

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## Savior of the World

### John 4:39-42

**Intro:** Ch4 of John's Gospel has proved to be a treasure trove of spiritual truth. We have come to vs39 and so far, we have seen the ministry of Jesus played out in microcosm. We discovered that, unbeknownst to the disciples, the whole reason Jesus wanted to travel through Samaria was so He could meet a particular woman at a particular well and deliver a particular message to her. It was surprising to see that, after all His time in Jerusalem during Passover, as He was cleansing the temple and performing many signs, He never openly revealed His true identity to any of the Jews. Even when He held that late night conversation with Nicodemus, He never revealed Himself to him. But here in Samaria, next to an ancient well, Jesus did reveal Himself to this unnamed woman. Why her? Because Jesus reveals Himself to sinners! Not to the self-righteous, the self-confident or the self-sufficient – but to sinners.

We saw that Jesus did more than just reveal His true identity to her. He also revealed that He is the source of a kind of lifestyle that this woman had never dreamt was even possible, let alone was able to possess it for herself. She had come to the well to retrieve water and Jesus offered her living water – eternal life. It took a little time for this offer to sink in but in the meantime, Jesus also taught her something about the Father as well. That the Father is constantly seeking for individuals who will worship Him in spirit and truth. In effect; the Father is pursuing true worshippers for no other reason than that He is worthy of true worship and has made true worship possible through His Son.

Jesus also used this occasion to teach His disciples a few important lessons. First, He taught that spiritual realities must always take priority over physical realities. As physical beings, this is so foreign to our concept of life but it is a critical characteristic of a successful spiritual walk. Second, He also taught them the importance of capitalizing on every opportunity that passes by them. He taught them about the nature of true, godly ministry in that, some are called to sow and others are called to reap but they are both involved in the same great work of God and will both eventually see the eternal results of their efforts on the other side of eternity.

But of all the spiritual principles and truths contained in this chapter, the greatest is yet to come. In fact, it is found in our text today and it concludes this account of the Lord's ministry in Samaria. Let's see what the Word says to us...

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**39-** We see that there were many in the city of Sychar who believed on Jesus but what was it that prompted their faith? The woman's testimony! Because this woman willingly bore her testimony of Jesus – faith was kindled in the hearts of these Samaritans. Many came to believe. Now, it is true that the particular testimony she gave was clearly an overstatement: Jesus hadn't had the time to tell her everything she ever did; but, it was obvious that the words Jesus told her had made a profound impression on her and through her, it was being passed on to others.

This should be an encouraging lesson for all of us. You don't have to have years of Bible study and training under your belt to be an effective witness. It doesn't hurt to have these things but don't ever think they are a requirement to win souls. This woman's knowledge of Jesus was certainly limited and her testimony of Him was clearly flawed but it was effective in her community because her newfound faith had brought visible changes to her life. It's the reality of a faith that produces unconditional love that convinces the skeptic and encourages the sin-weary. It's not about how many verses you can quote or chapters you can outline but what Jesus done in your life. Can you quantify it?

This is not to say that Biblical education is unnecessary. Some sections of the church tend to bad-mouth higher Biblical studies. Of course, it's always the section that has never pursued it. "Who cares if I don't know the meaning of apocalypse? It's not like it's the end of the world or anything!" Still others tend to use education as an excuse: "I'll witness more after I've gone through this class or finished this series or... If you're not willing to witness of what you know now – you won't be too likely to witness later, even after years of training because it's not simply a matter of instruction; it's a matter of obedience (as we saw last week). We are under marching orders.

So the woman went into the town and started a revival but then things began to change...

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**40-** This is a significant change from the normal attitude of the Samaritans in relation to a Jewish presence in their land. In **vs9**, the Apostle John made a point to inform the reader that the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans and from my own extensive knowledge of human nature I can unequivocally state that I am sure the feeling was mutual. Any other time, these Samaritans would have been coming out of the city with pitchforks and torches to run the unwanted Jew from their vicinity. But that's not what's happening here. The generations old contention between Jew and Samaritan has dissolved completely. Instead of a conflict between enemies, the Samaritans make a request that reflects that of students to a teacher. The witness of the Samaritan woman turned into a host of Samaritan followers.

There new believers were in no hurry to part ways with their newfound Lord. They pressed Him to stick around for a while and Jesus agreed: He stayed for another 2 days! During this short time, His Word produced fruit in their lives...

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**41-** The result of this 2-day layover was an increase in the number of followers. Why did they believe? Just like those who initially believed because of the woman's testimony; these believed "**because of His own word.**" What's going on here? It is nothing other than the normal progression of faith. Many had heard the woman's testimony in the end they were genuinely impressed with what she said but – their faith was not fully formed. The woman can only introduce them to Jesus but faith is not saving faith as long as it hangs on the testimony of another. There must be personal knowledge of Jesus Christ if there is to be an authentic Christian experience. The woman's witness was important! Without it, her fellow-citizens would have never come to know Jesus. But, they couldn't rely on her witness alone; they must know Him for themselves! Second-hand acquaintance with Christ or hearsay belief in Him can never substitute for personal knowledge and saving faith.

