

Sermon followed by Service

March 26, 2023

John 4

Speechless. They were left speechless. What leaves you speechless? I'll tell you what leaves me speechless: Looking out, looking down from the top of a Colorado mountain - wow! Seeing my wife smile at me - oh, too good to be true! But then sometimes what leave me speechless is your hurt; hearing your hurt sometimes leaves me fumbling for the right words - please, forgive me. What leaves you speechless? Some days it's the wonderful; some days it's the awful and painful; and some days it's the "What? What in the world?! What am I supposed to think of this?!"

In our lesson Jesus leaves his disciples speechless. Speechless and wondering: "What? What in the world?! What am I supposed to think of this?" I wouldn't be surprised if what they saw and heard was awful to them - "This just isn't right." I hope we all see it as wonderful.

What did Jesus do? The disciples caught him talking with a girl, a woman. In those days, a proper Jewish rabbi wouldn't be seen talking alone with a woman - it wasn't right; it wasn't worth it. But there Jesus was, talking with a woman. And not just any woman, a Samaritan woman. What's the significance? You might remember from a couple weeks ago when we talked about the Good Samaritan. Jews looked at Samaritans as mixed-blood, mixed-religion people they didn't want to mix with. Centuries earlier, after the Assyrians had sent the northern ten tribes into

exile, the Assyrians brought in foreigners to keep the land from going wild. The foreigners mixed their blood with the Israelite left-overs who were left behind; they mixed their old religion with some Moses talk; they thought that sharing blood and sharing religion they should be able to relate with the Jews. But for reasons right and wrong the Jews would have none of that. For hundreds of years the Jews and Samaritans feuded and fought. It wasn't unusual for Jews to treat Samaritans like skunks. But there Jesus was, talking with a Samaritan. And it wasn't just that Jesus was talking with a woman and a Samaritan; this Samaritan woman was a living example of how not to live. Her past, her present, a mess of godlessness that would have had people looking down on her as trash. But there was Jesus, talking with her. Not just politely answering some question from her, but there was Jesus, engaging her in conversation; not just polite chit-chat, Jesus was opening himself up to her and offering her a new life - like she mattered. And the disciples were left speechless.

I haven't preached on this text for over 30 years. (I know; it's hard to believe I was preaching when I was five.) Oh, I've preached on a verse here or there, but not this whole section. Why not? When I read the lesson, I feel so "can't." When I hear people preach on this section, I hear that I'm supposed to be like Jesus. But I'm not. Jesus is able to start up this conversation with a complete stranger, and she doesn't turn her back and walk away. He's able to work God into his conversation, and when she interrupts, detours, distracts, questions, he's still able to take his conversation where he wants it to go. And - get this! - he's able to do all this when he's exhausted, too tired to go along with

his disciples into town. When I try to see myself in our lesson, doing what Jesus does, part of me steps back: “That’s just not me.”

So let’s step back. Let’s step back and instead of seeing ourselves in the role of Jesus, let’s just look at Jesus, his heart, his heart for the Samaritan woman, his heart for you and me. We go back to the first words of our lesson: “Jesus had to go through Samaria.” “It was necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria.” That’s not map-talk; it sure seems to be heart-talk. Sure, the direct route from Judah to Galilee went through Samaria, but there were ways to go around Samaria without having to go through Samaria. There’s nothing before our lesson, nothing after our lesson, that tells us why Jesus had to go through Samaria. The only “have-to” in our lesson is the “have-to,” the “need-to” urgency in Jesus’ heart to offer living water, to offer himself to that woman at the well, and the “have-to,” “need-to” urgency in Jesus’ heart to show himself as Savior to her Samaritan neighbors.

Why? They were ripe for God’s harvest. How so? We don’t hear how any of them were especially godly; in fact, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that when it came to religion, she and the Samaritans didn’t know what they were talking about, and he calls her out for her godless life shacking up like she was married. So what made them, what made her ripe for God’s harvest? She was a mess; her life was a mess. You don’t go through four husbands and shack up with a fifth guy and not be a mess. She had to be a mess. But still Jesus saw her as ripe for God’s harvest. Or maybe I should say, “She was a mess and so

Jesus saw her ripe for God's harvest." With her past, she wasn't respected; with her present, she wasn't considered good company; with her future, she didn't have a whole lot to hope for. At least not by herself, and she knew it. From the hard life she had lived, from whatever God-talk she had heard, she knew she wasn't right by God. From the hard life she had lived, from whatever God-talk she had heard, she knew she needed someone to step in for her. And so what do we see? "Jesus had to go through Samaria."

Do you ever see yourself like that woman at the well? With a past that would turn people away, if they knew? With a present that would turn people away, if they knew what goes through your mind? Do you ever see yourself like that woman at the well? Messed up - some days rejected, other days used, every day just trying to make it to the next day? Do you ever see yourself like that woman at the well? Hoping that someday someone will step in and make life right for you?

