



*LEARN: “Finding a New Way”

Bible Text: [John 4:4-15](#)

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We left off last Sunday with a *lesson from an old-fashioned well.

It was a reminder that with water and life, we need to not only think of ourselves, but those who come after us - those who surround us. Because at the level of our humanity and our basic human needs, and hope and dreams, we are all more alike than we are different. And that means that everyone is important in the eyes of God

Because if we Christians don't acknowledge that, and we often don't in our biases and divisions and differences, in the *powerful words of Søren Kierkegaard, *“Something else is lacking...”*¹

Today we draw a similar lesson from a completely different Gospel, and an entirely different kind of well. Much older still. *

(Open Bible) So, if you would open your *Bibles with me to the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John, about 2/3 of the way into your Bibles.

The lesson unfolds with these words from John 4:3-4: *“(Jesus) left Judea to go to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria...”*²

In actuality, no one in Jesus's day had to go through Samaria. In fact, hardly any Jew would have. There were two roads from Judea to Galilee. There was the Jericho Road that every Jew would have taken, to avoid going through Samaria, today's West Bank.

It would be like choosing to go through the *I-435 / I-35 Interchange at rush hour like I did Friday night. Crazy. Who would do that? Me.

¹ Søren Kierkegaard, as quoted in [Overhearing the Gospel](#). Copyright © 1979, Nashville: Abingdon Press.

² John 4:3-4, paraphrased by the author.

But in our text, it was *Jesus. And he always did things his own way. Always bridging differences. Always willing to talk to people others wouldn't. Always talking about his Father in heaven. And there it is.

Our text continues: ****“Jesus came to a city called Sychar ... near the ground that Jacob gave to Joseph. And Jacob’s well was there...”***³

Jacob, one of the patriarchs of Israel built an altar and dug a well there. * And the ancient city of Nablus, at the base of Mt. Gerizim, is still there. And still today, Jacob’s Well is there as well. *

But between the storied history of the patriarchs and today? Racial hatred between Jews and Samaritans happened. The current racial hatred between Israelis and Palestinians happened. The divisions of our culture and the hatred that still lives in us happened. But the West Bank is still there, * and so is Jacob’s well.

Our text says: ****“Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.”***⁴

You can still go to the St. Photina Greek Orthodox Church, and monastery. * Though she is unnamed by John, the Orthodox have given a name. * And by the altar there are steps that lead down to *Jacob’s Well. And you can still drink from that well today. *

The monastery icon * helps us picture the scene at noon. Jesus had sent his disciples for food, and the text says: ****“A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’”***⁵

Not only was it forbidden for Jews to interact with Samaritans, but gender roles were rigid. In Hebrew and Samaritan cultures, men didn't interact with unrelated women. But again, **this was Jesus.**

³ John 4:5, paraphrased by the author.

⁴ John 4:6, paraphrased by the author.

⁵ John 4:7, paraphrased by the author.

Not only that, but on *Father’s Day, when we celebrate the human family, vitally important to both cultures and ours, *John 4:16-18 tells us that this woman was divorced five times, and living with someone not her husband, breaking both Samaritan and Jewish law.

Back to verse 6, that’s why she came at *noon. Because she had to wait till last. She was unclean. And John’s Gospel in verse 9 says: ***“The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’”**⁶ She knew the score.

But this was Jesus. And he was willing to talk to her, touch her, drink from her cup! *Can you imagine how she would have felt?

Jesus talked with her! ***“If you knew who said, ‘Give me a drink’, and the Father who sent him, you would ask, and he would give you living water.”**⁷ Verse 14 makes it clear that his “living water” is more than water. ***“Those who drink of the water I give will never thirst. It will be a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”**⁸

The Samaritan woman opened her heart: ***“She said to him, ‘Give me this water, that I may never thirst...”**⁹ You never know where reaching out your hand, or offering an act of kindness might lead.

But in this case we do know. Reading on far past our text, we discover that Photina became a witness for Jesus, and verse 39:

*** “Many Samaritans from that city believed in him (Jesus) because of the woman’s testimony.”**¹⁰

You never know where reaching out a hand, or an act of kindness might lead. Jesus made a place for people others would not.

⁶ John 4:9, paraphrased by the author.

⁷ John 4:10, paraphrased by the author.

⁸ John 4:14, paraphrased by the author.

⁹ John 4:15, paraphrased by the author.

¹⁰ John 4:39, New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States.

Sometimes the **“thing that is lacking”* in us is as simple as that.

I used to say it has everything to do with how you see Jesus.

But I really think it has everything to do with how we see others.

Jesus thought so too. Matthew 25:40: * *“When you have done anything for the least of these, you have done it for me.”*¹¹ Unless we see, really see, the people around us, we haven't seen him at all.

I hope you learn to see Jesus in the people around you, and that you show him to them as well. The way things are going isn't working very well. God knows the world needs people whose hearts are willing to try a new way, a better way.

* Maybe we can learn the lesson of Jacob's Well.

I pray that you and I will be the people who do.

Let us pray.

¹¹ Matthew 25:40, paraphrased by the author.