

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Telling the Story

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Scripture:

John 4:1-42

Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman

4 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.

³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ 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.^[a])

¹⁰ 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."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² 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?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ 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."

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband.

¹⁸ 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."

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet.

²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

²³ 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. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

The Disciples Rejoin Jesus

²⁷ 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?"

²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

³¹ Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

³³ Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

³⁴ "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true.

³⁸ 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 Samaritans Believe

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."

⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴² 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."

Transcript:

Jesus, as we turn to your word, ask that you would teach us from it. And Lord, help us to be more like you. And we pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Well, I want to say hello to those of you who are here in the room. Thank you for being here. Hello to those of you who are joining us online, great to have you. If you were here last Sunday, 139 people got baptized or reaffirmed their baptism last week.

About 40 of those people were not signed up, so they just responded spontaneously in the service. So, they got up last week not knowing they're going to be baptized, but they got baptized. And a lot of us, including me, it was very emotional and I was kind of teary, a lot of you were kind of teary, and I just want to say Bell Press, well done. In a culture that wants us to be stoic all the time, your tears were holy worship to God. So, well done. And there's a group of pastors I meet with to pray for revival for our area. And I've told them we had 139 Presbyterians get baptized mostly by immersion. If that ain't revival, then I don't know what it is. When God's frozen chosen start doing that kind of stuff then you know that Jesus is on the move. And behind every baptism is a story of Jesus at work in somebody's life. And that's the sermon series we're in, storytellers.

Because in the Bible when people have an encounter with Jesus, the first thing they do is they go and they tell the story. And that's important because when we tell the story, it makes that experience for us more real. So, the devil can't take it away and convince us it wasn't real. But the other thing that happens when we tell our stories of how Jesus has changed our life is it makes Jesus look good to people who don't know Him. And the old-fashioned word for that is evangelism, a word that has a ton of baggage, but it just means in Greek it's, a word in Greek that means, good news. So, to evangelize someone means to good news someone. But that's not how we think of it, 'cause mostly in our culture it's been done very badly, often the word evangelism, we think of angry, judgmental, pushy kinds of people.

I've told you before about the first time I met my high school girlfriend's parents and her mom asked me if I went to church and I said, "No, I'm an atheist." And I said, "I hope that doesn't bother you." And she said, "Why would it bother me? I'm not the one going to hell." So, there are better ways to do it than that. That relationship didn't work out by the way.

And I know it is hard to talk about Jesus at school or at work. I get that. I wasn't out in the Open Christian and the Stanford English department is a very hostile place for Christians. But we can do this in a loving way, in a caring way, and we can do this in a way that brings us joy. This is fun guys. Actually, when we do this right, when we talk about Jesus with others, when we do it well, it's actually fun. Because Jesus changes lives. And to get to be part of that is just, it's amazing.

What I'm going to do is I'm going to walk through a story in the Bible where Jesus has a conversation with a woman at a well, and it shows how to good news people about Jesus. And I'm going to make a bunch of points in this sermon, okay? Way more than the

Presbyterian three. I'm going to make a bunch of points. A pyrotechnic display of Homiletical brilliance is what this is going to be. So, you just asked the Holy Spirit to kind of help you remember the ones that He wants you to take home and maybe get out your phone because at the end I'll have a slide with all the points and you can take a picture of the slide if you've got your phone. In this story, Jesus is on a journey and He comes to a well and He sends His disciples into town to get food. And then, the text says, "Jesus, tired as He was from His journey sat down by the well, it was about noon." Remember that detail, "When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, will you give me a drink?"

Now, it is shocking that He is even talking to her because there was a lot of ethnic hatred between Jews and Samaritans. And on top of that, the sexism of the day meant that men weren't supposed to talk to women. But Jesus crashes through those racial and sexist barriers to have this conversation with her. And He says, "Give me a drink." And what this shows is when we talk to people about Jesus, we need to do so humbly. Approach people humbly. See, it's not just that Jesus can give her eternal life. She has something she can offer Him as well, water. And good newsing people about Jesus is never of one up, one down kind of relationship. We actually have something to give each other. Then Jesus says, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks for you asked you for a drink, you would've asked Him and he would've given you living water."

