

The Woman At the Well: Sharing Like Jesus

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[0:00] This is a sermon from King's Church West William. I'm dropping any hints because I already got some for Christmas.

So I'm not, I'm not. But I had the privilege of going there. So kind of beer. I'm not big into beer, but it just happens to have started two doors down from a job I used to do around the time Toby was born.

You know how you somehow just get associations. And I just was really glad that for Christmas I got a couple of tickets to take some pals to go and do a kind of tour of where they make it. Because it's now quite a big business and it's just, I thought it was quite interesting.

But I don't know how you deal with awkward situations. But I can be good at them and sometimes I'm not so good at them. And at this beer tasting, me and my two pals were sitting in this quite kind of intimate little space where they're about to do the tastings and do all the chat.

And at the very last minute, having told us no one else was coming, this other family kind of arrived at the beer tasting. And it all just went a bit wrong. The first thing that happened was they were ID'd at the door because their son, who was 25, looked about 12.

[1:20] And it was just a really, really horrible start for them as they were like, I'm sorry, could you show us my ID before you come in? He was like, oh my goodness. And so we were kind of like trying not to watch this awkward interaction but failing a bit.

And then they came in and just as I was about to turn to say, hi, I'm Gordon. And I never quite know how you deal with these things in public places. Do they want to know who the people are they're sitting with? Do they not? I don't know. But I was like, hi, I'm the guy just starts the tour and we don't get time to speak to each other.

So they're sitting there a bit kind of, we're just kind of, I'm thinking, do I ignore them? Do I just pretend they're not there and just do my own beer tasting? Do I try and be social again later? I failed miserably and spent the whole time just overthinking this interaction.

And I loved the beer tour. The beer tasting was wonderful. And at the end, one of them came to me and said, it was so lovely to get to know you. And I thought, it just didn't happen. So awkward situations, they happen.

They're a part of life. But what we're looking at here in the Woman of the Well, and I was really keen that we'd read a whole chunk of those verses, is just a brilliant interaction that should have been really awkward, but in fact was deeply life-changing for our whole community.

[2:30] Craig, I have no idea what's going on, but if you need me to do something different, let me know. So it could have been really deeply awkward and should have been by all the social rules at the time, but in fact was life-changing, deeply life-changing.

We're going to look at a story where Jesus embraces the awkward, and I'm going to try and do that myself if the mic carries on playing kind of funny games with me, and breaks a whole of the social norms because he loves his father and he wants to lead other people to the goodness of God.

So how we're going to do this is it comes in a series of threes, because threes is my favourite number, and I think it might be the Lord's as well. And it's the first three things we're going to look at, at who Jesus is, like who he reveals himself to be in this story and how that changes over the conversation.

Then we're going to look at three things that that shows us Jesus is greater than... So we're going to look at... I'm going to clip it here and see if that does anything. I don't know if that's still... Does that still give me any sound?

Yeah, okay, we'll do that. Then, so three things of three of who Jesus is, three of what he's greater than, and then three ways in that help... in that that can help us when it comes to us sharing about Jesus with other people.

[3 : 47] Because our great hope in the whole Conversations with Jesus series is that we'll see how he interacts with people and how he lives his life and how we can mirror that, learn from that, and be with him to help other people get to know him.

So three who he is, three things he's greater than, and three ways that can help us share with other people. So to understand that, let's start at the beginning.

Who Jesus shows himself to be. Well, the first thing you notice is that Jesus arrives as this kind of awkward stranger. He starts the conversation as a stranger with her.

She is not expecting to see anyone. In fact, a woman is only found at the well at midday when they're avoiding other human contact. Because it's the hottest time of the day. It's the time where you don't want to see other people.

Well, she's clearly purposely trying not to see other people. And yet, she gets there, and there is a stranger. And he asks her, even more than being just a stranger like my beer-tasting non-buddies, he doesn't just sit there and do his own thing.

