

11.3.23 Evening Service

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Preacher: Reverend Iain Morrison

[0 : 00] Thank you for all those who led us in prayer, bringing us into God's presence. As we turn now to his word, we're going to look at that passage that David read for us.

An amazing passage in John's Gospel, in John chapter 4. So if you have your Bibles open, that would be helpful probably, just to kind of make sure I don't say anything wrong for a start.

But also maybe to follow the drift and the sermon. She lived over 2,000 years ago.

She's from a race that, well, probably none of us, maybe one or two, have actually met any of her descendants from that race. She lived in a region of the world, which many of us have never been to and have never seen.

She was from a city most of us had never heard of until we read it in John's Gospel. She was a Samaritan woman from a place called Syker.

[1 : 11] And yet I believe that if we understand this woman, we somehow understand ourselves and who we are. If we get a picture of her profile, socially and psychologically and spiritually, I think we see reflections of ourselves in her.

I think we have a kind of self-portrait of who we are actually ourselves, or maybe who we were, those of us who are Christians tonight.

And I think if we understand how Jesus responds to her, then we understand how Jesus responds to us. Because we've all been in that place, and maybe there are some here who are still in that place tonight.

In the Bible, we're confronted by Jesus meeting people all the time. He met all sorts of people. Last night, we looked at him talking about the tax collector that he met.

Although it is a parable, he was used to meeting tax collectors. These tax collectors that were labelled in the same vein as sinners. He met with sinners, tax collectors and sinners that he was chastised for eating with, for going into their homes.

[2 : 43] He meets with the Pharisees, with the religious people. He meets children. And it's great to see that there are children here this evening. He meets with rich people, with poor people.

He meets with all types of people. And I think there's a reason for this, because one of the reasons being, is that there is not one person who has ever lived on this earth, who can say, Jesus doesn't want to meet with me.

And here, this evening, tonight in this place, each one of us can meet with this risen Christ, that we've read about, who meets this woman at a well in Saecher.

We can meet him in the power of the Holy Spirit. And we can meet him through his word. So important to know that.

This is truth. This is God's word. This is a living word. As someone prayed, this is not just fantasy or a story.

[3 : 58] Not of something that's consigned to history that happened years and years ago. This has a bearing on us tonight, here in this place. I want to describe this woman to you, first of all.

What was she like? And there's three S's to describe her. She is separated. She wants to be alone. How do we know that? Well, we know it because the Apostle John, who records this story for us, gives us quite a number of hints in the story. First of all, she's traveled to a well to draw water at a strange time of the day.

John tells us that she went at the sixth hour. That would be high noon when the sun was at its highest. Nobody went to the well at high noon to draw water.

And certainly not at harvest time. The hottest time of the year. The hottest time of the day. The women of the town would go at sundown for obvious reasons, because it was cooler.

[5 : 10] They went about their business, about their work at that time, because it was easier on them and easier for them. They would meet together and they would tell stories. It was a communal act.

When I was thinking about this, I was thinking actually, I have memories as a child in the summers down in Miavag. When the women of the village would get all the blankets together, I presume it was the annual wash of the blankets, and they would take them to a loch up the hill and then they would peg them out to dry them in the summer sun.

And it was a time to meet, a time to chat. And so it was for these women that would have gathered the water. It was like kind of their afternoon coffee break to catch up with one another, to have a wee chat with one another.

But not for this woman. She's not part of them. She's on her own. And she goes at high noon. And it's not just when she went to the well, it's the well that she went to.

The text tells us that it was Jacob's well, a famous well outside the city of Seicher. But historians also tell us that in order to get to Jacob's well, this woman had to pass lots of other wells that would have been perfectly productive for her to use.

[6 : 39] She didn't want to be at a well with these other women because she'd been there before. She saw the looks.

She heard the murmurs. Oh, that's her. No, that's the one everyone's talking about. She had heard what they had been saying about her.

And she didn't like the feeling. And she wants to be alone. She's ostracised by the community that she's part of.