Just as Jesus had to step in for the Samaritan woman, Jesus stepped in for you. He had to. Not because he had no choice, but because in his heart he had to. He stepped in and he spoke up words of invitation: "**Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**" He stepped in and spoke up words of hope: "**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**" He stepped in and he

spoke up words of pardon and peace: “**Your sins are forgiven you.**”

Did you notice what was common to all those words of Jesus? Compassion. Compassion for the guilty. Compassion for the broken. Compassion for the crushed.

But Jesus didn't just step in and speak up. Jesus stepped in and stood speechless. This past Wednesday you time-traveled to Good Friday; you heard Jesus before Pontius Pilate, speechless. He didn't try to defend himself; he didn't try to distract Pilate; he didn't try to save himself. Why? Because Jesus didn't come just to step in and speak up. Jesus came to step in for you on the cross. He came to take your place and my place as guilty - guilty for the times we lived broken, messed up, godless lives; guilty for the times we treated the broken and needy and messed up as trash not worth our time; guilty for the ways our hearts don't match his heart. Jesus stepped in for us as guilty; he went to the cross; he was treated - by God and the worst of the world - as guilty and broken and messed up and godless.

And then he spoke up. And what did he say? Words of compassion: “**Father, forgive them.**” Compassion for his hurting mom: “**Dear woman, here is your son**”; to his disciple, “**Here is your mother.**” Compassion and promise for thief on the cross: “**Today you will be with me in paradise.**” He spoke up words of victory: “**It is finished**” - your guilt, God's judgment - finished!” And words of trust: “**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.**”

On Good Friday, we will leave quiet, speechless, forgiven, hurting and hoping for Easter. But then what? The Samaritan woman didn't leave speechless, did she? She had to - with the same "have-to" that is in Jesus' heart - she had to speak up and tell others, she had to invite others to Jesus. And those others, they didn't stay speechless; they spoke up: "We want to hear more": they spoke up: **"We know this man [Jesus] really is the Savior of the world."** And us? What is our "have-to" for the hurting? Our "have-to" for the broken? Our "have-to" for the messed up? What is the "have-to" inside us that just has to get out? The love and compassion of Jesus. For the hurting and broken in your life, God be with you to step in and speak up and share the love of Jesus! Amen.

March 25 & 26, 2023

SERVICE OF THE WORD

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are surrounded by people who are hurting and in need. Some are good at hiding their hurts and needs behind smiles; others hide their hurts and needs behind a cold exterior or a show of evil.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see the compassionate heart of our Savior Jesus - for us and for the hurting world around us. We also see our Savior's favorite way to show his compassion - through his people!

OPENING HYMN (Sat.)

"Come, Thou Almighty King"

Hymn 921

Come, thou almighty King, help us thy name to sing; help us to praise.
Father all-glorious, o'er all victorious,
come and reign over us, Ancient of Days.

Come, thou incarnate Word, gird on thy mighty sword; our prayer attend.
Come and thy people bless, and give thy Word success,
and let thy righteousness on us descend.

Come, holy Comforter, thy sacred witness bear in this glad hour!
Thou, who almighty art, now rule in ev'ry heart,
and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of pow'r.

To thee, great One in Three, eternal praises be hence evermore!
Thy sov'reign majesty may we in glory see,
and to eternity love and adore.

INVOCATION

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

+ CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**

OPENING HYMN (Sun.)

“God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It”

Hymn 679

God’s own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ!
He, because I could not pay it, gave my full redemption price.
Do I need earth’s treasures many? I have one worth more than any
that brought me salvation free, lasting to eternity!

Sin, disturb my soul no longer: I am baptized into Christ!
I have comfort even stronger: Jesus’ cleansing sacrifice.
Should a guilty conscience seize me since my baptism did release me
in a dear forgiving flood, sprinkling me with Jesus’ blood?

Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ!
Drop your ugly accusation, I am not so soon enticed.
Now that to the font I’ve traveled, all your might has come unraveled,
and, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me!

Death, you cannot end my gladness: I am baptized into Christ!
When I die, I leave all sadness to inherit paradise!
Though I lie in dust and ashes faith's assurance brightly flashes:
Baptism has the strength divine to make life immortal mine.

There is nothing worth comparing to this lifelong comfort sure!
Open-eyed my grave is staring: even there I'll sleep secure.
Though my flesh awaits its raising, still my soul continues praising:
I am baptized into Christ; I'm a child of paradise!

+ **HOLY BAPTISM** +
Beau Gillespie
Son of Kaitlin and Daniel Gillespie

p. 151

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, your Son came among us to serve and not to be served, and to give his life for the sins of the world. Lead us by his love to serve those to whom the world offers no comfort and little help. Through us give hope to the hopeless, love to the unloved, peace to the troubled, and rest to the weary; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 10:12–20

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING

Galatians 6:7–10

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

GOSPEL

John 4:4–42

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.

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 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."

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."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the 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, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

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 Messiah?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

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 Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Son of God, Eternal"

Hymn 729

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us, hallows all our human race,
you our head, who, throned in glory, for your own will ever plead:
fill us with your love and pity, heal our wrongs and help our need.

