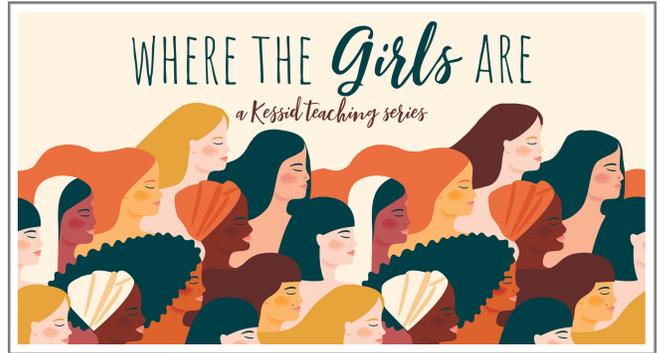


"JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING"

Date: July 25, 2021

Speaker: Brenna Blain



- Last week Danny introduced the series, myths and misconceptions we think the Bible teaches us about women, and one thing not only I've dealt with, but have seen many other women wrestle with, is being in ministry.
- But, something that many women who've just been in places of faith have dealt with is the validity of our stories...our testimonies and sharing our knowledge and the truth of Jesus.
- I've heard questions asked like "Does my story matter? Is it most honoring to God if I remain silent?" Or I've heard from women who have excellent education...BA MA...DR...in areas of Theology, Divinity, and Biblical Studies walking into places of faith offer their gifts and being turned away...

They've been displaced in places of faith.

- But I would also be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that this isn't just an issue central to women. I started to think about how many people, men, AND women, really question or come to the conclusion that their life isn't compatible with Christianity.
- For me, I was young, abused, mentally ill, and had a few other big questions/difficulties in my life... and I looked at the faith communities around me and I came to the conclusion that my life was not compatible with Christianity.
- Maybe some of you are sitting here right now feeling that way, or maybe you're walking with someone who feels that way. Let me just tell you. You are in Good Company.
- Today we are looking at an interaction that Jesus had with a woman, nameless to us, but famously known as the Woman at the Well...and if there is anyone who should feel displaced and incompatible with the surrounding faith communities it's this woman...

The Woman at the Well

- (Vs) John 4:16-30
- Jesus leaves the south of Israel, headed north for Galilee and in between those two points lies Samaria...which is a problem. You see the people of Samaria used to be part of the children of God.
- They were Jewish by descent but during the Assyrian Exile... which we can read about in both books of Chronicles as well as 2nd Kings. Samaritans started to marry gentiles, which went against the belief of Jews and through that became a people who were unclean. Along with significant compromise in their faith, Samaritans started to absorb and practice pagan religions with some of their Jewish practices.

- So when Jewish people looked at Samaritans they saw a disgraced, unclean people of compromise who walked away from the real God for a life of pleasure. There was a deep seeded animosity that Jews had towards Samaritans. So because of this, you can imagine that when Jews made this trek from Israel to Galilee that their feelings for Samaritans were on their mind. Maybe some even made the effort to go all the way around just to avoid contact with anyone who might be a Samaritan.
- By this point in the narrative its noon, and customarily women would go to the wells at the start of the day or the end of the day to avoid the heat. So, we know that when Jesus is not the only person at this well, something is going on. This woman is willing to put up with the heat just to avoid social interaction.
- But why? The other thing we need to take note of is this is no coincidence...Jesus being all knowing goes to this well with a purpose. Maybe you're saying well how do we know this? Aside from Jesus being all knowing, there are more implications to this interaction than just the animosity that exists between Jews and Samaritans.
- Not only is this individual a Samaritan...she's a woman. And at this time Jewish teachers/Rabbis would not normally speak to women, not even devout Jewish women.
- SO when Jesus Sees this Samaritan woman....and He doesn't turn around and walk the other way. He's making a statement. He's saying something significant in his actions. He's confronting the racial and gender stereotypes of the time and culture AND Jewish religion, and He says, "Not with me."
- These things that matter to other people...to religious zealots and leaders, these things that have been taught and learned and adopted and held up, I undo them. I, Jesus, break down these walls.

Jesus Changes Everything

- ...HOW does He do this?
- Where we picked up in our reading, we started in a place of tension. Jesus, a complete stranger, dares to bring up a point of pain, of sin, and of struggle in this woman's life.
- You see, the woman had many marriages, but Jewish women could not divorce.
- "What's going on here?" The sin was that she kept going back to the same things expecting different results. But the struggle was the false hope each relationship promised her – that each man, who was probably more than well aware of her past, said "Oh yeah, I'll treat you different..." and discarded her when he got all that he wanted.

(Vs) John 4:16-18 ESV – 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

- How is this a part of Jesus changing everything?

He names our sin and struggles.

"I see a pattern of sin, struggle, hopelessness, and destruction...a pattern that is leading you to agony, pain, shame, guilt, and eventually death."

- He has the right to do this, being the author and perfecter of all goodness and light. We need to be careful because some of us hear this and we go, "I call people out of their sin and struggle too! It's just what is loving..."
- But so often we miss the way that Christ operates. We say, "He does it," but we MISS the HOW.
- In verses 7-15, Jesus alludes to a hope this woman has never known...never tasted...never seen **"Living Water"** : He says she has the opportunity to partake in this living water so that she would NEVER thirst again. NOTICE He does this BEFORE He calls out her sin and struggle...Jesus sees her in all her humanity and brokenness and extends an invitation of hope with grace and kindness and GENTLENESS.
- He says, "This is available... These old things, your past, your struggles, or sin do not dictate the future I have for you. But you must make that choice to step into the new life I am offering. In order to take living water, you have to decide to stop taking up water that will leave you thirsty again..."

(Vs) John 4:21-24 ESV – 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

- Notice the language....THE FATHER IS SEEKING SUCH PEOPLE TO WORSHIP HIM.
- Many of the Jews this woman knew about were all about laws laws laws..... and Christ calls her to worship in Spirit and Truth. Radical Love and Radical Obedience. Intimacy and Theology. Honesty and Earnestness. Abiding in Him and laying it all down. This new life we are led to BY Him BECAUSE of Him.
- But we are also called to surrender...to drop our luggage...to be willing to pick up our cross and take the narrow path. He says love me with your heart and your actions will follow...

He calls us out of our old life and into a new one.

- So here I am....and I am starting to see the real God and His real, deep, life changing love. And I am starting to fall in love with Him in return and that's when I am compelled to start saying. What can I do for you...what are you calling me to?

- Loving is a response out of being met in love. Trust is a response out of being met in love. This woman, had she been met with being called out first, I don't know if she would have stuck around to even hear about this Living Water.
- But Jesus in His wisdom and tenderness knows to approach her first with gentleness, then with truth. He doesn't withhold one or the other. But he's not a jerk either. Loving is a response out of being met in love.
- So the Woman is standing there...I imagine overwhelmed by the person of Christ, who proved to her first in action of His love, by simply interacting with her. Then through word, by offering her the hope of salvation through this Living Water, that she may never thirst again. And then through the opportunity of repentance and redemption, by telling her that God is SEEKING those who are willing to worship in spirit and in truth through their lives.
- And what happens next is interesting, because the disciples show up and they know...and she knows "this interaction shouldn't really be happening," but no one says anything. And the disciples, who so often miss the significance of things, I think miss the significance of this...In fact, verses 31-38 are this awkward interaction they have with Jesus, where they are insisting that He eats and Jesus says, "No...you're missing the point...God provides for me...and while we're on the subject, the harvest is ready for reaping..."

MEANWHILE

- The Woman, whether she knows it or not, goes into the town of Samaria that holds so many other Samaritans who have stories JUST LIKE HERS, who are THIRSTING for HOPE and TRUTH, who are RIPE for the harvest, and she starts reaping, by telling people about a man she met in the middle of day, a Jewish man named Jesus.

(Vs) John 4:39 ESV – 39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

- She's not even ashamed. She's not hiding anymore. She's not avoiding anymore. She's not living out of guilt anymore BECAUSE SHE MET THE ONE WHO SAYS YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE THIS WAY ANYMORE, I GIVE YOU NEW LIFE.
- She OWNS her testimony BECAUSE her security is now in Christ. No one can tell her, "You're dirty and useless and unseen" anymore.
- And what happened? The people noticed. The people said...wait a second.... There is something different.

(Vs) John 4:40-42 ESV – 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

- BECAUSE of her testimony the Samaritans who had very little interaction with Jews yet alone positive interaction with them ASK A JEWISH RABBI to stay, and her truth leads them to hear THE TRUTH and they become Children of God...followers of Christ...a people who have seen a great light, all because Christ allowed this woman, who otherwise would have no real part in society, no worth, no value, and certainly no right to tell others about Jesus, to do just that.

Jesus sends us out.

- Even the most unlikely, the most broken, the most socially unacceptable, .the one who God's chosen people would have deemed "unclean" because of her ethnicity and unfit because of her gender, Jesus allows. And He uses her to reap the harvest of many who thirst for living water.
- And He's seeking us out, inviting us into His presence to know and love and to experience Him...and saying, "I want to send you, because you have a unique story that will reap a harvest that has been waiting and waiting and waiting..."
- In my own life...I realized I couldn't keep quiet about my experience with mental health because there are those who wrestle with the same things...who just need to hear that someone who looks or sounds just like them has been met with radical hope.

The Woman at the Well is not just a story for other women, but for all of us.

- That we would know Christ meets us where we are at, in the condition we are in, He listens to our needs and then offers us a hope NO ONE ELSE CAN. And when we accept that, He calls us worthy and says, "Tell the world about me and what I have done for you"

Jesus Changes Everything.

Our shame, He calls us out of

Our hopelessness and loneliness, He meets us in.

Our unfit/unredeemable features and sinful life-styles, not only does He call us out of them, but in His sufficient goodness, He turns around and USES them as tools of communication to those swimming in similar waters.

Because Jesus Changes Everything.

All lives can be made compatible with Christ.

All people who've been displaced can be met by the only person who can offer us a life of Spirit and Truth. And Because Jesus Changes Everything, He can qualify and send anyone who might be willing to be a living testimony to His name.