

John 4:39-45
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Romans 10:4, 9-17)
“Hearing for Yourself”

Introduction

Whenever I return to this amazing story, I find new challenges to my understanding of the heart of God as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus. I realize how easily I lose my focus and intensity in pursuing both my own knowledge of God and the mission he has entrusted to all of us who claim to be followers of Jesus. Here we see God’s mission displayed in Jesus’ remarkably counter-cultural behavior: going where Jewish men who valued their own reputations would never go, talking publicly with a woman with a damaged reputation, revealing to her thirsty soul what he was not yet ready to reveal even to his closest disciples, and spending time sleeping, eating and socializing in a village considered out of bounds, dangerous and unclean, by his own people. And all this because he was on a mission given him by his Father: He came to seek and save lost and broken people – folks like you and me.

We have been studying this story for several weeks, and I really thought that we would be moving on today, but this past week as I read the story through one more time, I was struck by these final verses, verses that describe the kind of movement that should mark the growth of everyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus. So let’s not leave this story without noting three final lessons.

Body

- 1. Most of us are like these Samaritan villagers who first became acquainted with Jesus through the testimony of someone who already knew him (4:39).**

If you want to know him, you need to meet people who can make the introduction. How do we do that? Where is a safe place to begin?

If you already know him, you are responsible for telling your “village” about the only one who can give living water to spiritually thirsty people.

- 2. If we would know Jesus – not merely by reputation or the narrative of someone else’s life, but personally as friend knows friend – then we must move beyond the testimony of others and be willing to make a commitment to spend time with him ourselves (4:42a).**

Like the Samaritan villagers, there comes a point where you can no longer live off the experiences of others: you must seek him out for yourself. But how do we do that today? What does that mean?

3. When we spend time with Jesus and come to know him for ourselves, then our understanding of who he is and of what he has come to do expands exponentially (4:39b).

Did you notice the growth in the woman's understanding? First, she simply notes that Jesus is a Jewish man (4:9). But then, when he reveals his knowledge of the secret of her brokenness, she perceives that he is a prophet – one who speaks for God (4:19). Finally, when he reveals his own secret, the secret of his identity – that he is Israel's Messiah – she believes him and runs back to her village to share the good news (4:25-28).

Too often we think the revelation ends there, but it doesn't. Only when the people gather together to spend time with Jesus, listening to him teach, watching his life as he reveals to them how deeply God loves even people despised as outcasts, only then do they make the further connection that he is not merely Israel's Messiah, but is indeed "the Savior of the world." And that means that God not only loves his special people, Israel, whom he chose to carry his Word to the nations of the world, but that he cares for all the people of the world, especially those who realize their brokenness and are ready to confess their need of God's healing grace.

Conclusion

This is the message entrusted to us. This Jesus of whom we sing, whom we profess to love and worship and serve, is God's answer to this world's brokenness – living water for the thirsty, bread of life for the hungry. As he would finally describe himself just before his death, he is the way, the truth and the life.

Do you know him this morning? Or do you still only know something about him through the life and experience of others who have shared their stories with you? If you don't yet know him yourself, what are you willing to do in order to know him? And if you do know him, how seriously do take the mission he has entrusted to you and to me to make him known to those in our families, in our circle of friends, in our neighborhoods – and even to the ends of the earth?

I long for each of you here today to be able to say, "John, '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'" (4:42). But that will never happen by itself. It will only happen when like these Samaritan villagers we say, "Stay with us, teach us, give us this living water, that we too may never thirst."