



Introduction

The following questions, prayers and comments are intended to assist you through a Bible study time this summer. Watch on Facebook Live or commhope.freeonlinechurch.com/live at 9 am on Sundays. This study and Pastor John's sermons will cover 15 men & women of the Bible. Weekly studies like these will be available each week. If you have any questions, please e-mail koko@commhope.org.

Week 12: The Samaritan Woman - FOR THE JOY

Prayer of Preparation: Lord, I am so excited about the way you treated the Samaritan woman. Let my spirit sing like hers did when she ran back into town. Thank you for being so gentle and humble in heart. Amen.

Comments & References: Read John 4:1-42, Luke 10:30-36, Luke 9:51-56

When you read the verses in Luke 9, you see some of the animosity that existed at that time between the Jews and the Samaritans. As I read this I thought about the immediacy of the outcry over racism in our time. I remember the race riots of the 60's and seeing Martin Luther King and his "I have a dream" speech on black and white television! The pain of injustice happening all around us, in this time is especially harsh, again. In John 4, Jesus has left the animosity brewing against him, by the Pharisees in Judea, and is heading back to Galilee. Jesus was not unfamiliar with being pre-judged based on his humble birth, Jewish race and lack of earthly wealth.

Here is a little information about how the animosity between Jews and Samaritans came to exist. The children of Joseph, son of Jacob, inherited the land that became Samaria. Later, when the North Kingdom of Israel separated from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, they were invaded by Assyrian forces and taken away from their land. The people that were removed were then replaced by other people from foreign lands. Hence, the opportunity for intermingling of cultures and faiths. When the kingdom of Judah was also invaded and its people taken to Babylon, they were later able to return to their land with their culture and faith intact.

"The people who now inhabited the former northern kingdom—the Samaritans—vigorously opposed the repatriation and tried to undermine the attempt to reestablish the nation. For their part, the full-blooded, monotheistic Jews detested the mixed marriages and worship of their northern cousins. So, walls of bitterness were erected on both sides and did nothing but harden for 550 years. There are countless modern parallels to the Jewish-Samaritan enmity—indeed, wherever peoples are divided by racial and ethnic barriers. Perhaps that's why the Gospels and Acts provide so many instances of Samaritans coming into contact with the message of Jesus. It is not the person from the radically different culture on the other side of the world that is hardest to love, but the nearby neighbor whose skin color, language, rituals, values, ancestry, history, and customs are different from one's own. Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. With whom do you have no dealings?"

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Jesus and the Samaritan woman let their racial differences rise to the surface of their conversation. It becomes obvious that race is not actually the problem for either.

In verse 10 Jesus says to her “If you knew...” At first, I thought how could she know, and then I remembered the study we did about Rahab, earlier this summer. Rahab (see Joshua 2), heard the stories of God leading His people out of the land of Egypt and she believed in God and when the spies showed up at her door she knew how to serve God immediately, by hiding the spies. But the Samaritan woman does not recognize Jesus like Matthew did when he immediately left his business and followed Jesus and then took Him home to dinner.

In verse 11, the Samaritan continues to resist giving any respect to this Jew that is continuing to speak out of turn, with her. This verse reminds me of Mary, Jesus mother, when she says to the angel, “How can this be?” (see Luke 1:34), and Nicodemus when he asks Jesus how a person can return to the womb and be born again? (see John 3:4). When we are outside of our faith, understanding God’s words and ways is very confusing. The writer at Wycliffe makes a wonderful comment about how and why this awkward conversation happens. Each person matters to Jesus:

The story of the woman of Samaria teaches us that each person matters to Jesus. Why did he choose to go through Samaria on this journey? Usually he would have gone the longer way. It seems that he went just to meet this woman. He wanted to bring new life to her. As a result, the town of Sychar heard about Jesus. A number of times Jesus went out of his way to meet just one person. © 2002-2005, Wycliffe Associates (See Mark 5).

