

# Happy Hour

It's a strange name for a town – Drunken. But, this is the place Christ came to get a drink. The story is found in John chapter four.

You may have heard great sermons on witnessing or the compassion of Jesus or perhaps on the acceptance of cultural differences coming from this passage of scripture but we will consider it in the light of John's stated desire to help us believe in Christ (John 20:31). And first, we need a little geographical background.

At the time, Israel was divided into three regions. In the north was Galilee; in the south was Judea and sandwiched between them was the 'defiled' land of Samaria. However, when a conservative Jew wished to pass from the north area to the south or vice versa, he would not travel through Samaria. In fact, he would cross the Jordan river and make a large detour to the east through the region of Perea. You see, the Jews and Samaritans held a lot of ill will for each other. In fact, "Samaritan" was a curse word for the Jew.

It was back in the year 722 BC that the Assyrians invaded and crushed the northern kingdom of Israel and took the ten tribes living there into foreign captivity. It was a monstrous act really. The Assyrians literally put fish hooks in their captives' mouths, stripped them naked, tied them together and dragged them back to their homeland where they were kept hostage. After this, they sent some

of their own people into Israel to colonize it. As a consequence, they intermarried with the Jews there who hadn't been taken away and 'la voila' – you have Samaritans. They were mongrels, half-breeds and thus disgusting in the eyes of the Jews. They were banned from the temple in Jerusalem and so they erected their own temple on Mt. Gerazim. Now, even though they revered the Torah – the books of Moses – they altered the stories such that Mt. Gerazim became the location of the Garden of Eden, the resting place for Noah's ark and the site where Abraham offered up Isaac. ('Rewriting scripture' a la Mormonism and other cults is not new!)

In John chapter four, Jesus was on His way north to Galilee from Judea. "He left Judea, because he was likely to be persecuted there even to the death; such was the rage of the Pharisees against him." (Matthew Henry) And the scripture says, "*But He needed to go through Samaria.*" This is wonderfully prophetic. You see, Jesus left Judea to spend time in Samaria, a gentile-ish land, and as we will see, He then afterward returned to a Jewish region. This is pictorially reminiscent of the two comings of our Lord to Israel – in the first, He was 'unwelcomed' and in the second He will be lauded and desired. And between these two He's been ministering to non-Jews in what we call the Church Age. It aligns perfectly with our study chapter here in John.

"So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph." There was a good deal of

heritage in this place named 'Drunken'. Abimelech was made king here; it was Jeroboam's royal seat; the Valley of Achor called the door of hope in Hosea 2:15 ran along by this city and to top it off, Joseph's bones were buried there. (Gen 48:22, Jos 24:32). Yes, it had a strong Jewish heritage yet the Samaritan zealots claimed 'God was through with the Jew' so to speak. Whoa! That's sounds like today's false doctrines of substitution, doesn't it?

"Now Jacob's well was there." You know, this well is still there. It's about 150 feet deep and one of the few authentic sites you can visit in Israel. However, assuming the water level was about the same as it is now, can you imagine hauling buckets or jars of water up 150 feet? That's a lot of work. If you weren't thirsty to begin with, you certainly would be.

But it wasn't always that way or so it would seem for the word used for well here means a fount or flowing spring whereas later, as it is spoken of, the term used for well means a deep cistern. It appears that Jacob's well may have changed from one that flowed like a fountain to one that was just a plain lot of work to get anything out of.

"Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour (noon). A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food." Now, as you've likely been taught, this was indeed radical. Ordinarily, a rabbi of that time would not even acknowledge his wife if he

saw her on the street. But here, Jesus began to minister to the lowest social outcast. Outcast? Yes. You see, the women typically went for water in the morning or evening but this lady was there at noon. Once you hear her story, you'll understand that she probably had few female friends.

But that's where the gospel finds 'paydirt'. The 'together elite' don't usually respond to its call. It is the sinner that can be saved if you know what I mean. Unfortunately, the church corporately spends far too much time and resource trying to impress the unimpressable.