[4 : 52] In fact, he immediately connects with her and says, Can you get me a drink? He breaks the social tension. He breaks massive societal awkwardness.

Not only do Jews and Samaritans not interact with each other, women and men don't interact with each other. I heard one preacher say that in his 20 years of being in this area of the world, he wouldn't have looked another woman in the eye that wasn't his wife more than twice.

Like, that's how unusual this was for Jesus to, I imagine, look her in the face and say, Could you get me a drink? Will you give me a drink? Verse 7. He starts as a stranger, but he doesn't stay there.

And then he reveals himself to be a prophet. And what I mean by prophet is someone who shares the goodness of God, someone who hears what God wants and shares it with other people.

He reveals God to her. He reveals the Father to her. And I think these are on the next slide, Regan. There we go. So he starts as a stranger. He then becomes someone who speaks the truth of God to her.

[5 : 57] As he starts to talk about this living water that she too can find, which is greater than the water that she'll find in the well. He also reveals in that that he knows her deepest secrets.

Yeah, go and get your husband. No, you haven't just got one husband, right? You've had five. Like, he is speaking truth to her that really meets her deepest need. He hears from the Holy Spirit and he uses this to give her life and to give her hope.

But he doesn't just stay there. He goes from stranger to prophet and then prophet to saviour. And originally, she just says, just have a look at the shift in the text. I think it's brilliant.

Originally, she says, I met a man who told me everything about me. In the later verses, you can find that down in verse 29. Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Could he be the Messiah? It starts as a question. Later, her whole community are able to say, We know this man, verse 42, really is the saviour of the world.

[7 : 08] Jesus meets her. It's three different things. He starts as a stranger. He reveals God's truth to her. And he becomes her and her, a load of people from that community's saviour.

He moves from stranger to saviour. The weight of her life begins to shift. And I think she realises, and I think we can see, three things that Jesus is greater than in this text.

And he is greater than social awkwardness. He isn't embarrassed walking into this situation, sitting on this massive slab of stone, without the ability to get himself water, speaking to a woman who's from the other side of the tracks from him, who should be an outcast, is an outcast.

In fact, he's greater than that. He meets her, he sees her, and in fact, he welcomes her. He's also greater than personal and local history.

So, some of this awkwardness for her, and some of the stuff that keeps her away from the people around her, is that they know her. They know what she's been up to, or they know how, certainly, she's been treated by men in her life.

[8 : 21] And that may well have been an alienating thing. A kind of, we're not going near you type thing. But Jesus shows, no, I will come right in.

I will come, I will meet with you. I'll tell you the truth of what's going on. Both you need living water, and I know you and I see you, but also the grace of God, which says, come and drink.

He doesn't let that get in the way, because he's greater than it. He knows our personal histories. He knows all the stuff that goes on in society around us. He wants to meet us, and he has met us in that.

He's a stranger, greater than social awkwardness, the prophet speaking into her life, despite the divides, and the saviour who knows her thirst, who knows what she needs.

And to be fair, she really needs water. You and I really need water. Like, you are 60%, I believe, 60 to 70% water. Your brains are apparently three quarters water.

[9 : 23] I mean, I learned that first when I was about six, and I still think that's an amazing fact that I'm looking at a load of droplets right now. I mean, you guys are mostly water. So when she came to the well-needed water, that was a perfectly valid human need.

Like, it sustains life. It keeps her going. It feeds the very thing that she is and helps her continue to be that. And yet, what she finds, and we'll come back to this a bit later, is that her need for water was much less than the need for him.

How do we know that? Well, verse 28, she left her water jar and went back to the town and shared Jesus with everyone. Man, her need must have been met, right?

Because she came for water. She left with the water of life, and she didn't even bother with the water anymore. I think that's quite amazing. So Jesus is greater than our social awkwardness, and we're going to need to remember this in a couple of minutes before we get on to the application part.

Jesus is greater than our personal and local histories, and he's greater than our deepest needs and able to meet us in those deep needs. Why am I sharing that?