That's the first S. She's separated. Why is she separated? Well, the second S is because she felt shamed. Now, shame is different from guilt.

Guilt is a doing word. Shame is a being word. Guilt says, I have done something wrong. Shame says, there is something wrong with me.

[7 : 46] Guilt says, what I did wasn't good. Shame says, I am no good. You see, she wasn't just feeling guilty.

She was feeling shame. And how do we know that? Well, again, John gives us a hint. Because the primary characteristic of shame-based people is that they don't want to tell the truth about themselves and about their situation.

Later in our personal encounter here with Jesus, he says to her, go and call your husband.

And she doesn't want to come clean about the circumstances of her life. So she deflects. She says, I don't have any husbands. But of course, the divine eye sees right into her soul, right into her heart. And looking her in the eye, Jesus says to her, right, you've actually had five husbands. And the man you're living with now is not your husband. So here she meets a man at the well.

[9 : 00] And she doesn't want him to know the truth about who she is. And about what she's done. Because then he'll be like everybody else.

Talking about her. That's her expectation. So she covers up. She hides. And why does she do that? Because she's ashamed of her current condition. And about her past. And that drove her to be socially separated. And she wants to hide.

What a place to be in. But of course, this is the place of the human condition, isn't it? Ever since sin came into the world.

Ever since the fall of mankind. Remember Adam and Eve in the garden. After they had been tempted. We read that they felt shame in each other's presence.

[10 : 04] And they covered themselves because of their shame. And because of their shame, they tried to hide from God. They don't want God to know what they've done.

They don't want God to be involved anymore in their lives. Because they feel so much shame. And that's where this woman is. And maybe you're here tonight.

And that is where you are right now. And before you become a Christian. Maybe that is that you identify with that. Because that is where you were.

That's where I was. And that leads to the third S. That describes her spiritual condition. She is sinning.

Now we need to watch how we understand that word sinning. I think it's often misunderstood and misused. You see the word sin means missing the mark.

[11:10] Falling short of a standard. And it's a word that applies to us all. We can't afford to point fingers. Because God's word says we have all sinned.

We have all fallen short of the glory of God. You see this woman had fallen short of her own personal standard.

You see the power of sin within her made her do that. That's why she's feeling guilt. That's why she's feeling shame. She's not even being the person that she herself would want to be.

The power of sin is at work in her. And we've all been there. Paul talks about the good that he would want to do. But he can't do because of sin within him.

She had fallen short of her own personal standard. She had clearly fallen short of her cultural standard. That's why her community had shunned her. She was living a lifestyle that they reckon was wrong.

[12:16] Didn't meet their standards. She had fallen short of her religious standards. This woman had no place in the temple or in the synagogue.

She was banned. She was barred. There was no place for her where publicly she could go and join with others. And worship God. And stand before God. And get to know God.

And of course she had fallen short of God's standards. And she knew it. And when we fall short of God's standards.

We know it too don't we. God's convicting spirit within us. Oh we can't point the finger at this woman. And it's that falling shortness that led to her shame.

I'm bad. And her shame led her to be socially separated. I just want to be alone. I want to basically kind of pull myself out of this world.

[13:22] And be on my own. And picture that circle. As it spins around her day after day after day.

Sin leading to shame. And shame leading to separation. And then we're separated. And we're isolated.

Even from God himself. It's a horrible vicious circle. And you know there's a world out there. That is the message they present.

They say to us. You're too bad for God. You're too bad. Even for God. It's a horrible trap.

But it's the universal predicament. Of humanity. We run away from God. Because of our shame.

And our guilt. And our sin. Instead of running towards him.

[14:19] And you know sometimes the church has been guilty. Of causing that to happen to people. Because we've judged people. And said these people. Will never be part of God's kingdom.

Because of the kind of people they are. And we drive them further and further away. From the means of grace. And from God. Because at some point in this sin.

Shame. Separation cycle. Every one of us asks. What would God do with someone like me? If God really knew the truth.

