



Evangelism Sunday – Sermon

## CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES

### Making a Connection that Counts!

Sermon

John 4:4-26

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1:5b-6).

God's Word for our consideration today on this Evangelism Sunday is our Gospel reading, recorded in John 4. Hear again these select verses: **Then a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"** <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>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.) <sup>10</sup>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."... <sup>25</sup>The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." <sup>26</sup>Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

This is God's Word and so we pray: **May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. Amen** (Psalm 67:1-2).

In the name of our Savior Jesus, dear fellow people of God connected to him by faith.

There is nothing more frustrating than a missed connection. Like a dropped cell phone call...like a dropped baton in a relay race...like a missed train. A fellow pastor told me of the time, in his student days, when he back-packed around Europe and missed more than one connecting train, preventing him from reaching his destination. Specifically, he spoke about a time when he not only missed a connection but made a wrong one. Attempting to make it to Wittenberg, Germany to see where Luther served as an Augustinian monk and a professor at Wittenberg University, he saw a train that was leaving 5 minutes earlier for "Wittenberge." He thought, "What's another 'e?' It must be the same place." An hour later, though, he realized it was not. Wittenberge is a town over 3 hours away from Wittenberg!

In the great scheme of things, whether he ever made it to Wittenberg doesn't make any difference at all. He may have been frustrated that he was so close and missed it, but it really didn't affect anyone else. But what about the connections that God wants us to make with people who don't know their Savior? Now we're talking about important connections—now we're talking about eternal connections. Perhaps we don't like to think of it this way, but a missed connection with the Savior has eternal consequences, not just a long train ride to nowhere. Today, as we consider the account of the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus will lead us to **MAKE A CONNECTION THAT COUNTS** as we connect with our lives and as we connect with our faith.

### CONNECT WITH YOUR LIFE

He did the unthinkable. He walked through Samaria—a country looked down on by true Israelites because those half Jews had intermarried with the nations that had occupied them after Israel fell to Assyria. He did the unthinkable. He spoke with a Samaritan—a person considered unclean by the Jewish mind. He did the unthinkable. He spoke with a woman with no husband in sight—an act that was taboo according to the social norms of the day. He walked through Samaria instead of taking the longer, more usual Jewish route, through the Jordan Valley to avoid Samaria. He did the unthinkable. But as our text says, “he had to.” The heart of the Savior would allow him to do nothing less. But the fact that he traveled through Samaria and spoke to a Samaritan woman is not the thing that ought to strike us as “unthinkable”.

Consider the scene. Whittle these two down to their very essences. The eternal Son of God, complete in himself, speaks to a spiritually dying woman who needed more than she knew. Perfection itself was encountering a cesspool of sin. The God who says over and over that sin cannot stand in the presence of innocence, that it eternally separates the doer from the Creator...spoke to this woman. He did the unthinkable...because he had to. Jesus had to connect to this woman or her future would remain eternally dark.

And so, Perfection asked for a drink. Though it may look like it from the outside, make no mistake—Jesus did not view her as someone that he could get something from. The truth is she could offer him nothing. Jesus viewed her as someone he could give something to—something she so desperately needed. Jesus made a connection with this Samaritan woman with his life by simply loving her enough to pass through Samaria and speak to her, though he had essentially nothing in common with her.

With whom are you friends? If you are like most, you are friends with those that you have something in common. You enjoy the same hobbies, like the same activities, think the same way. That's great. But now for a more difficult question: With whom are you friendly?

Think about the last month of your life and think about the literally hundreds of people that you have come into contact with. How many of those people have you viewed as people that you can get something from instead of people that you can give

something to? I go to the store to shop. I go to the mechanic to get my oil changed. I go to the doctor to get a check-up. I go to the gas station to get gasoline. How often do I think about the connections that I can make in my life? How often do I think about the eternal need that my neighbor has and use the God-given tasks and callings he gives me in life to make a connection with them? I am surrounded by those who need Jesus in their lives! It starts with those in my neighborhood. But I don't always look at what they need. Rather I dwell on what makes them different from me? They may look differently, they may think differently, they may believe differently—I may have nothing in common with them and they may have nothing to offer me, just like Jesus and the woman at the well—but I have something special to offer them!