[10 : 29] Because I reckon you've found those things too. I reckon for each of us that know Jesus, we have been on that same journey, but once he was a stranger, and then he became in some way prophetic in your life, of sharing the goodness of God through the truth of God.

It might have been someone that shared him with you. It might have been that you opened the Bible. It might have been, I know for some, it's dreams that they had, and they just thought, I need to get to know Jesus. But you and I, if we know Jesus, we've been on that journey too.

He was stranger. He spoke truth. And then he became saviour. I thought, I need him. I need his forgiveness. I need his love.

I need to bow down and make him Lord in my heart. So I reckon you've been on that journey, and you've discovered he's greater than many, many things in your life, where you've moved from awkwardness to intimacy.

I don't know if you remember, but I was casting my mind back this week and just thinking, what was church like when I first went? I remember just thinking, I had to be really, really good to go into church. Do you know?

[11:36] I remember just arriving, and I'd found Jesus, but I still somehow felt to be accepted there, I better just pretend, because I really wasn't the great at all. But I would just go along and be like, I sound really moral all the time, because that's what you do at church, right?

Hopefully. I mean, I hope you're growing in grace and morality and all the good things God's got for you. But really, we don't come like that at all. As a father has compassion for his children, he has compassion on us, and he moves us from awkwardness of, who is he?

Can I go to church? How does that all work? Can I approach him to intimacy? We can boldly approach the throne of grace, boldly walk towards him in our hearts and draw to him in our hours of need and in our joys and our sorrows.

Because you've been on that journey from stranger to saviour. And also, the journey from shame to security. She was an outcast in her community, and yet, I imagine, she ran back to them.

She knew Jesus now, so she didn't have to be distant from them, because actually, if they rejected her, who cares? She has the water of life she's met with. She's fully known by him, and she is led by him to him.

[12:49] And we know now, he will never leave us or forsake us. Once you know Jesus, you know that too. And I reckon you've found that once you've put your trust in Jesus, your past also doesn't need to define you anymore.

Whether that's good, or whether that's bad, whether that was, you know, whatever that included, your past doesn't have to define you. Like the woman at the well, you'd no longer have to rely, or run away from personal, and social, local histories.

Because he's the one. His story defines you. He's such good news. I reckon you've found that too. So I guess here's the big question I'm coming to.

If you and I have been on that journey, from stranger to truth, and prophetic truth discovered through Jesus, into him as your saviour, why? Why, why, why, is sharing Jesus so flipping awkward?

Anyone else find that? Give me a little nod and hope. Maybe it's not. Yeah, thanks Mike. Okay, why is that? Because we have found, the most amazing thing. In Jesus we found the water of life.

[14:04] And yet, in the workplace, we might have found a kind of couple of awkward nods towards the fact we know him. I know that isn't true for all of us all the time. I absolutely know that. There are moments where we just have the joy of sharing Jesus, and it comes really naturally and really easily.

I reckon for the average person, it's a little less straightforward than that. My hunch is, and this is, I'm not speaking from a scripture here, this next 30 seconds is totally my thoughts, 100%.

Write it down, don't write it down, take it, leave it, up to you. But I reckon it's because we fall into a few different myths. I reckon it's because we fall into, oh, another three, I'm really sorry.

We fall into one of these myths. One is, we often think we have to be a superhero. If I'm going to share Jesus, I have to be ready to have all the answers, to know how to solve all the problems, to take responsibility for everything, and make it good.

And it's like, because what if I share that, and they ask me that really awkward question about why religion causes wars, or stuff about LGBTQI rights, or whatever else it is, or why I'm sometimes rude in the office, I don't know.

[15:11] But I need to have the answers, because we think we must be a superhero. For some of us, it can be that we think we have to be some kind of salesman. I don't know where this came from, but you know, do you guys remember that kind of stereotype of the watch salesman, with his kind of jacket that he opens, and has, is that a thing?

