**Jesus’ Word Makes a Difference**

**John 4:1-5:18**

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| **Slide** | **Sermon** |
| **1** | **Title Slide & Introduction:** Today I am preaching on a whole lot of scripture, but I want us to see how these three scriptures, when taken together, teach us some important concepts that we might miss if we take them separately. The three stories are: **1)** The Samaritan woman at the well; **2)** Healing of the man’s son who is at home, and **3)** the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda. I submit they all have a common thread that makes a tremendous impact. That common thread is that it is Jesus’ word that makes the difference. |
| **2** | Most of us know the story of how our flag of the US was crucial to one of the key battles of the War of 1812. It was at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland. The battle with the British waged all night. The fledging forces of America were put to the test. All night long the bombardment continued. As dawn broke to the joy of the Continental forces, they could see the stars and stripes were still waving. Ultimately, we won that battle and eventually the war for our freedom.  O say can you see by the dawn's early light What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.  Out of the struggle for freedom our flag gave birth to our national anthem. The tune the words were set to was by John Stafford Smith. Those were tumultuous days as the US fought for it’s freedom while at the same time still endorsed slavery. Another war would be fought over this issue. |
| **3** | In John chapter 4 Jesus heads back to Galilee from Jerusalem after His encounter with Nicodemus. Any Jew in good standing always took a round-about loop to avoid the region of the Samaritans because they had nothing to do with each other. For you see the Jews felt the Samaritans were not fit for God’s kingdom. They were the product of Jews marrying the local pagan men and women years before. No good Jew would be caught seeing or talking with a Samaritan. It is a racial issue. Samaritans were an inferior race as far as the Jews were concerned.  Well Jesus doesn’t go the round-about way back to Galilee. Instead he walks right through Samaria. When they get to Jacob’s well, one that their ancestor dug years ago, it is about noon. And the disciples have gone into town to get something to eat. Jesus is left to sit near a well. |
| **4** | While waiting, a woman from Samaria brings a large water jar to get water. The time was strange because everyone usually gets water from the well in the early morning when it is cool. But this woman can’t because she is not married to the man she lives with and she was not welcome among the others. As she gets water, Jesus asks if she would share a cup with Him.  The woman is astounded because a Jew would never ask that of a Samaritan, much less a Samaritan woman. They have a conversation. She is surprised that Jesus knows about her. He knows she has had 5 husbands and is not married to the man she lives with. They talk of the proper place to worship. But Jesus says that the place is not the issue. One worships in spirit and truth. The woman says that when the Messiah comes, he will straighten all this out. Jesus tells her the time has come. He is the long-awaited Messiah and she has an invitation to the party. She can taste the living water. And oh, how excited she is! She drops everything, leaves her jug behind, and runs back to the town to tell everyone she knows. An unlikely person to share His identity, a woman, a person who’s reputation is as low as it can get, a Samaritan the hated race of the Jews! Yet, this is the person He chooses to share His true identity. But more importantly, she is given the living water and can be a part of God’s New Kingdom!  Jesus’ word is powerful; if you believe it and follow it, amazing things happen!  Jesus’ word doesn’t hold to normal conventions but breaks through the sin and normal expectations and standards! Where injustice and bigotry exist, Jesus’ words break through what one believes and sets our actions based on His word. |
| **5** | The disciples, like us, don’t understand how they are to deal with people who are different from them; other races, those that have other histories! These disciples are taken aback that Jesus is talking to a Samaritan woman and doesn’t understand why He is not hungry. Jesus says He is full in spirit because He is doing God’s will.  The result of this evangelistic effort is that the whole town comes out to meet the Messiah! Many believe on Jesus’ word and are saved.  So, Jesus’ word called the disciples to make room for the Samaritans. Through Jesus, God calls us out of our old standards, the ways we were raised into a new way of thinking and believing. Jesus brings the kingdom of God to all races, all people on this earth! And most of us miss this in verse 40 it says Jesus spent 2 days in that Samaritan town!  What a few days in Jesus’ life—   * He calls 4 disciples to follow and see * Turns water to wine at the wedding—no fanfare, only the servants and disciples know * He turns the tables of money changers and lets out the sacrificial animals and whips the men—calling for proper worship and does not tell them He’s the Messiah directly.   Now Jesus is in another town—one of the hated race of Samaritans—and He gives living water to the sinful woman and shares salvation with the whole town over a 2 day period!  Jesus faces racism head on. Jesus’ word is powerful and true. He came to save everyone no matter of skin color, nationality, mixed races.  Samaritans had become outcasts to the Jews. But Jesus turns the tables on racism in 2 days. And what a stark contrast to American as we continue to deal with racial issues 2000+ years later!  Jesus’ word can unify us when we worship in spirit and truth! |
