

What Did Jesus Say?

The last few weeks we have been examining signs and miracles and the response Jesus provokes in those who observe them. This has been a key theme running throughout our study and goes towards answering Jesus' questions: *"Who do you say that I am?"* and *"Who do others say that I am?"* We have noticed the trend that everyone who encounters Jesus has a life altering experience whether or not they choose to believe what the signs and miracles testify to and about Jesus.

Over the next three weeks we will be examining what Jesus has to say in his teaching to not only the twelve disciples but the hundreds, even thousands of followers that come out to hear Jesus teach. We will spend quite a bit of time studying the Sermon on the Mount. It is the longest recorded teaching of Jesus and three chapters of Matthew's Gospel (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) are devoted to those teachings. By spending time closely examining what Jesus teaches about himself and the Kingdom of God, we learn what the expectations God has for his children. We also become disciples of Christ ourselves as we devote time and energy to the study of his teaching and actively implement those teachings into our daily lives.

The second over-arching theme of our ten week study is to become prepared to give an account for what we believe. We can only do this by knowing what it is we believe. 1 Peter 3:15 says, *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."* It is my sincere hope that as we examine Jesus' teachings over the next several weeks that we will build and strengthen our understanding of who Jesus is, and his teachings so that when we are asked to give an answer for our faith in Christ Jesus we will be prepared.

This week we have an exciting course of study. In our Session we studied about Nicodemus and came to an understanding of the necessity of spiritual birth. This week we will be taught by Jesus about the importance of living water and spiritual nourishment as we follow him to Samaria. Then we will spend some time with him as he gives the Sermon on the Mount and come to understand better the promises he makes.

Woman at the Well

John 4:4-42

Today we will begin with the story of the woman at the well. Because of its length we will divide it into two sections, the first focusing on Jesus and the woman at the well. In the second section we will focus on the activity of the disciples and Jesus' sermon about the harvest. This is a long passage and more easily understood if we break it down into two parts.

An explanation of who the Samaritans were, and the social customs of Jesus' day may help clarify this passage of scripture. Going back in Jewish history about 1,000 years, King David succeeded in uniting all of the 12 tribes of Israel under one monarchy. Prior to King David's reign,

the 12 Tribes ruled themselves and fought amongst themselves. The book of Judges concludes with the appropriate description of the times: *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."* (Judges 21:25) Saul, the first King of the Jewish Nation never did succeed in uniting all the tribes. After King David, his son Solomon managed to keep the entire kingdom together, but under the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam the Northern tribes revolted and there was never again a unified Kingdom. Rehoboam continued to rule the Southern Kingdom and his descendants after him. (The history of the Divided Kingdom is recorded in 1 Kings 12-22, 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles.)

Jeroboam became King of the Northern Tribes setting his capital in Shechem (later the capital became the city of Samaria). Jeroboam, in an attempt to solidify his position encouraged his subjects to worship at altars and "high places" he built preventing the Jews of the Northern Kingdom to worship in Jerusalem, a practice carried out for the rest of the history of the Northern Kingdom and what later became known as Samaria.

Most of us are familiar with the fact that Jerusalem was sacked in 586 by the Babylonians. When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians the Jewish people of the Southern Kingdom were carried off to Babylon in what is called the Babylonian Exile. The Exile lasted 70 years before the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple. The Southern Kingdom consisted of the two tribal regions of Judah and Benjamin.

Prior to the Babylonian Exile the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 722. The Assyrian policy was to deport Jews of the Northern Kingdom to various parts of the Assyrian Empire, and to settle Assyrians in the newly capture territory of the former "Northern Kingdom". The purpose of this was to prevent rebellion, quickly promote peace, and encourage the Jews to assimilate into the Assyrian culture. The original Jewish population of the Northern Kingdom had all but abandoned their Jewish heritage to embrace the pagan religion of the non-Jews living in the area or had combined the pagan practices with Jewish tradition. When Assyrians settled into the region, they brought their own religion with them further mixing in with the semi-Jewish / pagan practices of the area. A portion of the population did still adhere to their early Jewish roots by establishing their own temple on Mt. Gerazim. Their worship and study was focused on the Books of Moses, but not on any of the rest of the Torah of the Jews. It is important to note that God did not authorize a Temple to be built anywhere but on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem (the Temple Mount). God also spoke to the faithful Jews of the Northern Kingdom through his prophets, most notably Isaiah. The entire book of Isaiah is God's word to the Jews of the Northern Kingdom calling them to repent of their idolatry and return to God otherwise God would remove his hand of protection from them and allow them to suffer the consequence of their disobedience, in short the Assyrians over-running the Northern Kingdom and carrying them off in exile. They were choosing to assimilate with the pagans in the country; and God would allow them to fully do so by permitting the Assyrians to conquer the kingdom.