Bind us all as one together in your Church's sacred fold,
weak and healthy, poor and wealthy, sad and joyful, young and old.
Is there want or pain or sorrow? Make us all the burden share.
Are there spirits crushed and broken? Teach us, Lord, to soothe their care.

As you, Lord, have lived for others, so may we for others live.
Freely have your gifts been granted; freely may your servants give.
Yours the gold and yours the silver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
we but stewards of your bounty held in solemn trust will be.

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us hallows all our human race,
by your praying, by your willing that your people should be one,
grant, O grant our hope's fruition: here on earth your will be done.

SERMON

HYMN

"Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service"

Hymn 766

Lord, whose love in humble service bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken, offered mercy's perfect deed,
we, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose ev'ry gift that you impart.

Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom; still in grief we mourn our dead.
As, O Lord, your deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles still to save and make us whole.
As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness, dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving, your abundant life to share.

Sent from worship as your servants, forth in your dear name we go,
to the child, the youth, the aged, love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, goodwill and comfort, counsel, aid, and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom may your mercy know and live.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Brief intercessory prayers may be added at the end of the litany.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you love your whole creation and
forget none of your creatures. We bring you our supplications for all your
children, for all those we love and all those committed to your care:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

For all who have blessed us with kindness, led us with patience, and
restored and refreshed us by their sympathy and help:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

For all who have wished or done us ill, that you would turn their hearts to penitence and ours to blessing:

Lord, have mercy.

For all prisoners and captives and all who suffer from oppression, that you would lead them to know the perfect freedom of your Son's forgiveness, relieve their suffering, and move us to imitate you by assisting them with works of mercy and compassion:

Lord, have mercy.

[For... *here name the person and the cause of the petition*, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.]

For all who bear the cross of suffering, who are sick in body or in mind:

Be merciful and spare them, good Lord.

For all who are troubled by the suffering or sin of those they love:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who have experienced worldly loss, that in the midst of darkness and confusion they may find their peace in you:

We implore you to hear us, O God.

For all who are absorbed in their own grief, that they may be raised to share the sorrows of their brothers and sisters and to know and appreciate the fellowship of those who bear Christ's cross:

We implore you to hear us, O God.

For all who are suffering because of their faithfulness to conviction and duty, that in sacrifice they might find strength and joy; and that you, who see in secret, may uphold them by your grace, so they may at last come to an open reward:

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are undergoing temptations of the flesh or who imagine evil in their hearts, that you would enable them to overcome and obtain the victory through Christ:

Be merciful and spare them, good Lord.

For all who are lonely and sad in the midst of the joys of others, that they may know you as their Father, Friend, and Comforter:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the infirm, the aged, and all who are approaching death, that they may find their strength in you and obtain a blessed end:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all for whom we have forgotten to pray but who are dear to you:

Assist them according to their needs, and bring them to your heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord.

O God our Father, hear our intercessions, answer them according to your will, and make us the channels of your infinite pity and helpfulness.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“See, He Comes, the King of Glory”

Hymn 494

See, he comes, the King of glory, angels blazing round his throne,
wielding wrath to those who spurned him, bearing blessings for his own.
Do not dread that day, dear Christian! Do not fear his fearsome face,
for the judge is our dear Savior; we are guarded by his grace.

See, he comes, the King of glory, naming deeds we did for him:
feeding, clothing, sharing, caring, visiting, inviting in.
We may ask, “When did we do this—show you, Lord, such courtesy?”
He will say, “The least, the lowly— serving them was serving me.”

See, he comes the King of glory, with a kingdom to award.
We have not deserved or earned it; it’s his gift, not our reward.
All our works are but an off’ring of our gratitude and praise.
We serve not so God will save us; we serve God because we’re saved.

Till he comes, the King of glory, angels blazing round his throne,
we will turn our eyes to heaven, tune our ears to trumpet’s tone.
But we won’t neglect our neighbors needing comfort, shelter, love.
Kindnesses for friends and strangers serve our Savior-King above.

OFFERING

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Called to Love Like Jesus

**LET'S GATHER TOGETHER THIS
EASTER TO CELEBRATE OUR RISEN
SAVIOR AND HELP OUR HOMELESS
COMMUNITY.**

We are collecting the following items to put together “Care Bags” for the homeless:

- Peanut Butter
- Raisins (small individual boxes)
- Beef Stick
- Apple Sauce (small containers, spoons will be provided)
- Granola Bar or Protein Bar (any flavor)
- Protein Shake (any flavor)
- Crackers (Self-contained sleeve of crackers, like Ritz or Kellogg’s Club crackers)
- Hygiene Products (deodorant, shampoo/conditioner)
- Pass-along Bible Promise Sheet

And, join us Easter Sunday at 10 for kids crafts and super-charged fellowship food. For more information, please contact Sheryl Linnemann or Joanna Schaperow.