About me. If he really knew about the sin. That has led to my shame. That has led to my separation. What would he say? And those are the questions.

That lay at the heart. Of this personal encounter. That this Samaritan woman has with Jesus. And it's at the heart. Of the personal encounter. Jesus wants to have.

[15:18] With each one of us here. Today. We know how Satan. Wants to answer that question. Don't we? Satan wants us.

To answer that question. By saying. Jesus won't have you. Jesus has turned you away. How can you go to Jesus? But if we look at the texts.

We'll see how Jesus responds. And the first thing Jesus does. For people trapped in this cycle. Is. He comes looking for us. We don't even have to go looking for him.

As I mentioned. From cover to cover. The Bible reveals a God. Who goes out of his way. To find people. To meet people. Even people like this woman. That we meet here.

Again. How do we know this? Well. In verse 4. We're told that Jesus. Had to go through. Samaria. Well. Geographically. He didn't.

[16:20] Going. Through Samaria. For him. Was a bit like. You're going to Stornoway. And going. Via Carlaway. It would have been. It would have been a lot easier.

Just to go straight to Stornoway. This is. A meeting here. By divine appointment. It's Jesus who causes this meeting. He knows that she's here.

And he wants to meet with her. And that's why he has to go through. Samaria. Because he wants to meet with this. Sinful. Shameful. Separated woman.

He's got to find her. And what does Jesus do with sinful. Shameful. Separated people. He comes looking for us. He goes out of his way.

To find us. And that's a story of the Bible. From cover to cover. In the very beginning. In eternity past. Jesus and.

[17:15] God the Father. They had this plan. That mankind had to be redeemed. That a saviour had to be found. And that plan was set in place.

That Jesus would come. And leave heaven. And come to find us. Here on this earth. He didn't have to. But he chose to. And praise God for that.

Amen. That's exactly why. We should read God's word. Because as we engage with God's word.

God is speaking to us. And God is saying to us. I want to find you. I want to find you. I'm looking for you. I'm calling out for you.

And I'm sure there are many folk here tonight. Who are Christians. And if you think of your testimony. Where was the first place you met Jesus. Did you meet Jesus.

[18:14] Because you were looking for him. Or did Jesus come to where you were. And it might have been quite a strange place. Where it happened. And it's not necessarily in a church building.

If you read the stories of the Lewis revival. The places where Jesus met people. On the roadside. At dances. Coming home from dances.

Milking the cows. Jesus is out looking for people. He wants to meet with us. And what does Jesus say to us.

When he finds us. He says. I know you. When Jesus comes to us.

He lets us know. That he knows us. Inside out. He knows the truth about us. He knows about this woman. He knows about her life.

[19:18] He doesn't need to ask the questions. But he does. Just to kind of engage with her. And build that relationship with her. And what does Jesus say to us. When he finds us.

It's in effect what he says to this woman. I still love you. Despite your baggage. Despite everything in your life. Isn't that absolutely amazing.

I still love you. And what does Jesus do. When he finds her. In the midst of this private conversation.

Jesus zeroes in on this woman's sin. That has led to her shame. That has led to her separation. And he deals with the issue.

He says. Go call your husband. In verse 16. And oh. You can almost feel her. Her stomach tighten. Oh. Speak to me about anything else. Not this.

[20:26] And she puts the wall up again. I don't have a husband. And Jesus says to her. And I believe with. With great compassion. You are right.

You don't have a husband. You've had five husbands. And the man that you're living with now. Is. Not your husband. Jesus I believe is saying to her.

I know you. I know all about you. I know all about your life. Your life is like an open book. Before me. You don't need to hide anymore. You can come out to the open with me.

I know what you've been looking for. I know that what you've been searching for. I'm aware of the emptiness. That's in your life. I'm aware that you're looking for intimacy. Someone to know you.

Someone to love you. Someone to care for you. Someone who's willing to commit. themselves to you. For the long haul. I know that.