Anyway, the dialog began as, "...the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."

"Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'"

Keeping our focus on coming to faith in Christ, let's consider this woman's heart. To begin with, she's bluntly honest and this is always the starting point on the road to salvation. Those who try to play an insincere or dishonest game of verbal dodge-ball with God find Him silent. But Jesus gave this woman a response that engaged her beautifully. When He said, "living water", the original language is water 'having vital power within itself, the power to enjoy real life – fresh, strong and powerful'. Now, that's no belly-wash!

*“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?’”*

Note that her first inclination was to think that Jesus would draw this ‘living water’ from Jacob’s well. Her question was sincere and like most all of us who believe, her initial understanding of Christ’s words was foggy at best. She challenged Him based upon her limited tradition and a supposed link to the patriarch. It is much like those today who suppose that their salvation is somehow enabled by a loose relationship they share with someone ‘religious’. This is often because they think they have to be good to go to heaven, that salvation has to be earned, and they know they’re not ‘good enough’ so riding on someone else’s coattails so to speak is the only alternative.

“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.’”

What the world offers, like Jacob’s well did originally, can come easy and initially be a temporary thirst satisfier. But over time, it takes more and more effort. It gets tougher and tougher to slake that dryness in your soul. Finally, you can wonder if it is even worth all the effort for the momentary satisfaction. In contrast, Jesus



*Living Water by Simon Dewey*

spoke of a source that billows eternally with life – a fountain that springs up or literally leaps. It’s the same descriptive word used when Peter and John saw the lame man healed outside the temple in Acts 3:8 who, after being healed, “...entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.”

“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.’” As yet, she still didn’t understand but she recognized that this was what she wanted. Salvation has never been understood. If you’re like me, there are fewer and fewer brain cells

‘upstairs’ and I’m grateful that understanding everything is not the key to eternal life. This woman only recognized that what Christ offered was WAY better than what she had.

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’”*

*“The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’”*

*“Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband,” for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.’”*

There is no other way; there is no real conversion without conviction. Salvation is not an intellectual discovery. It is the humbling confrontation with your sin before a merciful and gracious Creator. That’s why Jesus presented it to her. Now, I submit that this woman is not just an example of a sad story – someone who for whatever reason went through five or six men. Rather, she typifies us all. Now, you may think, ‘I’m not that bad!’ But, actually, you are. So am I. Even if your grandparents and parents were missionaries and you’ve worked with Billy Graham for decades, the truth is that we are all as deeply in need of salvation as the dear woman in this story. The great apostle Paul concluded, “...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners**; of whom I am **chief**.” (1 Tim 1:15)

“Notice also Jesus didn’t say, ‘You’ve had five husbands. Let’s talk about Husband #1: Sam. Then, we’ll talk about why you left George in Session 2. Come next week, and in the third session, we’ll talk about Pete. In Session 4, we’ll discuss Harry.’ No, it didn’t take Jesus five

sessions to discuss the five husbands. He didn’t delve into co-dependency, or into the woman’s past iniquities. Yes, Jesus revealed her sin — but He didn’t revel in it. Big difference. I think it is dangerous for people who mean well to start reveling in the past sin of another — talking about it, exploring it, pursuing it. Jesus does not model this for any minister of the Gospel, or for any servant of the Kingdom. He says, ‘I know you’re a sinner. You know you’re a sinner. Now, let’s go on from there.’” (Jon Courson)

*“The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’”* Her perception of Christ was changing. We commonly think of a prophet as one who predicts the future accurately but most literally a prophet is one who speaks the truth. Now, this truth wasn’t particularly secret. There were many who undoubtedly knew it but how surprising it is sometimes for us to learn that God already knows our whole story. He knows it all and yet He comes to us.

