

“Falling into the Arms of the Savior: isolation”

Scripture: John 4:5-42

Graphic: isolation, loneliness, outcast, trust, falling

Key Verses: John 4:26 Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Theme: The unnamed Samaritan woman is one of the best-known personalities in the NT. Her conversation with Jesus shows that she is bright, clever, and hungry for spiritual reality. But she is also a social outcast, a person well-acquainted with rejection. Fortunately, no one has ever been cast out so far as to be beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. This is good news not only for someone so obviously vulnerable as the Samaritan woman, but all of us because every human being sometimes feels unloved and unlovable. Somewhere in the court of the outcasts, Jesus is always waiting.

1) Introduction

- a) Let’s pray...
- b) Open your bible with me to John chapter 4...
- c) We have a lot of ground to cover today, so let’s not waste any time without the truth in front of our eyes and hearts open to the Word...
- d) In these 40 days of preparation leading up to Easter, we are learning what it means to *fall into the arms of the Savior*, Jesus. Falling is unnerving! Falling is unsettling! Falling into someone’s arms takes trust. Most of us are self-centered enough to want to be in control, especially when times are good. But when life gets messy...when we get lost or frustrated...or have doubts or are tempted...Jesus calls us confidently and fully to fall into HIS arms for safety and new life. “I don’t want to BE in that MODE anyMORE, God! I want to trust YOU!”
- e) Another one of the devastating things we all experience in this life is rejection, which leads to isolation. When my Dad died in 2002, I tried, and mostly failed, to walk beside my Mom through the feelings of loneliness and isolation that come when a spouse dies. I thought I knew what she was going through, but as anyone who’s been through it will tell you, I didn’t have a CLUE and I can’t. None of us can, unless we’ve been there.
- f) Isolation is a POWERFUL feeling that we can’t just PULL OURSELVES OUT OF, or GET OVER! It’s a fortress, and we’re inside! It’s a jail cell of emotion...you KNOW people are OUT THERE, but you can’t seem to connect. And ultimately, isolation from God leaves us empty...hallow...
- g) But just when we are famished...and thirsty...and isolated...Jesus shows up. And as He does, He sits and invites us into a deeper relationship with Him, as He did with an unlikely woman one day...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 4:5-6

- i) Jesus is tired from walking. The journey from Judea to Galilee is like **80 miles**. Jesus and his disciples are only HALFWAY into their walk. Some people run marathons for fun (or so they say)...in Jesus' day, simply walking from one place to another was a marathon plus...
- ii) And it's HOT! Middle of the day...
- iii) And they are walking in enemy territory. See, the Samaritans and Jews were like oil and water. They hated each other. The Samaritans, who were half-breeds, according to the Jews, built a temple on Mt. Gerizim – very near where Jesus was on this day. Of course, the Jews maintained that all true worship had to be done at the Temple in Jerusalem, about 40 miles to the south. Serious problems with these Samaritans...
- iv) So why were they in Sychar...in Samaria? Well, it's hot. We have to walk 80 miles. It's the most direct route. Jesus isn't stupid.
- v) And even though there are Samaritans there, Jesus chooses to walk right through Samaria...I think, BECAUSE there are Samaritans there.
- vi) These people were outcasts...not LIKED by the Jews. And Jesus has something to say about that.
- vii) And while Jesus was sitting there, a Samaritan woman came...verse 7...

b) Read verses 7-15

- i) Any idea how many hours per year are spent by women gathering water for their families around the world? Anyone? Survey says: 200 million hours. 200 MILLION hours of walking miles to carry heavy vessels.
- ii) Do you know how many of them would do that in the heat of the day? Almost none. It's hot...
- iii) See, women get water in the morning...when it's cool out. Not in the middle of the day.
- iv) So here's Jesus, resting at this well at noon, and he sees a woman coming up to the well to get water. BING! RED FLAG! Something's not right, Jesus is thinking...

- v) And so, he's like, "This outta be good..."
- vi) Now, social convention says that a Jewish MAN, especially a religious one, doesn't make contact with a WOMAN in public. And it would be considered SINFULLY UNCLEAN for him to talk to a SAMARITAN woman, who is not his wife. Can you see the social COLLISION coming? Here's where we usually get excited for some AWESOME!
- vii) I mean, last week, Jan introduced us again to Nicodemus – a named, religious, male... Jesus had no problems with talking with him. But an unnamed woman in an enemy territory?
- viii) Jesus, now alone with her because the disciples went to Subway or something, said to her, "Give me a drink." Simple command. Probably blew this woman out of the water. She probably looked around to see if she was on candid camera or something... why is this OBVIOUSLY JEWISH guy, talking to ME?
- ix) Jesus knows this woman is a social outcast... she's isolated. She's not hanging out with the other women in the village. She's been shunned or rejected by them for some reason. If not, she'd have been at the well in the morning with the other women. She's alone! She's got issues. She's isolated.
- x) Sounds like someone Jesus would want to talk to, right?
- xi) And Jesus breaks all the social conventions and all the rules and invites her into a conversation...
- xii) She's like, "How come you're asking me?" And Jesus replies, "if you only KNEW who it is that's asking you, you would be asking ME for a drink. And the drink I can give you is from God and is LIVING WATER."
- xiii) Now, this term for LIVING WATER, here, has a double meaning. It can be fresh, clean water that never ends (like a spring), or it can be life-giving water. John uses this double-meaning, just like he did the term born-again in the story of Nicodemus, to make a point.
- xiv) Unfortunately, the woman to which Jesus is talking chooses the more obvious meaning... fresh, clean water that never ends.
- xv) And she's like, "I want that water. But you don't have a bucket, so how are you going to GIVE that water to ME?" Think about it. If she

could get fresh, clean water without having to go to THIS STUPID WELL during the middle of the day, because she's an outcast, then she WANTS IT. No more daily acknowledgment of rejection in her life.

xvi) And even though Jesus tried to explain the difference...she still didn't get it and is still thinking he's talking about actual water...

xvii) So Jesus changes his approach to try to illustrate his offer...verse 16...

c) Read verse 16-26

i) Jesus, knowing this woman's heart, tells her to, "Go call your husband and come back." Go get your people...the people you are connected with, knowing full well that she doesn't have a husband, currently.

ii) Now, this scripture passage has gotten some bad play. When you have read this passage, do you think of this woman as morally upright, or morally bankrupt? Usually, we think she's got moral failures, right? ...that must be why she's had five husbands. But, notice that Jesus isn't judging her, but merely stating facts. Could be, she's had five husbands die. Could be she caught in a Levirate marriage process that requires her first husband's brother to marry her after he dies and so on down the line. Could be that the youngest brother doesn't want to marry her, but allows her to live with him. There's no indication here, that this woman has done anything wrong. That's NOT necessarily why she's an outcast.

iii) Sometimes, when we feel isolated from God or cutoff from others, it's because of choices we've made. Other times, we feel rejected by God or others because of circumstances or the choices of others. When my Dad died, my Mom didn't have a choice...yet, isolation and pain resulted from that circumstance.

iv) The Samaritan woman didn't fit IN and was outcast, maybe as a result of things out of her control. Now, even though the CIRCUMSTANCES may have been out of her control...her RESPONSE to the circumstances IS IN her control...as it is for us too.

v) When Jesus identified her circumstance, it was in order to establish the fact that she was thirsty...that she was in need...that she was isolated and lonely and broken. He didn't condemn her or tell her she was a sinner.

vi) Instead, what did he do?

- vii) (Listen) He told her the truth. He told her the truth about herself...about her life and her circumstance! He told her the truth about God being spirit. He told her the truth about the coming of the Kingdom of God here and now. He told her the truth about God's plan of salvation through the Jews. Jesus told her the truth about true worship. His response was not, "You're a terrible person!" or "If you were a better person, you would be in this mess!"
- viii) He simply told her the truth. And the TRUTH gave her the opportunity to TRUST HIM. And she began by saying, "I see you are a prophet." She's identifying something unique and trustworthy in Jesus.
- ix) And Jesus responds in the most powerful and telling, impossible and amazing way. This is it...if you don't hear anything else I say this morning...hear this.
- x) Sitting with Jesus is a woman...from a foreign country...who is an enemy of the Jews...who is by all conventions an outcast, isolated from society...and who shouldn't even be talking to Jesus...and who desperately wants to NOT be where she is...
- xi) Yet, and here it is, Jesus chooses, for the FIRST TIME in the Gospel of John, to reveal TO THIS WOMAN that HE IS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD! Not Nicodemus...not the Pharisees...not men of integrity...not anyone else! **A sad, rejected, Samaritan woman!**
- xii) And if Jesus has that kind of desire to save THIS WOMAN and tell HER that he offers the gift of eternal life...then, Jesus can work a miracle in YOUR life. Jesus can pull you out of whatever isolation or separation or rejection you find yourself because, even in YOUR state, Jesus loves you and cares for your pain.
- xiii) And if you think for one minute that Jesus doesn't understand isolation and rejection...just think about the pain and the rejection he felt by the disciples and the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane...on the road to the Cross...or as he was hanging on the Cross and God's wrath was being poured out on Him. He gets it, all too well.
- xiv) Pause...
- xv) In some ways, the rest of this story is icing on the cake for me...verse 27...

d) Read verses 27-38

- i) The disciples just aren't getting it yet.
- ii) They are still hung up on convention...of things in THIS world. Their minds just aren't ready for the Kingdom thinking that Jesus just presented to this woman.
- iii) She left her water jar...she LEFT the one thing that she was clinging to at that moment and went back to the city to tell others about this TRUTH that Jesus had told her. About her life...about being the Messiah.
- iv) While she was gone, Jesus gave the disciples a schooling about the fact that the harvest time had come. And, although it's really comfortable to want to talk with and convert people JUST LIKE US...Jesus reminds the 12 that HE BREAKS ALL THE RULES. It's not about the rules. (Turn to your neighbor and say, "It's not about the rules") It's about the truth...and the heart...and the awesome power that Jesus has to change our lives.
- v) The power he has to draw us from our circumstances and sin, into a place where we TRUST Him.
- vi) And because there are people in your life who are living apart from God...they are rejecting His offer of Living Water...this text speaks volumes to the transforming power of Jesus, the I AM.
- vii) There's still hope, always, for those we love...for those who are rejecting this love and our witness.
- viii) Look at verse 39...

e) Read verses 39-42

- i) Falling into the arms of the Savior means trusting in the very ONE who came to call us from the brink of utter despair into a place where we trust Him with our lives, despite the cost.
- ii) This WOMAN, whom Jesus encountered in the most unlikely of circumstances, RAN and TOLD the very people that were rejecting her about His claim. And in the process, she fell backwards into the arms of the Savior, with a trust that she had lost with anyone else.
- iii) And her testimony is what led others to seek Jesus out...to ask him to stay with them...and in the process, they came to know Him personally.

3) Application

- a) As I studied this week, I read this quote, “Somewhere in the court of the outcasts, Jesus is always waiting.” (repeat)
- b) When Jesus encounters people like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, he’s not asking them to believe a doctrine, or a set of rules, or a way of living. He’s telling them that HE is the way...that He is the truth...that HE is the life. That whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.
- c) You may find yourself today with feelings of emptiness and thirst. You may not’ve been able to put your finger on it, but today the Holy Spirit was revealing some things to you that you can see more clearly.
- d) We all face loneliness. We all face rejection. We all face isolation from God and from the world.
- e) Yet, we were created to be in community together. There’s a huge disparity, sometimes, in our lives and we feel empty because of it.
- f) We find all kinds of ways to combat isolation and loneliness...Facebook, television, surfing the web, getting involved in social clubs or church, going to parties, trying to find fulfillment in work or sleep. Keeping busy...
- g) Those things aren’t all bad...but if we **rely** on them to try to rid ourselves of the feelings of loneliness, then we’re left empty when those are over. To use Jesus’ words, “We will be thirsty again.”
- h) If you’ve had a spouse die...you KNOW the feelings of loneliness. There’s hope.
- i) If your sin has caused isolation and pain, or you know someone who is walking away from the Lord because of shame or guilt, there’s hope.

4) Conclusion

- a) Falling into the arms of Jesus, a connection to Christ in our lives, is that hope, no matter what else we use to help combat isolation.
- b) Somewhere in the court of the outcast, Jesus is always waiting for you.
- c) Today, we will baptize a child. And for centuries, people have debated if we should even baptize infants. Maybe you have some strong feelings one way or another.

- d) But let me just say this: the Samaritan woman was looking for the key to her life and was helpless before God to find it. Nicodemus, as learned and pious as he was, was told by Jesus that in order to find the salvation he desired, he would have to be as helpless as a child.
- e) In order to combat all those things in our lives, including the sin that binds us, we can do nothing except trust God, have faith in Jesus, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in us.
- f) Aiden Keefer is helpless before the Lord...we can see that. In the same way, each one of us is helpless before the Lord to do ANYTHING that would earn or find salvation apart from God.
- g) Today, Aiden and his parents will simply fall into the arms of the Savior and will confess and agree that they are helpless before God...are totally dependent on Jesus for forgiveness and salvation...and are willing to receive from God this gift by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- h) In that gift, comes a future of being connected with God through all the circumstances of life...and THIS water WILL quench the thirst in his soul for God...
- i) “The water that I give,” said Jesus, “will become in them a spring of water GUSHING up to eternal life.”
- j) Fall into the arms of the One who gives the water today and never be isolated, rejected, thirsty, again...
- k) (kneel) Let’s pray...