't. Follow that? I hope so.

That little parenthetical remark inserted by John is the answer to the question Jesus posed in Lu 20:4 *"The baptism of John - was it from heaven or from men?"*

It's **done** by men, but it gets its clout **from** Jesus! This has been a huge bone of contention amongst Christians. Some believing that baptism is a Sacrament involving pure grace, in that all of its benefits are God's doing. Others counting baptism as an ordinance, something we do for God. God pleasing obedience on my part! That's a huge difference, one is the work of an individual decision, the other a work that we simply receive from God!

Back to the text. Verse 4 reads: *"But He needed to go through Samaria"*.

Jesus didn't head straight back to Galilee, He had a divine appointment in Samaria! Isn't it amazing that He was always at the right place at the right time?

A woman at a well at noon? "Fancy meeting you here." Um I don't think so. Jesus knew, and there He was waiting for her and their divine appointment.

One of the mind-boggling things in Scripture and in life is this matter of right time right place. We talk about it often on the air at the radio station. We play a song and someone who is going through a rough time will contact us and tell us that it was just what they needed to help them through their crisis.

Sometimes they aren't even listeners! They turn a radio on fumble around, hear a song, or a word, and it saves their very life!

Divine appointments! God-incidences!

How did Jesus know when His time was right to go to the cross?

How did the Apostle Paul know when it was time to flee a city and when it was time to be arrested?

How do we Christians today know when to hold up and when to fold up?

I have no pat answer for you in this regard. It boils down to trust. Will you trust God to act in your situation or not? A couple of Bible verses may be helpful for you in this matter of hearing from God.

First of all, practice drawing near to God! Spend time in His Word on a regular basis. If you want to hear God, you've got to get within earshot!

Jas 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Note the necessity of cleaning up your act if you want God to draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, (how you live) purify your hearts, confess your sins and receive His forgiveness! 1Jo 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Here's another helpful hint: Declutter your mind, Shut the distractions of the world out of your mind as you spend time in God's Word. Listening for the promptings of the Holy Spirit!

Isa 30:21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left.

Still another hint is to begin your day with your soul lifted up to Him, (surrendered to Him) Trusting Him to speak to you through His Word. The psalmist said in

Ps 143:8 Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, For in You do I trust; Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, For I lift up my soul to You.

Finally avail yourself to God. Be a Lurch! Remember him from the Adams family. "You rang!" When God calls you to action, respond! The mantra of all God's servants has always been, "Here I am Lord, what is it that You would have me do!

You likely won't be needed in Samaria today, but you more than likely will be needed somewhere else. Divine appointments await those who present themselves to God on a daily basis for His work.

Heed the advice of Ro 12:1 every morning! *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* Then pray "here I am Lord, what is it that You would have me do?" The keep your eyes open and your ears tuned for the opportunities that will surely come your way.

In the case of our reading today, there was a woman at a well who needed to know that divorce, adultery, and fornication are sins. A woman who needed to know that the "living water" that can wash away those sins was talking with her one on one! In short, a woman who needed to know Jesus!

This woman was a Samaritan, and a brief history of Samaria seems fitting at this point.

The Samaritans were a mix of people that ended up occupying the land which was formerly known as Israel's northern kingdom. The details are found in 2 Kings 17:24-4, let me try and sum it up for you.

Some 700 years before Christ, the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom and as was their practice, they carried off the conquered people into captivity and then resettled the land with people of their own choosing.

They new settlers were men from Babylon, and other places and they were placed in various cities of the conquered northern kingdom. These people did not fear the One true God, they didn't know Him, and we are told because of this, the Lord sent lions among them and killed some of them.

The Assyrians figured these settlers had angered the god of this "northern kingdom and they needed to do something to appease him. You see, the Assyrians had this idea of localized or geographical gods. Anyway, the king had this plan to send in a Jewish priest to teach the new inhabitants the rituals of the "God" of the land. What the Assyrians didn't understand was they were dealing with the God of every land!

The priest set up shop in Bethel and taught the people that they should fear the Lord, but that's not the way it turned out. The people ended up with a mix of religions, with a mixed bag of truth. Sound familiar?

This is the country that Jesus "needed to go through!" He had to straighten out a misguided people who had displaced the Jews of the northern kingdom. A people who knew of Jacob. (Jn 4:12) A people who claimed their Mt Gerizim as the only place to worship God (JN 4:20) and at the same time a people who believed a Messiah was coming, one who would tell them all things. (Jn 4:25)

Truth be known, all descendants of Adam and Eve, and Noah, know a Messiah is coming, it's just been buried under years of neglected generational teaching. The whole purpose of Pentecost and speaking in tongues was to demonstrate that we the church have an obligation to go into the world and speak the words of the Gospel in their language, thereby reversing the curse of Babel!

The knowledge of a Messiah is there it just needs to be revealed through the preaching of the Gospel!

It's no secret that the Jews hated the Samaritans. Most Jews would rather walk around Samaria than through it because association with a Samaritan was viewed as uncleanness. But Jesus would not walk around Samaria. He "needed to go through it!" He had a divine appointment with a Samaritan woman with very loose morals and a distorted picture of God! A woman who, once saved, would go and tell others!

Jesus was on a divine mission seeking those who would worship Him in Spirit and in truth. (Jn 4:23)

Here He was, ever the Shepherd, seeking the lost. Ever seeking to make the unclean, clean. Perhaps

He is seeking you today. He knows your uncleanness, and He has come to tell you, that your uncleanness can be washed away by living water that He brings. He desires to cleanse you and I from the inside out, washing away sins forever by His death on the cross, and promising you and I new resurrected life with Him as you trust in Him as your Lord and Savior.

Surrender to Him and know with the rest of the Samaritans, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. John 4:42 *Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."*