

'We Know'

by Meirion Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discovering faith and the search for truth and meaning, highlighting the significance of the Samaritans' confession of Jesus Christ as the savior of the world.

Duration: 1:15:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 1:4, John 4:14, John 6:35, John 6:63, John 8:32, Romans 10:17

Topics: "Salvation Message", "Gods Identity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the darkness and emptiness of the world and the need for salvation. He shares a story about beach missionaries who speak to children about Gospel truths while their fathers are engaged in other activities. The preacher highlights the importance of hearing the voice of Jesus and understanding his identity. He also mentions the missionary exhibition as an example of the impact of the word of God in modern situations. The content of the word of God is described as giving dignity, identity, and responsibility to humanity, even in their fallen state. The preacher emphasizes the theme of discovery and the search for truth and meaning in John's Gospel. The sermon concludes by highlighting the ultimate giving of God in sending his only begotten son.

Transcript

Gospel of John chapter 4 verse 1. The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria, so he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, Will you give me a drink? His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

Sir, the woman said, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds? Jesus answered, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,

but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water. He told her, Go, call your husband and come back. I have no husband, she replied.

Jesus said to her, You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.

Sir, the woman said, I can see that you are a prophet. Our father is worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. Jesus declared, Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming, and has now come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.

God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. The woman said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.

Then Jesus declared, I who speak to you am he. Leaping on to verse 39, many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. He told me everything I ever did.

So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words, many more became believers. They said to the woman, We no longer believe just because of what you said.

Now we've heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world. Amen. Well, many of us may remember from lessons in school, the great word Eureka, Eureka, the great word of discovery.

A man sat in a bath, and he discovered something. I have found it, Eureka. That was his cry.

It will be true to say this evening that Eureka, the discovery, the search, the hope, the human aspiration, the desire to discover, to find is indeed the great human aspiration and desire to seek, to find in different walks of life. What do you hope to find? What do you hope to discover? How pathetic, indeed, how doomed any civilization will be when they have lost that great desire to seek and to find new things, new ideas, new horizons, a society that continues to dream, continues to hope. Indeed, all human civilizations, all human cultures are driven by that great motivating need to discover, to discover, to create, to design, to invent, to compose, in finding ways, new ways of communicating with each other, in medicine and healing, in science, in all kinds of ways.

People want to find out. People want to discover. And they want to, thankfully, share with us their discoveries.

We are all this evening beneficiaries of those who have gone before us, and they found something out. And we benefit from that. The people who look for new lands, the people who are still looking for new stars, are there any new worlds left to conquer? The history of researchers, the history of old and new technologies, they're all propelled by this same thirst, by this same desire to find and to discover.

And the religious experience and religious expression and world religions all testify this evening that there are people seeking, there are people wanting to know, is there an ultimate being? How can we find him? Where is he? Is he there at all? Is she there at all? The great search, ultimate purpose, why am I here? What's the point of it all? Destiny, the meaning of life. Alan mentioned in his prayer, reality. People who are fed up with the joke and the act and the boredom, they want reality.

Well, discovery is the big theme of John's Gospel. I want you to turn back to that section that Alan read for us this evening. This is the big theme that this Gospel addresses.

This discovering, this seeking, this searching for truth and for meaning and for reality. