

**“Jesus Loving an Unloved Person”** (Series #8)

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, for New Horizon URC, first service.

Bible text: John 4: 1-26

**Introduction: In John chapter 4**, we find Jesus reaching out, going beyond his own Jewish people. Jesus was **GOING to the world**. Bible scholars (学者) tell us this: that before Jesus, no Jewish rabbi (拉比) taught that God loved the people of the world. The rabbis taught that God only loved the Jews. They taught that God did not love the Gentile peoples (外邦人) of the world.

[Read John 3:16. The meaning is this: in some sense, God the Father, as Creator, **loved and still loves** the people He has made. I say in “some sense.” Because the Bible also teaches that God’s wrath (忿怒) falls on all the people of the world. Because of their sin. Yet, in some sense, God still loves the people of the world.

Think of it this way: God cares for the animals of the world. Why? Because he created them. So, too, for people. God created all the people of the world. Everyone is created in God’s image. So in that sense, God still cares for all people. Theologian (神学家) John Calvin says the same thing. Read his commentary (释经) on John 3:16, and other places. In some sense, God has a general care and compassion for all people.

-The gospel-writer John explains how Jesus was violating a Jewish tradition. [Read John 4:9, the last sentence. John explains the situation. That in his day “Jews did not associate with Samaritans (撒玛利亚人).” Even today, orthodox (正统的) Jews will not associate with Palestinians (巴勒斯坦人). Or any Arabs (阿拉伯人).

Here’s how extreme it was in Jesus’ day. Imagine that you wanted to travel from the southern region in Israel, up to the north. As a Jew, you would go a long ways around the middle part of Israel. You see, the region of Samaria is right in the middle, between the southern and northern regions. If you walked directly through Samaria, in the middle, you could save yourself at least two days of travel. But the Jews would always take the long route. They refused to travel through Samaria.

The Samaritans, as you might know, were half-breeds (混血的), part of Jewish blood, and part Assyrian blood. The Assyrian empire, back in 721 BC conquered the ten northern tribes. They deported many Jews from that area...and brought in many of their own Assyrian people, from various backgrounds. Over the centuries the people intermarried and intermixed. So the Samaritans were regarded as Gentiles. They were despised (被鄙视) by the Jews. And they were avoided.

So here in John 4, Jesus is committing a **triple sin**:

1) he’s traveling through Samaria, not going around it; 2) he’s stopping and actually talking to a Samaritan, 3) this Samaritan is a woman. A woman! Any respectable Jewish man would never talk to a woman; especially a woman not accompanied by a man. We read in vs. 27, that when the disciples (门徒) returned, they “marveled.” They “were **surprised**,” shocked, even. They were shocked that Jesus was talking to a woman. And a **Samaritan** woman!

-But, why? Why is Jesus meeting with her? John words it in a strange way. [Read vs. 4.

Another translation puts it this way: “...Jesus, **had to go** through Samaria.” He had to? No, not physically. There were good roads that completely bypassed Samaria. So Jesus didn’t “have to” go through Samaria out of necessity. But, it seems that John is saying this:

Jesus “had to go through” Samaria because of His love. Because of His Father’s love **for all the world**. And Jesus had to show the Father’s love to this woman.

And Jesus *had* to teach his disciples this truth. As Jews, the disciples would struggle with this issue. In fact, even after Jesus ascended (升天) back to heaven, they still struggled.

Does God love the Gentiles? Must we love the Gentiles?

So, Jesus had to go through Samaria, *also* to teach his disciples.

*Appl:* Question: Have you been taught this by Jesus? Do you know that in some sense Jesus loves the people in your neighbourhood?

So let me ask: Do you care about people, unbelieving, non-Christian people?

You see, if we are going to reach out to people, we must start as Jesus did. How?

By first **GOING TO THEM**. Out of his love for them.

**2. Then, a second thing**, Jesus **SEES this woman**. He SEES her.

As he is traveling through Samaria, he's not keeping his eyes fixed upon the road. And when he needs a drink, he doesn't quickly gulp down some water. Instead, Jesus actually takes some extra time. He actually sits there a while. And he focuses on this one woman.

Now, of course, Jesus is the Son of God. He is divine. Therefore, he knows all things. So Jesus knows exactly what is going on in this woman's life. / When we care about people and see them as individuals (个体), we cannot be exactly like Jesus. Because we will not know everything about them. For us, it's going to take time. To get to know people. It might take us even a year, or longer, before they tell us more about themselves.

But here's a lesson we should learn: we don't just mingle with people aimlessly (无目的地).

Oh, I suppose sometimes we do. That's alright. At the grocery store. In the shopping mall.

But as the Lord puts someone in our pathway, we should **focus** on that person.

*Appl:* A while back, I looked at membership statistics (统计) of the various Reformed churches in the city limits of Toronto. The established churches of mostly Dutch Reformed background.

Ten established churches. Amazingly, I found that every one of those churches has been **declining in membership**. Over the past 20/30 years. Two of these churches have already closed. The other eight are declining. Some have declined by 50%, over the past 30 years. There are many reasons for this. But I am convinced of one reason: most established churches are not really caring about their neighbours. Or, when someone comes to visit, church members are not seeing them. Not truly "seeing" them.

I am convinced that our Reformed churches have to become more caring, more seeing, and more intentional (留意的). And not just the churches of Dutch background.

All our churches must become more caring, more "seeing" people. Including New Horizon.

-Let me ask: how intentional are you, to meet someone new, at church? Before the service?

Between the services, downstairs? After the services? I know it is not easy, sometimes.

Especially for you who maybe are shy. Or you don't know what to say. But you don't have to say much. Just put a smile on your face. And shake the hand of that visitor.

Tell them your name. And tell them you are glad they are here at church today.

And that's for all of life. **GO** to people. **LOVE** people. **SEE** people. **REALLY FOCUS** on people. /

**3. So Jesus** sees that one woman. [Read vs. 7. What does Jesus do? Very simply Jesus talks to her. He starts a conversation. He **ASKS HER a question**. [Our translation, it's a command. "Give me some water to drink."

*Illus:* Two years ago a visiting pastor preached in the church I was serving. We asked him to preach about reaching out to unbelievers. He gave an example: woman at a gas station. +

So, let me ask: are you willing to do something like that? If you have eyes to really see people, ears to really hear them, you will have opportunity to say something. Something to get them to think more deeply.

This past week, I was at a cash register (收银处) in a store. The woman told me the price of the products. I held out some coins from my pocket. I asked: will any of this change help you? And she replied: "Oh, don't we all need help?" [Repeat. What an opening! What an opportunity for me to say something about God. And I did. But I wish I had said more. Following the pattern of Jesus, we should be willing to **SAY SOMETHING**.

Even to **ASK PEOPLE** certain questions. That they will be challenged to think about life.

**4. Now, John is not** giving us a 5-step program for reaching out. That's not his purpose.

So don't take the 5 points in my sermon outline as "5 easy steps."

John is always pointing us to Jesus, as the true Son of God. That we must trust in Him. [Read verse 19. Here's something else we learn from Jesus' overall approach to this woman.

He asks her certain questions. And then he listens. Jesus **LISTENS** to the answers she gave. We don't have time to look at each question, back and forth. From Jesus to this woman. From this woman to Jesus. But notice how carefully Jesus answers her. He doesn't argue with her. He doesn't debate her.

**Appl:** What is our tendency? When we get into conversations with unbelievers? Well, when people start talking, especially about religious topics, we often want to correct them.

Some of us might even want to argue with them, or debate with them.

Usually that is not wise. There might be an exception. But imagine you have started a nice conversation. You eventually say something about God, or about Jesus. They might say that they follow the prophet Mohammed. Or, someone else might say they follow the teachings of Buddha.

Remember, we want **TO POINT THEM TO JESUS**. We want them to sense "their inner thirst" for Jesus. As time goes on, maybe a later conversation, we want to lead them to the living water.

Water for their souls. So we must resist the temptation (试探) to argue or debate. That's a special temptation for us preachers, or those of us who are more theological in our thinking./

In vs 12 this woman asks Jesus: "Are you greater than Jacob?" We might expect Jesus to say:

"Of course I am greater than Jacob!! I am the Son of God!!" But Jesus doesn't say that! He doesn't argue or debate. Rather, he leads her to consider something completely different.

About a special kind of water than springs up to eternal life. The water that He will give her.

-Here's the point: let the conversation continue. And don't argue or debate.

If there is an opening, ask them more questions, perhaps.

-What Jesus asks of her, eventually leads her to share about her life. Her situation in life.

Vs 17, she says: "I have no husband. I only have a live-in boyfriend."

For us today, this might take 3 months of conversation. Loving them. Caring about their situation in life. Getting to a deeper level of sharing. Things usually stay somewhat superficial in the early conversations. But even then, as we show genuine caring, genuine love, as we actively listen. Maybe sometimes the best thing to say is this: "I'll be praying for you." "I'll be praying that you will want to learn more about Jesus."

Again: you can give them the small booklet, with the Gospel of John. You can give them your email address. Let them know you would be glad to meet any time.

But this is one thing I have learned, in 40+ years of talking to unbelievers about Jesus.

People learn that you are a follower of Jesus. And what happens then? Well, most people are a bit afraid that you will judge them. Or that you will condemn them. Or, as people share their faults and failures in life, many will start to feel guilty.

Regardless, they need to know *that you will continue to care for them*. No matter what.

That doesn't mean you will have to accept their lifestyle, or the decisions they made in life.  
But they need to know something about God's love, God's care, God as the Creator God,  
making them in his own image. Here's what they need to know [Read again, John 3:16-17.]  
-You and I have to love people enough to give them hope. And help. Through Jesus!

**5. Finally**, Jesus **TELLS HER more**... about himself, about true religion.

We read in vs. 21 following Jesus telling her about the true God, and about true faith.

Jesus tells her that God is a Spirit being. God does not live on a special mountain. God does not live in a church building. A church building is not a holy building. It's just a building.  
-The heart of what Jesus tells her, eventually, is this: "I am the Messiah." That means, "The Anointed One (受膏者)." Many Samaritans also were hoping for the coming of the Messiah. Many of them knew the OT Scriptures. So the woman wonders:

Could this man be the Christ? [Look, later, vs. 29.]

Could the man at the well be the Promised One? The One we have been praying for?

-Of course, we cannot do what Jesus did. Especially not in just one conversation.

But we must keep listening, and not be condemning (定罪) .

We must not get into religious debates or arguments.

But, as God leads us, we want people to ask themselves this:

Could it really be true? That God has sent Jesus into this world?

Could it be that Jesus really did die for my sins, on the cross?

Even if I am living with a boyfriend or girlfriend?

Even if I have a problem with alcohol or drugs? That I'm thinking about giving up?

-Could it really be that God has so loved the people of the world?

Could it be **that God loves you, here today? Yes, He Does!**

He loves you so much that He has sent His Son to be your Saviour.

-May God give us opportunities to really see the people around us.

That we would truly love them, and care for them. As our Saviour cared for this woman.

**LET US PRAY.**