[21:27] Come out of hiding. Because you don't need to hide. From me. And Jesus comes looking for her. And when he finds her.

He speaks the truth to her. Her condition. Her sin. Is exposed. It's brought out. Into the light. And we need that.

Don't we. In order to break. This vicious cycle. Someone has to know. The truth about us. Isn't that true. Because confessing sin.

Is the pathway. To forgiveness. And to salvation. That's how the gospel works. We don't hide from God. We come to God.

And we confess. And there's nothing. We want to say. There's nothing. We want to confess. That he doesn't. Know already. And when he. When we confess. He accepts us.

[22:27] He offers forgiveness. He offers us. His salvation. Jesus comes to us. And says. I already know the truth. There is no secret sin.

No secret thought. No secret intention. Of the heart. That I've missed. I know it all. I've come looking for you. So you can stop running away. You can stop pretending. You can stop hiding. You can now admit the truth. To me. Because it's the only way. That you're going to be set free from it. And part of the problem for us. Is that. For some people like this woman. We don't really know what God is like. Maybe just the way we've been brought up. It's. What we've been taught in the past falsely. That God will despise us. That God will close the door on us. Maybe it's just what we. We think of ourselves. [23 : 26] We think we're. We're such rubbish that. Why should he. Why should just want me. Forring me.

They come to Jesus. We will be amazed. We will be totally surprised. There's no need to be unsure. Of his love. No need to be unsure.

Of his mercy. And his grace. if we turn to him the bible makes it clear that god doesn't treat us as our sins deserve and the way he proves that to us is he points us to the cross and he says to us on the cross i gave my life for you i died for all the things you have done wrong and all the things you will do wrong god's amazing grace in christ is what sets us free god's amazing grace in christ is what we need to respond to and believe and trust in so we need to hear this third response from jesus to sinful shame-filled separate people jesus stays to this woman and he says to us i want to give you a gift if you knew the gift that i want to give you you will have water that will well up to eternal life i want to give you he says to this woman what you've been searching for for so long and you haven't found i want to give you myself i want to be your savior i want to be your lord if you knew the gift of god and who it is that asked you for a drink you would have asked him and he would have given you living water and then he says in verse 13 everyone everyone and that's such an important word everyone everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks of the water i give him will never thirst indeed the water i give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life in other words what he's saying here is without me you will be miserable for time and for eternity everybody who drinks this water will thirst again but not when you drink the water i give you it lasts not just for time but for all eternity it welling up to eternal life and then at the end of the conversation in verse 26 there's a confession here on her part on his part he's saying to her effectively i am the one you're looking for i am the messiah i'm the one you're looking for i'm the one who can forgive you your sins i'm the one who can set you free i'm the one that you're searching for in all sorts of places i'm the one who's going to die for you i'm the one who's going to give myself to you i'm the one who's going to prove my love for you i'm the one who's going to take all that rubbish in your life and i'm going to nail it to a cross for you i want to give you life life in all its fullness i want to give you living water and that is what jesus wants to give us tonight that is who he is whatever our situation that is what he wants to give us we we sang last night a one of the hymns glorious things of the unspoken written by by um john newton who who also wrote amazing grace and the the hymn concludes with these words solid joys and lasting treasure none but science children know and that's what this jesus is offering this woman solid joys not the rubbish that she was used to in her life solid joys lasting treasures not momentary relationships that we're failing but the only people that can go and know these are people who become science children who who drink that living water that is what he offers he wants to give us forgiveness for for all our sins that cause the shame that cause our separation he wants to give us a a a new beginning a fresh start a chance to start again with a clean slate bible says that when we when we accept christ we become new creations in christ the the old is gone the the new has come and that's what this woman woman experiences here with this encounter with jesus a restored relationship with god now made by god for god a freedom and a freedom and a power to change her life to to break that cycle to start living differently and of course an assurance that she'll spend all eternity because of this living water she'll spend all this all eternity gazing on christ's love for her and that's what we're going to be doing tomorrow morning is it not those of us who come and sit at the lord's table we're going to be gazing in time at god's love for us in christ what he's done for us that pit that he's taken us from and set our feet on that rock that's what we'll be looking at that's what we'll be gazing at we'll be doing it in time but it points to something else doesn't it it's not just for tomorrow it's not just for time it's for for all eternity because we remember the lord's death we remember what he's done for us tomorrow but we keep remembering until he comes again that's what we're commanded to do and when he comes again