And what this shows is when we talk about Jesus with other people, we need to make sure to engage questions people are asking, not the ones they're not asking. So, Jesus has observed that this woman comes to the well by herself at noon when women usually went to the well in groups in the morning. So, immediately He knows that this woman is an outcast, otherwise she would've been with the other women. So, He's going to talk to her about the things that are bothering her.

Do we love people enough to get to know what is going on in them? What makes them sad? What makes them glad? What are their hopes? What are their disappointments? What are their joys? And engage the questions and the issues that they're asking, not the ones that they're not asking. And this is where evangelism has gone wrong so often. The street preacher down at T-Mobile Park yelling at people as they go by, "If you die tonight, would you go to heaven or hell?" Okay, nobody is asking that question. Nobody asks that question. So why do evangelists ask that question? Engage people with what they're thinking about.

We find out in just a few verses that this woman has had five husbands and now she's living with a man who's not her husband. She's not married to him, which in that culture would've, that's why she's been ostracized and shunned. So, she's been searching for something. Who knows? Love, security, belonging, who knows? Whatever it is, she's been let down over and over and over. And Jesus uses water as a metaphor for the thirst this woman has for

something in her life. And He says, I can end your desire. I can quench that thirst you have. I am what you are looking for.

He is speaking to her deepest questions, her deepest hurts, her deepest longings. Which brings me to the next point, when we talk to people about Jesus, make sure it's good news that we're bringing. If Jesus says, if you knew the gift of God, gifts are good things. Living water, I'll give you living water. That's a good thing. If evangelism is hard for you, maybe it's because the news you're bringing isn't good, but if the news you're bringing is good, evangelism becomes a lot easier. Again, evangelism is a Greek word that means to good news people. And in order to do this well, it means you need to know your why. Why do you follow Jesus? How has Jesus been good news to you? Because Jesus is good news for lots of reasons. He forgives our sins. He frees us from shame. He gives people courage and hope in difficult times. He leads us to lives of meaning and purpose as we've come part of his rescue mission. He changes us to be everything He created us to be.

There's a long list of reasons Jesus is good news. Why has he been good news to you? Because when you know that and you know what you're giving someone is good news, talking about Jesus becomes a lot easier. Know your why, your story, your stories of how Jesus has changed your life.

Now, I want you to watch in this text, I want you to watch how Jesus kind of follows this woman's lead in the conversation. He says, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks this water I give them will never thirst. The water I give them will be coming them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so I don'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, you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband." Which may mean that she's living with a man she's not married to or living with a man who is married to someone else, AKA adultery. And we don't know what happened to the other five husbands. Maybe they died, maybe they divorced her, we don't know. Whatever it is, Jesus is not going to shame her about it the way the rest of the town has been doing. He's going to meet her at her deepest point of pain, and shame, and longing, and he's going to say, "I have the answer to what you're looking for."

You're looking for something and it's let you down over and over and over again. But I know you to the bottom of your soul, including your sin, and I still love you to the top of the skies. And what Jesus is doing in this conversation is He is following the breadcrumbs of the conversation where she needs to go, the things she needs to talk about. People will often signal to us in a conversation where they need to go and what they need to talk about. And our job is to listen to them and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us, tell us what to ask, tell us what to say.

As part of my training to be a pastor, I worked as a chaplain in a hospital and we'd have conversations with patients and then we would write them up and our supervisor would read them and give us feedback. And one time I talked with a 26-year-old man who was dying of cancer. I also was 26 at the time.