Jesus has approached each one of us in the same way that he approached that Samaritan woman. We have nothing to offer the Savior and so he connected to the human race by becoming a man for us. We had separated ourselves from God with our sin and so he connected our lives with his by living perfectly in our place. Our lives were lost and hell bound, and so he gave everything on the cross for our salvation. Jesus made a connection with you and me by giving his life!

Now what? Look at everyone you meet in the same way! Don't look at people as those who can serve you—rather serve them! Connect with your life so that you can lead them to your Savior. If you are a baker—bake good bread! If you are a waitress, then provide good service. If you are a doctor—show your patients you care about them! If you are a factory worker—be the best worker, you can be. If you are a parent, then let love emanate from your every word and action! Be a friend to your neighbor by making a connection with your life! Ask them how they're doing; bring over a plate of cookies; ask if you can help with a project; go fishing with them; go to a ballgame. Whatever you do, look at them the same way that Jesus looks at you—love them, serve them.

Now I'm sure that there are some of us here that feel that we do a pretty good job of that in our lives. We can build bridges and friendships with others and connect with our lives. And that is wonderful. Yet just connecting with our lives is not the connection that counts. We need to cross the bridge. The connection that counts is the one that you make with your faith.

### **CONNECT WITH YOUR FAITH**

“Go call your husband and come back,” spoke Jesus. “I have no husband,” she replied. Suddenly this conversation about water had taken an unforeseeable turn for the Samaritan woman. Jesus didn't simply want to talk about water—that would have been a connection that didn't go near deep enough. He wanted to make a faith connection. And through that simple request, Jesus led the woman to realize that the great need was not his need for well water, but her need for living water—something *he* could only give. With five past husbands and one that she only lived with as one, suddenly her thirst was revealed.

“I know that Messiah is coming,” she dodged. “When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” In other words, “You’ll see.” And like a lightning bolt to her heart came those soul piercing words: “I who speak to you am he.” And suddenly that living water poured into her heart and quenched the deepest thirst of her soul. “He’s come to save...me. This is everything I never knew I needed!” Now that is a connection that counts!

What keeps us from making that connection with the people in our lives? We might think like Moses and offer up our excuses: “I don’t know enough; I’m not eloquent enough; they won’t listen.” Perhaps we are ashamed that some who have had their thirst exposed by the law of God criticize us as “too strict”. Whatever the reason, when we fail to connect with our faith, what impression do we give to those close enough to us to be considered friends? It must be this: “I don’t value you enough to share what’s most important to me—my faith.”

And yet, can you see your Savior speaking to you just as he spoke with that Samaritan woman at the well? With the power of a hurricane wind, with the authority of an earthquake, and with the purifying quality of a raging fire, yet all wrapped up in the gentle whisper of the gospel; your Savior has come with a word so comforting that it soothes your guilty heart and makes a connection that counts. Do you hear it?

It’s a word so powerful that death and hell lose their grip—a word that speaks of no more separation, no more condemnation, no more fear. A word that says, “It is finished” for that Samaritan woman, for the world...for you, for me. Page after page, he comes to you through the Bible and says, “I who speak to you am he.” He wishes to express with those words, “I am everything you never knew you needed!”

That is what we want to connect with! That is what we want to proclaim from the roof tops! But how can each of us do it? With your life connect to someone who doesn’t know Jesus or hasn’t heard the voice of their Savior in a while; then connect to them with your faith by bringing them with you to our worship services. *(Make mention of upcoming special worship services and events to which members are encouraged to invite the people they know who need Jesus.)* As individuals, share the comfort you have when you see what your neighbors’ spiritual needs are. Invite them to come to a Bible Class with you, invite them to come to a Bible Information Class—and come with them! Show them the voice of him who says through his word, “I who speak to you am he.” Show them your Savior by showing them your faith!

There is nothing worse than a missed connection. But by God’s grace and through his word, you have the promise that what God did for you on the cross, he also did for the whole world. You have Jesus’ promise that as he has connected himself to you through faith; he also wants to make that connection with every person in your life. God bless you as you make connections that count with your life *and* with your faith. Amen.

**“The LORD’s right hand is lifted high; the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. Amen” (Psalm 118:16-17).**