By the time of Jesus, the people of Samaria were view by Jews as people of mixed race, mixed heritage, and mixed religion. They had lost the "purity" so deeply valued by the Jewish people. The Jews condemned them as unclean to the point of absolute rejection, preferring dealings with Gentiles, even Romans, over any dealings with Samaritans. Samaritans returned the

affection. Devout Jews would go so far as to take a longer, circuitous route between Jerusalem and Galilee so as not to contaminate themselves by walking through Samaria. Open hostility between the two peoples was not uncommon.

Because of the history between the Samaritans and the Jews, the story of the Woman at the Well takes on a greater significance as we better understand the hostility and prejudices of these groups of people. While open hostility was not uncommon, it would be most uncommon for a Jewish man to be seen talking publicly with any woman, in particular a Samaritan woman.

Living Water



If you have not yet taken the opportunity to spend a few minutes in prayer, do so now before reading today's passage. Open your Bible to John 4:4-42 and read the entire passage for context. We will primarily be working in verses 4-26.

What does Jesus ask of the Samaritan woman? (v.7)

What does this tell you about Jesus?

What do you think is behind the woman's response in v.9?

What do you think is the woman's understanding of the "gift of God" and "Living Water"?

What do you think is the "gift of God", and "the spring of water welling up to eternal life"?

Jacob's well was and is a well known site. The plot of land is first mentioned in Genesis 33:19, again in 48:22 and also Joshua 24:32. According to archaeologists it is also one of the deepest wells in the Holy Land. It was not a well fed by a spring, or running water. This was an extremely deep well, or cistern, that collected dew and rain water from the wet season and was

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subject to drought. Interestingly, Jesus' offer of "living water" could be understood by the woman as him offering access to physical running water coming up from a spring, hence her excitement over the idea of being able to get water without having to work hard for it. She completely misses the deeper meaning of the "living" or "running" water offered by Jesus.

Look up the following verses. What do they tell us of "living water" and how does it relate to what Jesus was telling the woman?

Jeremiah 2: 13 (in light of verse 11)

Isaiah 44:3

Zechariah 14:8

John 7:38-39

Why do you think she brings up the issue of where one is to worship God?

Fill in the blanks from verse 23-24: *"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for _____ are the _____ of _____ the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

✎ What is the point that Jesus is trying to teach the woman?

A Spiritual Harvest

Now that we've tackled the first part of this story about the woman at the well, we'll take a closer look at the second portion of the story. You may want to review the previous verses (John 4:4-42) in this story to keep in mind the context of Jesus' ministry to this woman and the upcoming events. Take a few minutes to ask the Lord to clarify his teaching in this passage and that you will have a better understanding of his Word.



We will be focusing on John 4:27-42 today. Please read this passage and answer the following questions.

Why were the disciples surprised to see Jesus talking with the woman at the well? What were the three things about this situation that made it inappropriate in the minds of the disciples?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What did the woman exclaim to the people of the town?

What do you think she meant by *"a man who told me everything I ever did"*?

Why did she want them to come meet Jesus?

✂ Jump ahead to verses 39-42. Remember back to what we said about the key to John's Gospel. It is all about testimony revealing who Jesus is. It is the presentation of evidence and testimony leading a person to make a decision about who Jesus is. What was the result of the woman's testimony, and what is the significance of this story taking place in the town of Sychar in Samaria?

Now let's go back and take a closer look at Jesus' teaching to the disciples about the spiritual harvest. Reread verses 32-38.