And when my advisor read the writeup of that conversation, he said to me, "What's wrong between you and your dad?" And I'm like, "What? What's that got to do with anything, Mr. Non-sequitur? My dad and I are just fine. Mind your own business." And then he said, "Well, this guy who's the same age as you, that's interesting, don't you think, Scott, he's the same age as you and three times he mentioned his dad, and each time you change the subject. Every time he mentioned his dad, you change the subject. This guy is about to die unreconciled to his dad, and that's what he needs to talk about. That's where he needs to meet Jesus. So, whatever is going on between you and your dad that makes this an uncomfortable conversation for you, you need to park it at the door, stop thinking about yourself and follow him where he needs to go because that's where he needs to meet Jesus. This isn't about you, Scott." "What do you mean? It's not about me. It's always about me."

Now, my dad and I, we had a great relationship, but at the time we were working through some stuff and we got through it, but my discomfort meant that I wasn't following the breadcrumbs of where this guy needed to go and what he needed to talk about. So I went back and I asked him about his dad and he changed the subject 'cause it made him uncomfortable too, and I didn't get super pushy. I just said, "It feels like there's something there." And then he opened up and I had the privilege of bringing Jesus into that place of pain and Jesus brought healing and reconciliation. That's how it goes. There is no script for this thing. I can't give you a first, you ask this and then you ask that, and then you say this, and then you pray the prayer and close the deal. It just isn't there. We have to stop thinking about ourselves. How am I doing in this conversation? Am I doing okay? And listen carefully to the other person and to the Holy Spirit to nudge us what to say, ask, do.

Now, we need to respect people's boundaries. If they really don't want to talk about something, don't talk about it. Okay? And if they really don't want to talk about Jesus, here's a thought, don't talk about Jesus if they don't want to. But make sure it's them that doesn't want to talk about Jesus, not you, because talking about Jesus makes you uncomfortable. Just think about that for a minute. The bottom line is it's about caring for people and being in relationship with people. And this is where other cultures can help us. Other cultures that are more relationship oriented and more relationship focused, we can learn from them. New Hope and Chinese Covenant, we can learn from them, it's about caring about people. Bottom line is caring about people, loving people enough to get to know them genuinely and bring Jesus to them because it's good news and people need good news. It's about caring about others.

There's a woman in our church who became a Christian through a door-to-door evangelist. And I said, "Oh, that works in some cultures, but it doesn't usually work in our culture." And

she said, "I know, but it was just so clear that what he cared about most was me. He didn't care about a notch on His belt or having a story to tell. What he cared about most was me, and I felt cared about. And through that I felt God's love." And that's what Jesus is doing here. He's following the breadcrumbs to go where this woman needs to go, to care about her there, go call your husband 'cause isn't that what we're really talking about here? We're not really talking about water, are we? We're talking about that unquenchable thirst that you have. And he said it with no judgment in his voice. Otherwise, she would've just shut down. He cared about her. He cared about her. That's what this is about.

Then she says, "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." And what this shows is that at some point, maybe not the first conversation, maybe it's not till the 10th conversation, but at some point say the name of Jesus. Right here, Jesus points to himself, "I'm your Savior, I'm your Messiah." We need to say His name, not God. Because God in our culture can mean anything. The God who comes to us in Jesus. Because when we tell our stories, when we become storytellers, the main character of our story should always be Jesus, not us, not how great my church is, Jesus. Those are some of the ways that Jesus good news's is this woman.

Now, watch what she does. Immediately she becomes a storyteller. She goes and tells us the story. And it says, "Leaving her water jar." Which is kind of a symbol for the fact that her spiritual thirst has been quenched. "Leaving the 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." And this is amazing, because what she's doing here? She's speaking from her weakness. At the beginning of the story, she's trying to hide her shame and trying to hide her sin. And now she's willing to broadcast it to the world. Her sin, her hurts, her weakness, her brokenness become the pulpit she stands in to preach the good news about Jesus. And then the text says, "Many of the Samaritans believed in Jesus because of this woman's testimony, he told me everything I ever did."

