

“ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN #3:
THE FORGOTTEN WATER JAR”

(John 4:7-30)

© 2023 Rev. Dr. Brian E. Germano

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 3-12-23]

--I--

1. Read Text John 4:7-30 and Pray.
2. A number of years ago, USA TODAY asked 4th-10th Graders around the country the question "*What do you think will be most important when you are an adult?*" ¹ Here's how they responded:

To do something good for other people:	35%
To be good at your work:	34%
To make a lot of money:	30%
To have close friends:	30%
To have enough time to do the things you want to do:	27%
To be married:	21%
To have kids:	14%
To be famous:	9%

A--Even from a young age, you see, we tend to have a sense of what should be the priorities in and for our lives.

B--Our priorities not only reveal what we feel are important, but they also help to define, energize, and give us direction.

C--And whether we recognize their presence or not, we ALL have them, affecting us for good or for ill.

3. Well, in today's "*Encounter with Jesus in the Gospel of John*," we hear a story about **PRIORITIES** (among other things). It's from John 4:7-30, and has come to be called the story of "The Woman at the Well."

[9am ONLY... Hear its words...

"7 A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." 8 His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.

9 The Samaritan woman asked, "Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.)

10 Jesus responded, "If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would be asking him and he would give you living water."

11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water? 12 You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave this well to us, and he drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty and will never need to come here to draw water!" 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, get your husband, and come back here." 17 The woman replied, "I don't have a husband." "You are right to say, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus answered. 18 "You've had five husbands, and the man you are with now isn't your husband. You've spoken the truth." 19 The woman said, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You and your people worship what you don't know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. 24 God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will teach everything to us." 26 Jesus said to her, "I Am—the one who speaks with you." 27 Just then, Jesus' disciples arrived and were shocked that he was talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" 28 The woman put down her water jar and went into the city. She said to the people, 29 "Come and see a man who has told me everything I've done! Could this man be the Christ?" 30 They left the city and were on their way to see Jesus."]

- 4 In thinking of this as a story about priorities, we find here a description of... *WHAT* they are; *HOW* we make them; and (most importantly) *HOW* a walk with God can affect them.

--II--

5. So, let's start by talking about **what, exactly, a priority IS.**

A--Perhaps the best definition that I've heard is that it is "*something which is of leading importance in our lives.*" ²

1--It's what we spend our time thinking about, what we do, and even what we spend most of our money on.

2--It could be a person, possession, idea, belief, or even a behavior/action. ³

B--In Verses 16-17 of today's scripture, we hear Jesus telling the woman at the well to "*call her husband*" (or in this case, the one who's *not* her husband).

1--In effect, he's calling her to recognize and acknowledge that which her actions reveal to be of leading importance for her (i.e., her "priority") ---...

2--Namely: her relationship with men beyond marriage.

C--In other words, when we come face to face with Jesus, the first thing he calls us to do is to recognize and acknowledge what is it that's of "leading importance" in our lives (i.e., our "priorities"). So, *what* are your priorities today?

6. But next in this story we then learn **HOW we make priorities** in life.

A--In Verses 13-14, Jesus makes it clear that priorities are things that we can consciously *choose* -- in this case, he tells the woman she can *choose* to draw water from either:

- 1--the *earthly* well of Sychar (giving temporary, worldly satisfaction); OR
- 2--the *heavenly* well that HE provides (giving eternal, spiritual satisfaction). ⁴

B--And it's clear from the conversation that he believes this woman has metaphorically chosen from the *former* by choosing bad priorities for herself along the way.

1--While most people drawing water from a well in that time would have done so in the early morning when it is cooler, Verse 6 tells us that this woman was drawing from the well "*about noon.*"

2--Based on this and Jesus' discussion of her "live-in-husband," the inference is that there was something about this woman (we don't know exactly what) that made her feel unwanted and unwelcome to come to the well *earlier* in the day.

C--Well, like this woman, sometimes *our* priorities in life get misplaced, too.

7. But Jesus' very conversation with her also highlights **how a relationship with God and our walk of faith can play a positive role in affecting our priorities.**

A--You see, while this woman's priorities at first seemed centered around her needing a relationships with unmarried men, in Verses 21-26 Jesus points her towards a *different* priority: the *worship of GOD*, and her *acceptance of HIMSELF as Messiah*.