then we will we will be with him and we will serve him for all eternity we will know him as he really is in all his splendor and all his glory and we'll meet this samaritan woman she'll be there with us and she'll no longer be ashamed of her life she'll no longer be separated what an amazing promise that we have in god's word what an amazing salvation we have and what does this woman do with her new life well we're told in verse 28 then leaving her water jar the woman went back to the town and said to the people come see a man who told me everything

I ever did now when we when we read these descriptions of events in the bible of course there are places of what actually happened we don't have the full text but she went and she witnessed to her people she was no longer ashamed of who she was because she was a new person in Christ and she told other people about this Jesus this amazing Jesus and I'm sure she was saying to them you come on you've got to meet him as well he's amazing he's incredible you'll never believe what happened to me when I met him he's changed my life and in verse 39 at the end of the chapter many of the Samaritans from the town believed in him because of her testimony because of her testimony again what a challenge here for each one of us who has come to know Christ to be sharing our testimony to be sharing what God has done in our lives what Jesus has done for us again we're back to the great commission and the command to go to go and tell to go and share if this was a film and I'm going to close with this if this was a film and if there's a film of this woman's life and the transformation of her life the way I would envisage the film finishing would be the camera would kind of pan out and then it would focus in on these water jars that she left behind her verse 28 then leaving her water jars the woman went back to the town what do the water jars represent?

[33 : 21] all these days of toil and shame and separation as she left the town to gather the water having to come back day after day after day because that kind of was represented her life didn't it?

she would come she would labour she would take the water she would drink that water she'd have to be back the next day she no longer needs the water jars because Jesus has said to her I will give you living water water that will well up every moment of the day I will give you that and that will well up right through to eternal life have you drank at that stream yet?

have you had that living water well up in you? have you have you come to Jesus? maybe with your shame maybe a sense of sin and and separation but be encouraged by this woman that's not the place where God wants you to be or where God wants you to stay he wants you to know him in Christ and he wants you to have this living water and he wants you to be there tomorrow morning in celebration not of what you've done or what you bring to the Lord's table we bring our sin and our shame but we come before our God we come before our risen Christ and we know that in him all that is past all that is gone all that is forgotten all that is forgiven we are set free in Christ and we can come with confidence with boldness with humility and with love as we come to profess him and be a witness be a testimony to everybody else who's here maybe it wasn't that well we met him but we met him and he changed our lives not just for time but for all eternity let's pray

Lord our God we thank you for your word we do thank you that it is your word and it is a living word we thank you for what you did in the life of of this woman and Father we thank you for the way that she bore testimony to you and to your greatness and Father we thank you for what you have laid upon our hearts tonight Father that that we can know you and we can know you as friend we can know you as Lord we can know you as saviour we can know you as the one who offers forgiveness and cleansing and new life Lord we bless you because of all that you've done for us in Jesus we thank you for your great love your great mercy Lord bless us we pray Amen our closing hymn is How Deep the Father's Love for Us How Deep the Father's Love for Us

How vast beyond all measure that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure How great the pain of searing loss the Father turns his face away as wounds which mar the chosen one bring many sons to glory Behold the man upon a cross my sin upon his shoulders ashamed I hear my mocking voice caught out among the scoffers it was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished his dying breath has drawn me life

[38 : 27] I know that it is fair I will not boast in anything no gifts no power no wisdom but I would boast in Jesus Christ his death and resurrection why should I gain from his reward I cannot give an answer but this I know with all my heart his wounds up in my ransom go in peace and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with us all and with all those who we love now and forevermore

Amen