I just have it in my mind, and I'm like, I don't know where that came from. But you know, we feel like salesmen. I've got Jesus, he's right here with me, and people have been around me for a while, and I might eventually be like, so, what, why Jesus?

Like, can I offer him? What's going to do you? And they're like, hang on, what? Or some of us feel pressure as a salesman to kind of get it over the line. Like, if I start showing Jesus, will they say no?

Will they tell me to get stuffed? Will they like, you know, will they reject me? So I reckon we think we've got to be superheroes, or salesmen, or sometimes it's just, we think we have to be a saint of some kind of, and in Jesus we are saints.

There's biblical truth in that. But what I mean by that is, we think, they know me, and they know, I don't always hold it together. I'm sometimes cranky with my kids, or sometimes I'm a bit of a grump.

[16:16] How can I share this really important thing with them if I'm not perfect? Or in today's world, what if sharing Jesus, that I depend on the God that a large majority of people don't believe is real, somehow makes me less good in their eyes?

So I think there's a few things we fall into. Can I be the superhero I need to be? Can I be the salesman? Can I be perfect enough? Can I be the same? Can I be the same? And I love this phrase.

When it comes to sharing Jesus, one of my favourite phrases is this. Sharing Jesus with people is just one beggar telling another beggar how to find bread.

That simple. You needed him. You found him. And now, you want to share him with other people. We don't need to be superheroes or salesmen or saints or anything else but a beggar who's found something really good and says, are you hungry?

Are you thirsty? Come on, I can show you where to find the water of life. And I think in this conversation we find three things that will really help us to do that.

[17:28] And I think we see them very clearly in how Jesus approaches this woman. And I think they're ones that we can take and we can use. So we're going to spend the last little bit just looking at these last three things that will help us when it comes to learning from Jesus in his interaction and sharing him.

Because that's the end result here, right? Is she leaves knowing that she can have this water welling up inside her. She doesn't need to thirst spiritually again. And she knows it's life-changing and worth sharing so that whole community gets saved.

And I think we're given this as a kind of a masterclass or a sort of an opportunity to just peek in to what's going on with Jesus and say, so what?

What will help me here? Here they are. The first one is this. Notice right at the beginning in verses 4, 5, 6 I'm sorry, 4, 5, 6 and 7 he says this.

He says, Jesus was tired from the journey he sat down by the well when she came near he said to her will you give me a drink? He doesn't start as a superhero.

[18:42] He doesn't start as a man in control. He starts as someone with need and I think he's making it okay for you and me to start from a posture of need.

That we can start from a place of I'm normal, I'm just a human and actually it's okay to relate to other people and just say would you help me with this?

In fact, a couple of you have said to me over the years, over the last year in fact, a great way of connecting with someone is not to offer them something superhero style but is to say could you help me?

I have a need and that's exactly what Jesus does. I have a need. I'm tired. He's tired. It says, would you give me a drink? A posture of need. You be you.

Like we don't have to be what we're not. We just have to be human. We're not called to seal the deal, to make all things perfect, to answer every question, to even see the journey of sharing Jesus from sharing him through to seeing someone get saved or get baptised or live a life for him.

[19:44] We're just one beggar showing another beggar how to find bread. And the second one is the prophetic ear. And we also see that with Jesus.

He clearly is listening to the woman. They have an extended conversation where she does kind of go into religious history, social history, personal life, but Jesus is there being attentive and he's chatting with her about those things.

He's not just, hey I'm Jesus, I'm the saviour of the world, put your trust in me, thanks very much. He spends a fair bit of time in the midday sun with her because he's listening.

And not only and actually primarily he's not just listening to her, he's doing this prophetic thing of hearing what his father God wants. In fact, he says multiple times in scripture, I only do what I see my father in heaven doing and that he came to seek and save the lost.

He's listening with both ears, one ear to his father in heaven, one ear to the Holy Spirit leading him and an ear to this woman hearing her, seeing her in all that she is.