B--Now, we sometimes interpret this as meaning that God *Himself* should be the "top priority" of life -- as in: (#1) God; (#2) church; (#3) family; (4) job; etc.

C--But I don't think that's what this is saying.

1--For one, how, (specifically) do we make a "priority" out of "God"? By itself, it's too vague and nebulous to put into practice.

2--And what's more is that if God is our "first/top priority," then doesn't relegate God to simply being compartmentalized as merely *one* of *many* priorities.

D--So, instead of thinking of God as our "top priority," perhaps a better way to explain what Jesus saying here is that God should be the one who *orders ALL* our priorities.

1--In other words, God and His *divine* will should give meaning and purpose to all of our *earthly* priorities.

2--And in this way, God's will becomes the divine *center* around which our earthly priorities (such as family, friends, job, school, & church) orbit and revolve.

8. Today's story actually illustrates this, because notice what Verses 28-29 says this woman does *AFTER* she accepts Jesus' offer of "living water": "*The woman put down her water jar and went into the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I've done!'*"

A--Think about that a moment: *WHY* did this woman come to the well in the *first place*? To draw water! And she brought a water jar to do it with!

1--But by the time Jesus finished talking to her, she had *forgotten* the whole reason that she was there in the first place!

2--She was so excited and overwhelmed by Jesus -- this man who loved her in spite of who she was and whatever it was she had done -- that what she *thought* was most important wasn't so important anymore.

3--At that moment, Jesus didn't *become* her priority. Instead, Jesus *rearranged / reordered* the priorities she *already had*.⁵

B--When I was a pre-teen, I was always wanting to "fit in" with and be accepted by the other guys in my school. So, I cussed and swore and tried to act tough like they did.

1--But when I met and received Jesus as my Savior at Camp Glisson up in the North GA mountains, I remember thinking that that stuff didn't really matter anymore, because I was loved and accepted by Christ *just as I was!*

2--My priorities, you see, had been rearranged by my new life with Christ.

C--It was this way for the woman at the well, and it can be this way for you today, too!

1--When you and I come to have a personal relationship with Jesus, things that we think are important are all the sudden not as important as we once thought.

2--...Because Jesus takes the old priorities of our lives and rearranges them

3--And when he does, there are all sorts of "forgotten water jars" that *represent* our reordered priorities in Christ.

9. So, let me ask: what's the "forgotten water jar" from *your* life's encounter(s) with Jesus -- the thing(s) that represents what you left behind to follow Christ?

A--Is it a beer can or wine bottle? a syringe? a lottery ticket? the URL to a pornographic website? maybe your wallet/purse? the emoji that you *used* to use online to laugh at a racially or sexually insensitive joke?

B--You see, God's Word tells us that when we truly encounter Jesus and experience salvation, we -- like the woman at the well -- can begin to live new lives, with *reordered* priorities that reflect the kingdom and will of God, and those "old" things won't be so important to us anymore.

C--So today, what's YOUR "*Forgotten Water Jar*"?

10. [PRAYER]

ENDNOTES:

¹ From a USA Today poll published in their newspaper Tuesday, May 26, 1987.

² This is a definition I first heard while attending my "Walk to Emmaus" Christian retreat in April 1991.

³ In fact, humanity is unique in that we are the *only* part of God's created order that can set and establish priorities for *ourselves*. The mineral, plant, and animal kingdom do not possess this capacity in any meaningful way. In fact, one could argue that this ability to establish and set priorities is perhaps the greatest freedom that God gives to us as human beings.

⁴ So then, a priority is not chosen simply by belief *or* by actions *alone*, but by a *combination of these* -- I've even heard it said that "*Values/Ideals + Beliefs + Commitment ' A Priority.*"

⁵ I.E., Compared with the "*living water*" that she now had, the "*physical water*" didn't really matter very much. All of the sudden, whatever shameful things she had done didn't matter anymore, because she knew that she was a new creature in Christ, as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:17 -- "*Behold, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation: everything old has passed away; everything new has come!*"