They believed because she out argued them? They believed because she had really good theological points? No. They believed because she didn't speak from a position of I'm better than you. She didn't have that attitude. She made Jesus the main character of her story and said, "Look what he's done with my weakness. Look what he's done with my sin. Look what he's done with my brokenness. Look what he's done with my failures." And I have found that that usually does not make people feel like we're pushing something on them, when we talk from our weakness. So, get your phone. Here's where your phone comes in. There's the screen. Here are all the points I just made. So, many points in so few minutes.

Approach humbly. Engage questions people are asking. Give good news. Know your why. Follow the breadcrumbs. Say the name of Jesus. Speak from your weakness. Or, to sum it up in something more memorable, ask questions, listen, and tell stories. Because if something changes our life, it is just natural to talk about it. One of our deacons who's a member of the

New Hope community, he says, "If you had the cure to cancer, you tell people about it, right? Because if you had the cure to cancer and you didn't tell people about it, that's not loving. That's actually cruel." So, here's our action step, okay? And you might want to take a picture of this too. Because Jesus changes lives, because Jesus is good news, between now and Easter have at least two gospel conversations. A gospel conversation is when we talk about our relationship with Jesus, with someone who doesn't follow Him. And these conversations can be short, just a minute or two, or long, and they often include questions and stories and ideally name Jesus as our leader, forgiver, helper and friend.

It doesn't mean the person becomes a Christian, though they may, but that's above our pay grade, not our job to bring people to faith. That the Holy Spirit brings people to faith. Our job is just to tell our story of how Jesus has changed our lives. After all the Samaritans believe in Jesus because of this woman, Jesus tells his disciples, "Look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest." Thus, the saying, one sows and another reaps is true. In other words, it's not always the first person to talk to someone about faith that brings that person to faith. That maybe just planting a seed, it may be 20 people down the road that do that, that get the harvest.

Pastor Bill Johnson tells a story about being in Denny's and talking to some people about Jesus. And they said, "You are the fifth person in the last couple of weeks that has told us about Jesus and they became Christians." Now, was Bill Johnson's conversation important for that? Absolutely. But so were the other four conversations. Sometimes it's planting a seed, sometimes it's harvest. Here's what that looks like. Some of you have heard me tell a story about a time, not just recently, not too long ago, I took an Uber to the airport and I asked the driver three questions that got us to Jesus. I didn't manipulate the conversation to work Jesus in, it just I followed the breadcrumbs and the Holy Spirits leading, three questions got us to Jesus.

Question one, "How long have you been driving Uber?" And he told me. Question two, "Why did you start to drive Uber?" And he said that he had a lot of financial issues, really stressful financial issues, and then he went through a divorce and all of that meant that he ended up having to drive Uber to get more money. Third question, I said, "That sounds hard. How has that been for you?" And he said, "It's been the worst time of my life. I'm not religious, but I try to keep a positive attitude. I don't believe in God, but I try to stay positive. But it's been super hard."

And then, we talked about that for a while, and by that point we were at the airport and it was clear he wanted to get rid of me to get his next passenger so that he could make more money. He did not want to talk any further, so I just said, "Well, I follow Jesus and He helps me keep it positive the way you want to, and he helps me carry my burdens. So, when I get on the plane, I'm going to talk to Jesus about what you're going through. And I'm going to ask Jesus to help you with your burdens." And he said, "Right on. Right on." He didn't become a Christian, but he wasn't offended either. But maybe that's a seed that someone

else will eventually lead him to faith. That is what I mean by a gospel conversation. Okay? That's a gospel conversation.

And our prayer is that between now and Easter, collectively, we will have 1200 gospel conversations, collectively. If we all did one this week, that'd be about 2000. So, we could get it done this week and finish early and be overachievers like we are. We can do this, that Uber conversation, that's not that hard, right? That's a gospel conversation. We can do this, and you can let us know when you have had a gospel conversation by scanning this QR code or email GospelTalk@bellpress.org or through our app, and it'll take you like 30 seconds to let us know. And we're going to keep track of our progress and we're going to update you on our progress.