Some say that her comment here was a theological dodge of sorts like when you are sharing with someone about Christ and they say, “Well, who did Cain marry??” or. “Can God make a rock so big He can’t move it?” but I don’t agree. This woman’s interest was sincere and she, observing that Jesus had a prophet’s insight into her life posed a question that probably had really nagged her. Her experience and training led her to believe that something was amiss – she’d been

taught one thing and yet the truth was somehow elusive. Both the Jews and the Samaritans couldn't be right. This woman wanted to know the truth of the matter even if it contradicted the traditions she'd grown up with. Again, a sincere desire for the truth is fundamental to growing in faith. So many Christians never progress in their spiritual walk because they stop desiring the truth – that's because it's humbling, very humbling.

*“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’”*

Jesus said, “You don't see or perceive (and thus, know) what you worship.” And this isn't limited to the woman or the situation. Undoubtedly, Jesus is referring to the mongrel nature of the theological ‘soup’ the Samaritans believed. But, it also speaks to the whole of fallen humanity. The truth is that everyone's life is an act of worship to someone or something whether to self, Satan or the Son of God. Nevertheless, the vast majority of non-believers don't see it. At best, they are playing a dangerous game with eternal consequences. Sin has drastically contorted their perception.

This woman wanted to see, to know the truth and He was staring her right in the face. From her sincere question came a liberating answer – God is not stoically sitting in the heavens listening to some and ignoring others. Rather, He's actively seeking out those who will worship in His Spirit and with a true heart – nothing feigned, no games, no mindless religious routine. Jesus “needed” to go through Samaria as an illustration of what God is doing in this age – seeking those, like this woman, who want the truth and who will relate to Him, worship Him, literally ‘kiss the hand’ in Spirit and truth.

*“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’”*

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’”*

Ah, this was the turning point. Note, that she responded, “I know” rather than “we know”. It became personal for her. Belief in Jesus Christ is nothing if it's not personal. It is never because your parents are believers or your spouse. In her statement, you can just sense this woman's anticipation of the glorious truth being revealed to her heart. She wasn't theologically ‘savvy’ but she knew she needed a Savior. Jesus was first a “Jew”, then a “Sir”, then a “prophet”. Here, she brought up the topic of a Messiah, not Jesus.

At what point will you be satisfied with your relationship with Christ? Do you know you need a Savior? I submit that Jesus reveals Himself to us to the degree we desire to know Him.

*“And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why are You talking with her?’”*

*“The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, ‘Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’ Then they went out of the city and came to Him.”*

Ha! You know, there's a waterpot left behind every time the living water leaps forth in someone's heart. The things we once thought important, even vital to satisfying our ‘thirst’ are simply not our passion any longer. I remember when I got saved, I ran down the hallways of the dorm I lived in knocking on all the doors of my friends, incredibly eager to share with them what I'd just discovered. So this woman tasted the heavenly fount and could not wait to share the news. Nevertheless, she was humble in her approach.

A few verses later, the scripture records, *“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word.”*

*“Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.’”*

Again, the prophetic posture of this story is displayed. Jesus stayed with these non-Jews for two days and they were just wonderfully receptive. No miracles were recorded; just the power of His word was enough to bring conversion. Peter recorded that, *“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”* (2 Pet 3:8) That is, we can see this ministry lasting, in a prophetic sense, about two thousand years. Of course, we are quickly approaching that point aren't we? And it was after this period of time that Jesus returned to ‘His people’.

This also helps me understand why we've not seen during the church age as many bona fide miracles as we might think we would. Sure, God's still in the business of miracles, but in all honesty, most people have come to Christ in this age based upon hearing Him personally speak to their heart.

It was in a mongrel Samaria that Jesus was first widely recognized as the Savior of the World. In a town called Drunken, it was indeed a ‘Happy Hour’ when the Lord found there those receptive to the Heavenly Quaff. For two days they listened and received the Living Water of His Words. May we all be as sincere with the Lord as this woman by the well. May we likewise leave our waterpots behind to spread the good news. It's a joyous message, a happy hour if you would, and we haven't got much time left.