

THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

(A Study of the Gospel of John)

Difficult Neighbors

TEXT: John 4

INTRODUCTION: John the Baptist declared,

John 3:35–4:10 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

1 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), 3 He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 But He needed to go through Samaria.

Jesus needed to go through Samaria.

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5 So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

Would you read a portion of that truth with me?

If she knew the gift of God, ... she would have asked Him, and He would have given her living water. For He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him

In India, the streets of Mumbai filled with people who offer their sacrifices to the multitude of Hindu gods, but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water.

In West Africa, idols worshipped by the family hang at the entrance to their primitive dwelling, but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water.

Among the Huichol in the mountains of Mexico the people live in fear of witchdoctors and their wicked magic, but

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water.

In Brazil, multitudes hope their own good works are sufficient to bring them to heaven, , but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water.

In Southeast Asia, so many are lost in their idolatry because their government uses its power to prevent the sharing of the gospel, but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water.

In Baltimore, people are surrounded by historic church buildings, now converted to homes, shops, or museums, but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water.

In Washington state, the masses are seduced by the power and intellect of mankind, so they see little need for a God, but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water

And right here in our own city, at our Center of Hope, people are just as lost as any in India, Brazil, or Baltimore, but ...

If they knew the gift of God, ... they would have asked Him, and He would have given them living water. For He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

So, let me come back to that most unusual statement in our text.

But He needed to go through Samaria.

Jesus needed to go through Samaria.

Jesus did not take the customary route of Jews traveling from Judea to Galilee, and it's not because the interstate ran on the east bank of the Jordan River. It is because Jews hated Samaritans, and Samaritans hated Jews, and both parties did their best to avoid each other. So when Jews went from north to south or south to north, they went well out of their way to skirt the region of Samaria.

But, Jesus needed to go through Samaria.

I. WHY DID JESUS NEED TO GO TO SAMARIA?

- **Because the lady of the town of Sychar needed the gift of God, eternal life (living water), and the only way she could have it was by trusting in Jesus.**

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 2:36)

However, that is not the only reason Jesus went to Sychar.

- **Because the other people of Sychar needed the gift of God, eternal life (living water), and the only way she could have it was by trusting in Jesus.**

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 2:36)

There is still at least one more reason Jesus went to Sychar.

- **Because we needed Him to go.**
 - **His going to Samaria contains a message for us.**
 - **We can with certainty know this is true, because Jesus commanded His followers everywhere and for all time to go to Samaria.**

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

So, what is the message? What is the significance of Samaria for us?

The answer comes with the next question.

II. WHO WERE THE SAMARITANS?

A casual reading of the references of the New Testament tell us that Samaritans were residents of the region of Samaria just north of Judea in the general area of Palestine and were the objects of Jewish racial and religious hatred and who returned that hatred in venomous fashion.

- **The history of this fierce animosity goes back 700 years** before Jesus led His wary disciples down the road that led to Sychar.
- **When the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C., they carried its leading citizens into captivity.**
- **Forty years later, in 677 B.C., a different king ordered non-Jewish residents of the empire to move to this region.**
- **These idol worshippers obeyed their king and settled among those Jews who had not been deported, and they began to intermarry with them.**
- **Over the centuries, these people became a mix of Jewish and Assyrian ethnicity and religion.**
- **The Jews** who retained their ethnic purity and their faith when they returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, **contemptuously called their northern neighbors Samaritans.**
- **The years were filled with more than verbal insults and racial slurs.**
- **Violence, including both terrorism like murder and military action, was not infrequent between the neighboring groups.**

These were the people Jesus needed to go see.

The Samaritans needed the gift of God, eternal life (living water), and the only way she could have it was by trusting in Jesus.

And the group that was saved through faith in Jesus in Sychar did not solve the whole of the problem.

So when Jesus sent His disciples out to make disciples of all the people groups of the world, He very intentionally included Samaria.

You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

So, what is the message to us? To answer that we have to ask an uncomfortable question.

III. WHO ARE OUR SAMARITANS?

- The answer in a general sense is this.