[20:59] I'm sure if you ask my wife she would say any listening in our house is a little bit of a miracle, but it's one the Lord does and it's one that we can learn from that he pauses with her and he listens both to the Holy Spirit and to her.

So, for us, I would ask him when you get up in the morning, Lord, I want to hear you today. I want you to lead me to where you want me to go.

Verse 4, he actually says, it says Jesus needed to go through Samaria. It wasn't that he had to, he could have taken a long way around, but he was compelled to go. I reckon you, like me, want to be the kind of people who need to go where the Holy Spirit wants us and who want to be the people who listen prophetically and just listen.

And I love, I love that we're doing the Bible course at the moment because one of the best ways we can hear from him, absolute best ways to get written in his word. I love, we've got, what, 40% of our church adults are currently diving into the Bible every week and it's just a wonderful thing because the more we know him, the more we can hear from him.

So a great starting point as well is something like that, just being in your Bible regularly, diving in at something like the Bible course, but starting the day saying, Lord, I want to hear from you today. What have you got for me?

[22:23] My third key I think we see to help us in talking to other people is this, the conversation really ends with this very, very simple point. Jesus says in verse 26, he declares, I, the one speaking to you, am he.

This text is full of rabbit warren conversations. Absolutely chocked full of it. If you think about the religious discussion they have around, are you greater than Jacob?

Because she's basically saying, hang on, do you not need a well? Other people did. You know, that could have gone to our whole historical thing. The other, verse 11, the other one is verse 19, I can see you're a prophet, our ancestors worshipped on this mountain.

Now Jesus claimed the whole debate about worship, the number of weird debates you end up in if you want to share about Jesus is massive. But he doesn't get bogged down in that. It's a tiny chunk of this text.

What he cares about is being able to say, you need Jesus pointing to himself. Posture of need. Don't be afraid to be you, to be human.

[23 : 26] Have a prophetic ear, listening to what the spirit is whispering. Get to know the spirit and the word together, but really listening with the person in front of you, even in the midday heat.

And we make the point, Jesus. I honestly wish I didn't care if people think better or worse of me when I'm chatting to them about Jesus.

Sometimes I do, other times I'm more disciplined than that. But I see here, he manages to be full of grace and truth, but ultimately says, what you need is Jesus. I was at a wedding about, I think it was about six weeks ago now, and I love a good party.

I mean, my dancing is horrendous. Okay, don't think about that, it would distract you, but it's horrendous. But I love a good party where everyone's getting on with each other. This was absolutely cracking. Loads of friends that we've known for many years, some of them much older than us, and we don't actually get to hang around with people a lot older than us very often, so it's just really nice to be with them.

All of their kids who are younger than us, we occupy that sort of weird aunt and uncle middle ground of not as old as the parents, not as young as the kids, and had a really, really lovely time, and at one point, I knew I was going to be there late because our transport had kind of got messed up and I'd got a lift home for Jill, and I went off to the loos, and I know this is the kind of party animal I am, while having plenty of wine to drink and some beer, you know, I went off to the loos, and I just had a quick prayer, and I thought, Lord, I've spent a lot of time chatting with people tonight, just, I'm going to be here for quite a while because the transport's screwed up, and I'd just love to chat about you with some people.

[25 : 02] I wonder if you'll have a lot of conversations, that's happened at least once in my life in recent memory, where I have loads of conversations about him unexpectedly because the Holy Spirit's doing something.

On this occasion, I had no idea, I just went out and carried on chatting with people, and then a conversation happened with a girl that used to follow Jesus, and I wondered if she was standing there, and I said, are you still following Jesus?

She came alive and chatted with me for a while about following Jesus, actually that was a bit earlier in the night, but she came alive after I'd prayed that prayer. And nothing else, and I had a great time, you know, it wasn't one of those kind of, it can be a bit weird if you're talking about Jesus at a party, like you're going to have to be wandering around with a Bible or something when everyone is at a party, it was just a great night.