What does Jesus say is the food they know nothing about?

Read John 1: 6-13. Who is the light? Who is the light coming to? And what right will those who believe receive?

How do these verses fit in to what Jesus claims to be his "food" in John 4:34?

Jesus came into the world to show all mankind the light of truth, the love of God. And those who believed what Jesus came to show and teach were given the right to be children of God, not as ones born through physical birth, but through spiritual birth, to be born of the Spirit. When we experience that spiritual birth, a well-spring of living waters is opened in our soul. That well spring of living water is the Holy Spirit. What the disciples were missing was that Jesus came for *all* mankind. They were standing there in the midst of a wonderful display of Jesus transforming the hearts of the Samaritans. First the woman at the well, and then the town who came to believe because of her testimony (and later Jesus' own teaching). All the disciples could see was Jesus talking to a thrice "unclean" person whom, according to their distorted perspective, Jesus should never have been speaking. Thrice unclean because she was a woman, a Samaritan, and a woman of ill repute. They were blinded by their own prejudice.

✧ As the people of the town come out to meet him, Jesus exclaims to the disciples, *"I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."* What do you think Jesus means? Could this also apply to you and those God has brought into your life? What is your responsibility?

In the course of time, a harvest had been planted in the hearts of these Samaritans. The Books of Moses, the Pentateuch, was their sacred scripture. Jesus says *"others have done the hard work"*. The seeds of the harvest were planted by God in the scriptures, and the prophets had tended the fields. The disciples were the harvesters. Their reward was to be the joy and blessing of bringing in this harvest for the kingdom of God that they did not plant.

The Samaritans were in a spiritual place ready to hear the good news. They were drawn out by what the woman had said about Jesus. They too had been waiting for the Messiah (v25) and were ready to hear what Jesus would say. The disciples were in a place of privilege leading these Samaritans to truth, the spiritual nourishment of living water. The harvest theme even calls to mind a wheat harvest. *"Man does not live by bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."* Every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord is the spiritual bread, the spiritual food that Jesus told the disciples they knew nothing about. Jesus the *Word* is the *bread* of life. Sharing the word of God plants the seeds for more harvests. The work and will of God is that we keep planting and keep harvesting for His Kingdom and we will be nourished by his Word and his Spirit.

Be encouraged! Your faithful study of the scriptures pleases our Father and prepares you to carry His Word and His Love to all you know and all you meet. You, Dear One, bring joy to our Father because of your faith and perseverance.

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12

Today we will look at a portion of the Sermon on the Mount. It is not known exactly where Jesus spoke this sermon, but tradition holds that it was near the Sea of Galilee not far from Capernaum. It was in a large open space able to hold the crowds that followed him. The Sermon on the Mount encompasses three chapters of the book of Matthew (chapters 5-7). In our study today we will look at just a portion which includes the Beatitudes and Jesus' statements about the Law. Let's take a few minutes to spend in prayer with our Lord asking for his blessing on our studies today before we begin.



Let's turn to Matthew 5:1-12 and read what Jesus has to teach his disciples. Answer the following questions.

In verses 3-11 what one word begins each beatitude?

Write a definition for the word blessed, what do *you* think it means?

The Sermon on the Mount is the longest recorded sermon of Jesus. It begins with the Beatitudes which describe the traits God is looking for in his children, and what Jesus was looking for in his disciples.* In this instance "disciples" refers to anyone following Jesus to hear him teach and wishing to follow him further. Each beatitude is a contradiction of society's worldly values. The beatitudes challenge us to face our worldly values, uproot them and replace them with kingdom values. It will take serious effort on our parts to overcome worldly values so heavily engrained by society. Embracing the godly traits of the Beatitudes likely will cause each of us to face some form of opposition or even persecution from those who do not share the kingdom values of God. Jesus is the best example of those kingdom values, but his Word also contains direction on how to develop those values.

Let's take a closer look at each one of the Beatitudes and uncover what God has to say about each one and how we can begin to develop each trait with the help of the Holy Spirit.