In verse 13 Jesus begins to share about something He has and is willing to share. The Samaritan begins to open-up, just a little bit, to hope. She asks for the water that Jesus is talking about. In verse 16-18 Jesus makes her reconsider who He is. The Samaritan could have gone away in a huff at the impertinence of this Jew’s comment. In the NIV Study Bible by Zondervan Press the footnote to verse 18 reads like this; “five husbands”. *The Jews held that a woman might be divorced twice or at the most three times. If the Samaritans had the same standard, the woman’s life had been exceedingly immoral. Apparently, she had not married her present partner.”* The hope that began to rise when the subject of eternal life is shared by Jesus in verse 14 had to dissipate in the face of this fact of her life. In her disarmed state the Samaritan gives evidence she has been looking for God and realizes that the church in Samaria and the church in Jerusalem both claim to be the home of God, but it doesn’t ring true for her. She is a seeker after God.

Jesus gives her this extraordinary and sweet truth about the way to find God in verse 24. Spirit and truth. The Samaritan’s shame and hopelessness are in the open conversation by this point. The Samaritan’s spirit stands in astonishment and she begins to acknowledge that her real hope is in the Messiah that is going to make it clear who God is and where to find Him (see verse 25). In Luke 19:1-9 is the story of another person who met Jesus and, after being stunned with the meeting, repented with joy. Paul in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8, gives a detailed description of what happens to the soul of a person in the moment of redemption; like this Samaritan woman.

Max Lucado does a wonderful job of capturing the apex of this conversation in his book Ten Women of the Bible, pg. 137, “*Don’t miss the drama of the moment. Look at her eyes, wide with amazement. Listen to her as she struggles for words. Watch as she scrambles to her feet, takes one last look at the smiling Nazarene, then turns and runs right into the burly chest of Peter. She almost falls,*

regains her balance, and hotfoots it toward her hometown...Suddenly the shame of the tattered romances disappeared. Suddenly the insignificance of her life was swallowed by the significance of the moment. God is here! God has come! God cares...for me! The disciples offered Jesus some food. He refused it-he was too excited! He had just done what he does best. He had taken a life that was drifting and given it direction. He was exuberant!"

Last week, I encouraged you to write and/or share your story of your encounter with Jesus; how did you come to know Him. I hope you asked others about how they met God, too. These events are always exciting!

In verse 27 we see another awkward moment in this conversation between our Samaritan woman and Jesus. The disciples show up just as the Samaritan realizes who she is talking with and begins to absorb the implications of what has just happened to her. She runs for home. But the disciples, after some difficulty, have brought food for Jesus and they are stunned when he does not want it! They, and He, were tired when they got to the well and now, they are even hungrier and probably more tired, too. In verse 34, Jesus tells them where His strength, joy and faithfulness come from and gives them an insight to the calling He has for them. As I thought about Jesus not being hungry or tired after His conversation with the Samaritan, I remembered the little Bible verse that says, "The joy of the Lord is my strength...", Ps28:7. I had always thought that my joy in Jesus is where the strength comes from. However, in reading this woman's story I wonder if the strength comes from the joy God has when one of His children recognizes Him? Like the Father that ran out to the prodigal son on his return home, the joy all comes from the Father's joy.

I must ask, myself, is there anything I am doing or have done that gives the Lord joy? Is there any service, that I have done for the Lord, that was so joyous, that I did not feel hunger or weariness?

The joy and excitement of this woman spills over into the people in Sychar. They run out to see if she is right, and, hallelujah, she is! What a glorious celebration must have been experienced by everyone that was present. Jesus has sown a wonderful garden of humans around us. Remember the beauty of the Samaritan woman's story we have just read, His words in verse 38, "*I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.*", and share it with someone, like the Samaritan did. Let us be about the business of making God smile!

Prayer: I know my life is and has been a mess. I know you have been speaking to me through this and other ways. Your grace excites me, your consistency and promises, reassure me and I praise your name! Amen