And this is not about a weird quota, it's not about putting pressure on you. But what we have noticed is that when we collectively put our minds to something Bell Press, we get it done. So, what gets measured gets done. So, this is a way to encourage us all to actually do this rather than hear a nice sermon about doing this, which doesn't do anybody any good unless we do it, because Jesus changes lives. Jesus changes lives. And Jesus is good news in a culture that needs good news. Recently I met a man, I'll call him Andrew, used to be an atheist, and he played saxophone in a band for fun. And one of his bandmates was a Christian and asked Andrew if he'd like to go over to his house every Friday night to rehearse and play the saxophone together.

And Andrew said, "Yeah, that sounds great." And so, they started doing that. And one time the conversation turned to faith and Andrew said, "Well, the Bible makes no sense to me and that's why I'm an atheist." And so his bandmate who was a Christian, said, "Well, would you sometimes like to read the Bible when you come over on Friday nights to rehearse? Would you also like to occasionally read the Bible and talk about it?" And Andrew said, "Yeah, sure, that'd be fine." And they didn't read the Bible every time they rehearse, but sometimes. But after a couple of months of this, Andrew said, "On Friday nights, we don't need to play the saxophone anymore. Can we just talk about the Bible?" And so, that's what they started to do. And his bandmate would tell stories of how Jesus had been good news to him in his life. And sometimes Andrew would ask questions the bandmate didn't know the answer to, but the bandmate had this amazing response when that happened. It was very creative. He said, "I don't know the answer to your question, but I'll find out." And that showed humility.

And in a world where Christians come off as a bunch of know-it-alls, your I don't know, to someone's question may be the thing that leads into Christ, okay? Just think, your ignorance and incompetence finally put to good use. It's amazing. And Andrew started thinking about the ways that he'd hurt other people through his sin and having a forgiver that sounded good. And he started thinking about how he hadn't always done the best job leading his life, and maybe Jesus would be a better leader of his life. And eventually he became a follower of Jesus. And he said, I'm so glad that I did.

He's freed me from shame. I've gone through some hard times, and he's given me hope. And he's given me courage. He's making me a better husband and father and man, he leads me to be part of helping other people, which is super rewarding for me. His bandmate good newsed Andrew, all the way to Jesus. And Jesus changed his life. And that's my story too.

Way back when I was an angry, arrogant, sin soaked, shame ridden, 20 year old atheist, I had coworkers who had the courage to show me Jesus love by how they treated me. And at the right time, they had the courage to speak His name. And because they did, Jesus changed my life. And I am forever grateful.

Last Sunday, after all those wonderful baptisms, I got a lot of people that ask me, "Are we going to do this again? Are we going to do this again?" And some people even said, "Can we do this every month?" And I said, "Well, we'll probably do it again. But that was a lot of logistical planning, so we won't be doing it every month." I want to change my answer. Yes, it would be hard to figure out how to have baptism Sunday every month, Bell Press, give us that problem, give us that problem because we have good news, so many people about Jesus, good news them all into a relationship with Jesus. And now they need to be baptized, so we have to have one every single Sunday, Bell Press give us that problem. Not because we've argued with people, not because we've forced something on someone, but because we have good newsed thousands of people in King County.

Look, the fields are ripe for harvest. People are dying for good news. Our culture is nothing but bad news. And people are dying for good news. And Jesus is nothing but good news. So, let's tell them about him and light the world on fire with his love.

Jesus, you are nothing but good news. Help us to know that in our own hearts. Help us to feel that in our own hearts and know our why. And then, Lord, help us to talk about you in winsome and winning ways that lead people into relationship with you. In your name, Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Icebreaker Question: Do you have a favorite ice cream flavor? Not an ice-cream fan, what's your favorite treat?

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well, the woman's eagerness to share with others in the village, and the parable in verses 35-38 all provide a framework for sharing good news. What stands out the most to you and might be helpful as you consider opportunities for your own gospel conversations?
- A gospel conversation involves asking questions, listening, telling stories, and pointing people to Jesus. Which part of this is hardest for you? Which comes most naturally? Where or with whom do you feel God might be prompting you to have your next gospel conversation this week?

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.