But the thing is, as I was leaving, I saw a girl that I last knew when she was about 13, and she's now in her early 30s, and I just knew that I should tell her that Jesus loved her.

And I walked over to her, and I said about five words, I said, Sally, I'll pretend that's her name, I don't want to out of her, in case she comes to our church one day, and you're like, aha, it's you! Sally, I just want you to remember, Jesus loves you.

[26 : 15] And she looked at me, and it was like, you know, an electric shock, or like, the word scandalized comes to mind, like her sails on a boat had been kind of ripped, she was like, what? And I said, just don't forget, you should get to know him.

Okay, another three where you should get to know him, six more words, so nine words in total, basically. And she looked rocked to her core. And as I was praying for her later, I realized, I really think she was in a place of thinking she was useless, or worthless, or unseen, and unlovable.

beautiful. And in that moment, I really did sense the depth of her heart just be like, what? Like this unbelievable truth. Well, not just because some bloke that she used to know was speaking to about Jesus at the party, but because it spoke to her very core.

And I'm praying for her, I know nothing else about that. Do you know, I don't really need to, because my job is, I'm one beggar, showing another beggar how to find bread. That's it.

And I do believe that a few words like that can be utterly life changing. And I just want to encourage you, it's okay to be you, and that posture of need, be tired some days, don't let that put you off, recognizing that he can use you.

[27 : 38] Listen to the Holy Spirit, but really see the people in front of you. But ultimately, whether it's three words, 33 or 3,000, the aim is, we want to be like this woman who runs to her community and says, I met a man, I met a man, and he's now her saviour.

Just as we come into land now, another couple of minutes and we'll wrap up, but a phrase really struck me in this was verse 28, which says that then leaving her water jar, the woman went back to town and said to the people, we all have things we rely on, and good godly gifts that he has given us, but there are some things that we rely on that stop us sharing that deep hope we have in Jesus.

And specifically when it comes to talking about him, there are often things that we're afraid of, or we're afraid of losing if it comes to sharing Jesus for someone. Maybe it's their respect.

I kind of need their respect, I don't want to lose it. Or maybe it's like the fear of not being the expert that we kind of don't want to have to let go of, you know, I know him, I know the answers. Or maybe it's something like a fear of failure, of not getting things perfect, or a fear of making things uncomfortable.

Sometimes people realise you follow Jesus, and actually it gets a bit tricky for a while. I really think there's something in this verse here, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town, to the people.

[29 : 19] Some, we need to put down things we depend on, or things we think are more important than the water of life. And I just encourage you to have a think, what is it that you might be putting above him in this area?

Respect, or like not having all the answers, or what might it be that stopping you from just going back and saying, I met a man, he's the best thing that ever happened to me.

What's your jar? You need to put down to make sure you share him freely. Give it to him. Hey, I've got this thing, Lord, I'm afraid.

Give it to him. Lord, I don't know how I'd handle it if they asked me difficult questions. Give it to him. He's capable, he's much greater than any other thing we can rely on.

And ultimately, you're not providing. You're not providing for people. You're just pointing to him, one beggar showing another beggar how to find bread. And it's what he was all about. And as followers of him, it's what we want to be all about.

[30 : 28] And he's able, so able, to use you and me, weak as we are. Let me pray for us. Jesus, we are so grateful that you didn't stay a stranger.

We met you and you got involved in our lives and you led us to truth. And you are our saviour and we thank you for that.

You are so, so good and we love you. I ask, would you equip us by your spirit to share you with other people that we would point to you the water of life who doesn't run dry.

Help us to be people who aren't afraid to just be mere humans, that posture of need. Help us to be people who hear you.

We need you. We can't do this without you. We wouldn't even want to. And help us be people sensitive to you, but also sensitive to people in front of us and see the people you've placed us amongst.

[31:42] Lord, our hearts desire, weak as we are and much as we find it hard, is to point to you, the one who is worthy of all honour and praise.

We rest before you saying, use us, Lord. Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen.