

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



When All Hope Is Gone

KEY PASSAGE: John 4:1-42

SUMMARY

Hope is a word of optimism and expectation that looks forward with anticipation to the future, yet multitudes of people have lost their hope.

Some are hopeless about specific areas such as their marriages, children, health, finances, or jobs. But for others, this emotion permeates their entire lives. They exist but have no hopes, dreams, or goals. This is not the way God intends for us to live. He created us to live with purpose, working toward goals and feeling a sense of anticipation for the future.

SERMON POINTS

The story of Jesus and a Samaritan woman is one that gives hope to those who have lost it (John 4:1-42).

When Jesus was going from Judea to Galilee, the shortest route was through Samaria. However, from a Jewish perspective, this was not the wisest or most desirable choice because there was enmity between them and the Samaritans. But Jesus was undeterred by the racial and religious animosity, and His decision to go through Samaria resulted in the transformation of a woman who had lost all hope.

Various life circumstances cause people to have a sense of hopelessness.

Sometimes this feeling is not the result of anything a person has done, but in other cases, hopelessness comes from a sinful lifestyle or unwise decisions. This was the case for the Samaritan woman.

- **First of all, she had made wrong choices.** She had been married five times and was now living with a man who was not her husband. Because of this, she had suffered much difficulty, endured rejection, and been the object of gossip in her small community. Her situation left her feeling morally dirty and emotionally empty.
- **Second, she had repeatedly failed.** She'd searched for love and was probably discouraged because none of her marriages had lasted. Her dejection may have led her to give up on marriage altogether and simply live with a man.
- **Third, she may have felt trapped.** Where could she go to escape her situation? She needed a man for survival. Despite her search for security, she remained dissatisfied. The immorality was beginning to take its toll on her life, and she probably thought no one would ever love her.
- **Finally, she was isolated from her community.** No one wanted to associate with her. Even the religious leaders didn't want anything to do with her for fear of ruining their reputations.

A personal encounter with Jesus Christ radically changes people's lives.

This is exactly what happened to the Samaritan woman one day when she came to the well to draw water. She arrived around noon, a time when no one else came, and was surprised to see a man sitting there. Even more shocking, he asked her for a drink of water. There were three problems with this situation. First of all, Jesus was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan. Second, he was a man, and she was a woman. And third, Jesus was a rabbi.

A conversation between the two of them was not

acceptable in that culture because of what others might think. According to Jewish custom, a man was not to be alone with a woman at an inn or talk to her on the street—even if she was his own wife, sister, or daughter. Furthermore, if a rabbi or teacher was seen speaking to a woman in public, his reputation would be ruined.

Yet Jesus broke all these social barriers and started a conversation with a Samaritan woman. He began by asking her for a drink. When she questioned why He was talking to her, Jesus shifted the conversation to what He could give her—living water. This made no sense to her because He had nothing with which to draw from the well. However, Jesus clarified the issue by explaining, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst” (vv. 13-14).

The woman was immediately interested in this living water. She enthusiastically asked Jesus to give it to her so she wouldn’t have to repeatedly come back to the well and haul water home. But Jesus abruptly changed the subject saying, “Go, call your husband and come here” (v. 16). When she told him she didn’t have a husband, He agreed with her and told her she’d had five and was now living with someone who was not her husband. He wasn’t being critical but was simply helping her to see where she was emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

The woman responded the way many people do today when someone talks to them about Jesus—she changed the subject. Although she perceived from Christ’s insight that He was a prophet, she started talking about the disagreement between the Jews and Samaritans regarding where to worship. After Jesus explained that one day people would worship God in spirit and truth, the woman brought up the subject of the Messiah, saying that He would declare all things to them. When Jesus claimed He was the Messiah, she immediately believed.

She began that day as a rejected and hopeless woman, but found her hope restored in Jesus because He accepted her just the way she was,

didn’t condemn her, and loved her unconditionally. She was no longer interested in well water because she had found living water. Leaving her waterpot, she went into the city, which had previously rejected her, boldly proclaiming that she had met the Messiah.

This once discouraged and ostracized woman became the city evangelist. She was now full of excitement and purpose, wanting everyone to know that Jesus had changed her life, and she would never be the same again. Through her witness many believed in Him, and they even invited Jesus to stay with them for a while.

Today people are still going to wells seeking something that will satisfy their inner thirst, only to discover that sin is like salt water: It just increases their thirst for more of the wrong things. As believers, we are called to pass the living water on to thirsty people who don’t know where to find it. Those who are living in disobedience, indulgence, and worldly pursuits don’t realize that God created them for Himself—to be His beloved children. That’s why He sent His Son Jesus to pay their sin debt in full. As followers of Christ we can lead them step by step into a relationship with Him just as Jesus did for the Samaritan woman.

RESPONSE

- What kinds of wells have you dipped into to try to satisfy your thirst? What was the outcome?
- Have you discovered the living water of salvation in Christ? If so, what are you doing to pass it on to others? How can you start a conversation that will bring someone into a relationship with Jesus?

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