

## “Finding God through Unexpected Conversations”

John 4: 1-30; 39-42

Have you ever had a conversation that changed your life? Ask anyone this question and I am sure that we would get a variety of answers, a range of responses. Responses such as “We were sitting in the doctor’s office and we heard the words ‘There is no easy way to say this but we have discovered that your loved one has a terminal illness.’” Or maybe we would get responses such as “We were sitting in the doctor’s office and we were surprised to hear, “Congratulations! You’re pregnant!”

Or maybe the person when asked would tell us that this life changing conversation started out with, “I don’t know how to tell you this so I’m just going to say it. I want a divorce.” Or maybe the person when asked will tell us that this life changing conversation started out with “I don’t know how to say this so I’m just going to say it. Will you marry me?”

We’ve all had conversations like these. One minute we are in this reality and then the next minute, through a few simple words, our world was changed. And whether we expect them or not, we know that through a few simple words, conversations have the power to alter our lives.

And this life changing power isn't necessarily limited to just the big conversations of life. Even the small mundane conversations can lead us somewhere, can lead us somewhere new and exciting, can give us some new information, information that opens our eyes to a new world, to a world that we didn't know even existed until that moment. We know that conversations have the power to change our lives, sometimes change them forever because we have all had such conversations. Even the most boring conversation can provide us with some sort of new insight-even if that insight is that we don't want to talk with that person ever again!

Good or Bad: Conversations have the power to change our lives each and every day, have the power to change our lives in big and small ways. And that is exactly what is happening in our text today, a woman's life is being changed through an unexpected conversation with a stranger. I invite you to turn in your Bibles to John 4.

Read text.

This conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is the longest conversation recorded between Jesus and anyone in the New Testament. And it is a conversation that never should have happened in the first place. Here they were, Jesus and the Samaritan woman, two different people from two different races, two different people from two different religions, two different people from two very

different backgrounds. Here they were-two people that never should have been talking with each other in the first place, talking, all because some man asked her for some water. Now we as the readers know that this man is Jesus. We know his beginnings and we know all about his miracles. But this woman at the well does not. To her, he is just some guy, some stranger, asking for water, some guy, some stranger who doesn't even have a bucket. To this woman, Jesus at this moment is just some guy who shouldn't be talking with her in the first place.

So we shouldn't be too surprised by her reaction. We know that Jesus doesn't play by society's rules. That's part of the reason we love him so much. We know that something big is going to happen that day for the woman. We know that her life is about to change through a few simple words.

This woman's first response to Jesus' request is not "Jesus, my Lord and Savior" but "What is this man thinking, talking with me? He doesn't even have a bucket. And he is a Jew! What is he doing, talking with me? As a Jewish man, it is just not done for him to be talking with me.

Unlike this woman at the well, we as the readers of this text, are expecting the unexpected because we know Jesus. We've experienced the unexpected when it comes to Jesus and his teachings and his ministry. So we are waiting, waiting to see what Jesus will say, waiting to see what Jesus will do. Unlike the woman at the

well, we as the readers know that Jesus is not going to stop the conversation with just asking for a drink of water.

No, he challenges her. He calls her bluff. And he opens her eyes to the presence of God in her midst, simply by talking with her, getting to know her, and asking questions about her and her life.

In our text from John today, we get this great conversation between Jesus and this Samaritan woman, an unexpected conversation for the woman starts out with a request of water. And this wonderful amazing unexpected conversation leads to the gift of life for this Samaritan woman. This great unexpected conversation starts out with distrust and fear on the woman's part, only to end with her rejoicing and leaving in surprise. This is a great unexpected conversation because it was never supposed to happen in the first place. They were too different. Surely there was no way that they were going to make a connection. And yet, this great unexpected conversation changed this woman's life and opened her eyes to the presence of God in her midst.

All because for the first time, through that one conversation, this Samaritan woman was seen as a real human being. She was seen as a child of God. All because for the first time, through that one conversation, this Samaritan woman discovered that she was loved by God more than she could ever imagine. All because for the first time, through that one conversation, this Samaritan woman

was shown God's grace by and through another human being. Just like we experienced the first time we had the same unexpected conversation with Jesus, that great wonderful amazing conversation that helped us encounter the presence of God in our midst.

We know how she is feeling at that moment because we felt the same way when the same thing happened to us. Surprise, excitement, and an overwhelming sense of grace. We know how she is feeling at the moment when Jesus sees her, not as how society sees her, but sees her with through the eyes of God. She knows that she is made in the image of God. She knows that she is named and claimed by God. She knows that she is beautiful and loved beyond her imagination.

We know how she is feeling because we felt the same way the first time we had the same, the same conversation that opened our eyes to the presence of God in our midst. We know because that conversation changed our lives

I'm not talking about the times when we sat in Sunday School or youth group and someone told us what God was like. I'm talking about those moments, those moments when we could feel the Holy Spirit surrounding us, those moments when we encountered the holy, those moments when we felt deep in our hearts a sense of peace, a spark of understanding, and a feeling like our heart had wings, And it wasn't just that we experienced these things one at a time. No, all three

were happening at the same time and we were just amazed. We were just speechless.

Maybe that holy moment happened in a Bible Study or at church camp. Maybe that holy moment happened to us while we sat beside a mountain stream or maybe that holy moment happened to us while we were sitting at the dining room table and we were surrounded by coffee cups, while we were lingering and enjoying the fellowship found there.

Do we remember the first moment, the first time, the conversation when Jesus asked us for something simple, like could we pass the bread, or maybe, could we spare some change or maybe could he have a glass of water and it opened our hearts to something more, it opened our hearts to the presence of God in our midst?

That moment was special. That moment is holy. Because in that moment, our walls were down. We were vulnerable. And we knew that it is not just some ordinary conversation that we were having with our friends and family. We knew that it was not just some ordinary conversation that we were having with a stranger. And it all started with a simple request such as may I have a glass of water, may I have something to eat. And then maybe it led to someone asking, “Where have you see Jesus my Lord?” And then maybe it led to someone wondering out loud what is the purpose and point of life any way.”

And then it happened. We found ourselves having this great unexpected conversation, suddenly gathered around the Lord's Table, drinking the living water of God. And then it happened. we discovered that Holy Spirit in our midst.

Unexpectedly, We found ourselves having this great conversation that wasn't supposed to happen in the first place because maybe that person was just some guy, some stranger.

Do you remember that conversation? Have you had that conversation lately? Are the excuses there, ready for us to give, all reasons that we shouldn't have the conversation in the first place: we don't like to talk about our faith stories. we grew up going to church so we know all we need to know about Jesus. Excuses like: We don't want to seem overly zealous in our faith. We don't want to be that person. It is better not to talk about religion. Excuses like: we turned our backs on God because we felt like God turned God's back on us and had abandoned us. God is not real. God doesn't exist. All reasons for us to not have that conversation with that person, that stranger, that some guy, that some girl.

So where does that leave us as people of faith? We could simply walk away from that simple request, give our excuses and go on our way. Or we could engage that person as a child of God. We could see them as a real human being. We could see them made in the image of God. And who knows? We might just find ourselves having this great conversation, this great unexpected conversation, all

because we took the risk and discovered that God is in our midst. Who knows that simple request for a glass of water could soon start a conversation that will lead us to the living waters of God, that may lead someone home into the loving arm of God once again or may lead them there for the first time. Who knows that simple request for water might just change a few lives forever.

Do you remember that conversation, the first time you encountered God? In that conversation, we wanted to know more about this God. We wanted to know more about this living water that would restore us and make us whole. We wanted to know more about God. So we asked who. We asked how. We asked most importantly the question-Why? Why would God care about me? Why does it matter for me to have God in my life? Why would Jesus want to talk to me? As the Son of God, doesn't he know that it is not right for him to be seen talking with me?

And the good news is that someone took the time to talk to us. Someone took the time to answer our questions. And the answers that we got to these questions changed our lives. We began to understand that God so loved the world that God gave God's only son so that we might live. Through that conversation we began to understand that God never left us. Through that conversation, we encountered God. And we realized that the living water of God's grace is right here, available for us, if we would only open our hearts to God.

Do you remember that conversation? Do you remember the first time you encountered Jesus through an unexpected conversation? It was a conversation that changed our lives. It sparked something in us. It is the reason that we are here today, sitting together in worship, filling our cups once again with God's grace and God's love.

We are here because someone at some point invited us to have a conversation about Jesus. We are here because someone at some point invited us to have a conversation about God's grace. We are here because someone at some point invited us to draw from the well of God's living water, a well that will never run dry. We are here because a seemingly simple conversation changed our lives forever.

That conversation introduced us to a new way of living, to a new way of being, a way that we had never experienced or known before. We were just like the woman at the well, unsure and maybe a little fearful when that stranger, when someone first began talking to us but then we soon realized that this was no ordinary conversation. It was an invitation to experience the gift of God's grace, the gift of God's love in our lives, a gift that never goes bad or runs dry.

That wonderful great unexpected conversation set our lives in a new direction and from that point on, there has been no going back. All because someone took the time to introduce us to some guy, to some guy named Jesus.

in that conversation, we encountered Jesus. We encountered God's love. And for the first time, we were seen and embraced as God's very own. And that was not the only time we felt that way because that great unexpected conversation never really came to an end. It keeps going each and every day of our lives. We get to have this great conversation that leads us to the living waters of God's love and grace every time we encounter the presence of God in our midst. The conversation never ends. It keeps going as we grow in our faith, as we grow in relationship with one another.

Just look at our text today-Jesus never tells the woman, "Well, here's all you need to know about me. I'm a Sagittarius. I love gathering around the table with my friends and breaking bread together. And I love you." Jesus never tells this woman to go because she has grown in her faith as much as she is ever going to grow." He tells her that he is the Messiah and that she has found what she is looking for in her life. His statement is an invitation, an invitation to continue learning about the ways of God's grace, an invitation to continue learning about the ways of God's love, an invitation to keep the conversation going!

Jesus leaves the conversation open-ended with the woman. She can come back as many times as she wants, as many times as she needs to to experience the living waters of God because it is a well that will never run dry. Just as he did for us the first time.

In the end, it is the woman who leaves. She leaves the well and she is trying to figure it all out. She is not sure what she has just experienced so she starts telling other people. She talks with other people, trying to figure it out. And then they start talking with other people, trying to figure it out. The conversation keeps going! And lives keep changing.

All because Jesus initiated contact with this woman he shouldn't have been talking with in the first place! This Samaritan woman's "religious understanding, her categories of judgment, her whole life is turned upside down by this conversation she has with a strange man at the well."

The conversation leads to the encounter. The conversation leads to the starting point where the light of Jesus' truth and love can come through. The conversation leads to the moment when the woman has the courage to believe that she is loved and embraced by God as one of God's very own.

And it all begins with a simple request, a request for water. Who knows how many lives can be changed just by us starting the conversation?

May we always be ready for the many ways that God initiates the conversation to us and through us so that the ripples of the living water can keep on going. Amen.