| **6** | **The second story**—A royal official comes to Jesus once he returned to Cana. He wants Jesus to heal his son who is in Capernaum. He wants Jesus to come to Capernaum to do this. But Jesus says, “Go your son will live.” And the man believed the word that Jesus spoke and started on his way. On the way home the official’s servant met and told him that his son’s fever broke at 1 p.m.—the exact time Jesus spoke to the man and told him his son would live! Then the official and his whole household believed in Jesus the Messiah!  In verse 48 Jesus is frustrated that this official and others needed signs and wonders in order to believe. They doubted Jesus’ word after seeing many signs and wonders.  The official was forced to take Jesus at His word, leaving to go back home not knowing the status of his son. Yet he believed in that word—and that belief was honored by his son’s healing.  Jesus’ word is not just informative.  Jesus’ word is life giving!  Jesus’ word is truth  for your life and mine, for your salvation and mine, for transforming my life and your life and even to the point of healing!  You can count on Jesus’ word, if you believe it! |
| **7** | **John 5:1-18** **Third story**—Jesus returns to Jerusalem at festival time. He enters by the sheepgate on the Sabbath. There at the Pool of Bethesda a 38-year-old man suffered because he couldn’t walk and couldn’t get into the pool when the angels stirred the water. Jesus stops and asks him an important question:  **Do you want to get well?**  ie) How bad do you really want it? Do you really want to be changed? Questions good for us!  How badly do we want to change? Can’t we get comfortable in our own conditions, that we don’t want to change especially if it means having to go back to work, doing more jobs around the house, or not getting the sympathy of those around us?  Do we really want God’s healing and salvation? Do we really want to take on living by the example of Jesus?  The man by the well had to act in faith to show he truly believed Jesus. It was more than sliding into the pool of water. He had to get up, roll up his mat and walk! And he did this proving his belief in Jesus’ word! |
| **8** | Later in the text Jesus tells him to go and sin no more so that nothing worse happens to him! We don’t know the circumstances, but sin had ruined his life and left him helpless to walk and having to beg for a living by the pool.  How many of us have let sin, our decisions, ruin our lives and some of those around us? How many of us have let the abuse of alcohol, drugs, personal desires, or using gossip to control others, lead your lives in a downward spiral?  Jesus’ word has the power to straighten out our life, but if we go back to doing those same things, then it will get worse than before!  When you believe on Jesus’ word, then get as far away from those previous sins that ruined you! Jesus has come to save—for eternity as well as your present situations! |
| **9** | In all three stories John emphasizes that it is the word of Jesus that made the difference—for the woman at the well—the sick boy in Capernaum—the man begging by the pool at Bethesda  The woman saved and reunited with her people and the whole town and Jesus' disciples are now one.  The father of the boy realized that Jesus’ word was powerful over long distance—that Jesus’ word had power anywhere and everywhere!  The man by the pool believed but had to act to see Jesus’ word have power in his life! |
| **10** | We, too, need to Act in Faith to show Jesus we believe!  In high school I realized that Jesus’ word of salvation applied to everyone. That opened the door to a friendship with James Resse, an Afro-American student in French class and a player on our football team. As time progressed, we became good friends. And as time progressed more people saw our friendship grow. We both got negative reactions from family and friends, but we continued the friendship until we had 2 weeks of violent protest at school and classes were cancelled.  Our friendship collapsed as more and more pressure was put on us in the few weeks that remained in the school term.  Jesus’ word opened that interracial relationship, but we both let the sins of our society close it down.  Remember the words of John: “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because **the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”** |
| **11** | The message for us today is that if we let Jesus’ word loose it will bring transformation to our lives and beyond.  Are we not guilty of keeping Jesus’ word to ourselves and using it in ways we can control and dictate?  Are many of us not guilty of being satisfied with our lives and don’t want the change in a way that letting Jesus’ word loose would bring?  But remember: If we will let Jesus’ word loose— we will know salvation and our lives will be transformed for the better!  Amen |