* The mention of "disciples" in verse 1 does not refer to just the "Twelve". It refers to the crowds that have been following him in 4:25 and mentioned again in 7:29. The Sermon on the Mount concludes in Chapter 7:28-29 with the statement *"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the **crowds** were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law."*

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For each beatitude fill in the trait valued by God. Next to the verse write a few words describing what you think it means. Look up the Old Testament verse and the New Testament verse and make a few notes of what those verses say. Then write a few words describing the contrasting worldly value. Lastly, underline or highlight God's reward for developing the trait he values stated in the beatitude.

³*Blessed are the _____ in _____,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

- Isaiah 57:15
- James 4:7-10
- Opposing worldly value:

⁴*Blessed are those who _____,
for they will be comforted.*

- Isaiah 61:1-3
- James 4:7-10 (yes, again!)

- Opposing worldly value:

⁵*Blessed are the _____,
for they will inherit the earth.*

- Psalm 37:5-11
- Matthew 11:27-30

- Opposing worldly value:

⁶*Blessed are those who _____ and
_____ for _____, for
they will be filled.*

- Isaiah 11:4-5

- John 16:5-11

- Phil 3:7-11

- Opposing worldly value:

⁷ *Blessed are the _____,
for they will be shown mercy.*

- Psalm 41:1
- Ephesians 5:1-2

- Opposing worldly value:

⁸ *Blessed are the _____ in _____ ,
for they will see God.*

- Psalm 24:3-4
- Psalm 51:10
- 1 John 3:1-3

- Opposing worldly value:

⁹ *Blessed are the _____,
for they will be called sons of God.*

- Isaiah 60:17
- Romans 12:9-21

- Heb 12:10-11
- Opposing worldly value:

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are _____ because of _____, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

- Isaiah 52:13
- Isaiah 53:12
- 2 Timothy 3:12-14

- Opposing worldly value:

Jesus concludes the beatitudes with the final statements:

¹¹ *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

In following God and valuing the character traits he values, God's children will be persecuted in some way or another. If we possess these attributes of the beatitudes we will stand out in the world. The world shows great disdain for anything it does not value and deems weak. Jesus promises that we will be persecuted because of what we value. In the margin list a few ways that Christians today are persecuted for kingdom values. He also encourages us because by following in his footsteps we are also following in the footsteps of the prophets who also were persecuted and also rewarded in heaven. We do not choose an easy path when we choose to follow Jesus. Each of the Beatitudes promises a reward and tells us we will be blessed. When we face opposition because of our kingdom values remember and be encouraged by the knowledge that we are blessed and God is pleased with our choice to value the kingdom over the world.

Jesus' statements also pointed out to his followers a sharp contrast between what God values and what the Pharisee's valued. The Pharisee's were the people's only visible model of what God sought in faithful worship. Unfortunately many of the Pharisees were blinded by self-righteousness and pride. They no longer recognized sin in their own lives because they believed their righteousness came from vigorous adherence to their laws, rather than coming from belief in God's forgiveness. The Pharisees were not "poor in spirit", they took pride in their "righteous" standing. They were proud and harsh, not humble and gentle; they were more concerned with legalities than with mercy; their purity was ceremonial, but not internal; their prejudice and pride

caused divisiveness, and not peace in the community of the children of God. Jesus' truth was shining a bright light into the darkness of what Israel perceived as faith and righteousness as modeled by the Pharisees. Many of the Pharisees resented Jesus' truth and revealed themselves to be not children of God, but children of darkness in their persecution of him.



The last passage we will look at this week is a small but important portion of the Sermon on the Mount. In it Jesus teaches about the Law and drives home a very important point regarding righteousness.

Turn to Matthew 5:17-20 and answer the following questions.

What does Jesus say he has come to do regarding the Law?

What will happen to any who break the Law and teaches others to do so?

Who will be first in the Kingdom?



What do you think Jesus means when he says: *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."* (v.20)

It has been a week of intense study into Jesus' own teaching and words. Take a little time to reflect on the passages we studied this week. Write either a prayer to the Lord, or something of a journal entry reflecting upon what you have either learned this week or that has stood out to you. If there is something that we studied this week that you would like to share during our discussion, take some time here to prepare your thoughts. I'd love to hear them! Write your thoughts below.