- **Samaritans are people who live near us (relatively speaking at least) but who are culturally different from us and with whom we find it difficult to share the gospel.**
- **Who our Samaritans are is different than other Christians' Samaritans.**
For some Brazilians, Samaria is Argentina.
For some Christians who live in the south, Samaritans are blacks.
For some black believers, Samaritans are whites.

And Samaria may be different for us according to time.
One group may be our Samaritans today, but another group 20 years from now.

- But in general,
- **Samaritans are people who live near us but who are culturally different from us and with whom we find it difficult to share the gospel.**

So let me refine the question.

WHO ARE OUR SAMARITANS NOW?

The answer is going to make you uncomfortable.
The answer may anger some of you.
Those feelings, the discomfort, anger, denial, all support the validity of the answer.

So, if when I give you the answer, you feel ticked off at me or worse, would you please just bear with me for a few more moments and hear completely what I am saying. Then, when you have heard me out, if you don't agree, you take your thoughts home and take them before the Lord and compare your thoughts and mine with the Scripture, and when you are ready to show me from God's Word how I have missed it, you let me know. I will serve you a cup of coffee, and we will sit down, and I will listen to you explain to me the error of my ways.

I am only asking that you genuinely understand what I am saying and do not put words in my mouth or thoughts in my brain that are not really mine.

OK, are you ready?

**OUR SAMARITANS ARE OUR MUSLIM NEIGHBORS.
OUR SAMARITANS ARE THE MUSLIMS WHO LIVE AMONG US IN AMERICA.**

Now, you walk through this with me.

Samaritans are people who live near us but who are culturally different from us and with whom we find it difficult to share the gospel.

Samaritans are people who live near us but who are culturally different from us and with whom we find it difficult to share the gospel.

Do we have Muslims in Bay County? We have enough to have a Bay County Islamic Society.

Samaritans are people who live near us but who are culturally different from us and with whom we find it difficult to share the gospel.

Are these Muslims culturally different from you?

Samaritans are people who live near us but who are culturally different from us and with whom we find it difficult to share the gospel.

How many Muslims have you shared the gospel with? How many Muslims have you had a conversation with about spiritual things? How many Muslims have you talked to about anything except business that you were transacting, maybe with your doctor or a shop keeper?

Is there animosity, hatred even between American Christians and Muslims?

Without a doubt.

I am telling you, we feel toward Muslims living among us very much the same way the Jews felt toward their Samaritan neighbors.

- **I am not addressing the issue of immigration.** I am not suggesting that we open the flood gates and let all the Muslims in so we can reach them for Christ.
- **I am not addressing the war on ISIS or Al Qaeda.** I am not saying that the way to fight these murderous groups is with the gospel.
- **I am not addressing Islamic jihad or terrorism.** I am certainly not offering any excuse nor pleading for mercy on behalf of those who do these atrocities.

But I am telling you that when you look honestly at this text in John 4 and read that Jesus needed to go to Samaria. When you couple that with the command of our Lord to be His witness even in our Samaria, I do not know how we can fail to come to the conclusion that

The Muslims living among us need the gift of God, eternal life (living water), and the only way they can have it is by trusting in Jesus. Because, **He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**

Jesus needed to go to Samaria.
We need to go with Him.

And do you know that Jesus is, right this moment going to the Muslim population?

- Right now, there are more Muslims coming to faith in Jesus Christ than at any previous time in history.
- In Iran, 75% of the population is under 30 years of age. Many of this generation are fed up with the corruption of the Islamic clergy that is filled with greed, repression, and struggle for power. A multitude of them are turning away from Islam, and some of them are turning to Christ.
- And these poor Syrian civilians, made refugees from their own country by internal wars instigated by Islam, have hearts more open to the gospel than ever before if Christians, wherever they settle, will show them the kindness of the love of Christ.

Not all Muslims are terrorists, but

All Muslims, like every lost person, need the gift of God, eternal life (living water), and the only way they can have it is by trusting in Jesus. Because, **He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**

CONCLUSION: Do you need the gift of God, eternal life?

Do you need a church?

Do you need to respond to what the Lord is speaking to your own heart?