In a way, the woman's testimony and Jesus' testimony were similar in that they both centered on Jesus. But, unlike the testimony of the woman, Jesus' was a first-person message. It was an autobiographical statement. Thus, the woman's testimony was always secondary to the witness of the Word Himself! This is the job description of every evangelist: we plant the seed (make the introduction) then let the Word bring conviction and ultimately:

salvation! A successful witness works so that they become entirely secondary – even unnecessary in the presence of God.

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**42-** This brings us to the great spiritual climax of this story, found in the phrase John uses to conclude this account of the woman at the well. The Samaritan's belief in Jesus, which at first had been limited and flawed, is crystallized in the expression "**Savior of the world.**" This phrase, which to us today seems logical, even normal when applied to Jesus was particularly significant in this context. You see, no one really wanted a Savior of the world in Christ's day. The Jews wanted a savior of Jerusalem. The Samaritans wanted a savior of Samaria. The Greeks wanted to save Greece; the Romans, to save Rome. But Jesus was not that kind of a savior. Jesus was and still is the Savior of the world. He came to earth for men of all races so that He might die for them and become the means of their salvation.

It's because He did this that we who are not Jews can have a Savior today.

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What does John mean when he says "world?" The Greek word is *cosmos*. It seems to be a favorite theme of John's. Out of the 185 occurrences of the word in the NT; 105 are found in John's writing. *Cosmos* (as John uses it) refers to the human race as a whole. In later chapters of the Gospel, John uses it in reference to the human race in its opposition to God while in the early chapters; it's used to describe Christ's actions toward the human race generally.

Let's take a minute and look quickly at 3 of these references

**1) John 1:9** - What does that mean? It certainly does not mean that there is a divine light or spark of divinity in every man. That's the belief of the Quakers, but it's not what this verse teaches. The "Light" refers to the historical Jesus and the point is that Jesus came and shone upon all men—from the outside, like a spotlight shining on a dark, empty house. Jesus is the **true** (genuine) **Light**, meaning there is no other. Furthermore, He is the light **for every man**.

Do you realize that it is only because of the coming of Jesus Christ that we Gentiles have any spiritual light? Before His coming, salvation was, as Jesus said, **of the Jews**. To the Jews belonged the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises (**Rom 9:4**). For centuries the true light of divine revelation was confined to

Judaism. Now, through Jesus the light of God's truth and true religion have come to us Gentiles.

**2) John 1:29** – This verse presents 2 realities: 1) Potential – that the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross was sufficient to bring forgiveness of sin to every human who ever existed. 2) Pragmatic - Jesus is only the Savior of those who believe on Him, for salvation is through faith alone. **“Without faith it is impossible to please God,”** (Heb 11:6). Yet it is also correct to say that He died in order that all might come to repentance.

Many theologians hold that on the first Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem in triumph, He was presenting Himself as King to the people of the city. . But that is not what Palm Sunday is about. No, Palm Sunday was the day that the Lamb was led into Jerusalem, the day Jesus offered Himself as our substitute. Jesus entered Jerusalem at the precise moment at which the thousands of Passover lambs were being led into the city to be taken into the thousands of Jewish homes. What better way to emphasize that He was God's Lamb? Later when He died, it was at the precise moment when the Jewish people were actually killing their lambs and feeding on them.

**3) John 3:16** - Where can sinful humans learn that God is love? Not in books on human history. Not in philosophy or in Human reasoning. Not even in the other religions of this world. It can only be found in Christianity, at the cross of Jesus Christ. How do we know that God loves us? Not because someone else tells us so. He may be wrong. Not because the universe is beautiful; the universe is also horrible at times. Even on earth we must admit that there are tidal waves and hurricanes, earthquakes and disease, just as there are gorgeous spring days and beautiful sunsets. How do we know that God loves us? Only because Jesus of Nazareth died for us! **“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Rom 5:8).

He died for us even when we were hostile toward Him. What did men do when Jesus appeared as the Light? Men rejected the Light. What did men do when He appeared as the Lamb? Men crucified the Lamb. What did men do when Jesus appeared as the great and supreme manifestation of God's love? Men hated that love and despised it.

So we ask ourselves: Can God really love a race that rejects His Light,

crucifies His Lamb, and despises His love? Everything within us says No. But the reality of the crucified Christ forces us to say yes, because He is, in fact, the Savior of just such a sinful and rebellious world.

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The Savior of the world – what an amazing statement! How did they know this? They spent 2 days with Jesus; obviously, He revealed this truth to them. They had only been converted a couple of days but they already had a missionary vision!

Do you understand that Jesus came to be your Light? If you'll let Him, He will use that light 1<sup>st</sup> to reveal the darkness of your heart and then to lead you into the light of His truth and righteousness.

Do you realize that Jesus Christ truly is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of this world and that He came to die for you? Each of us should believe these things and commit ourselves to him. 😊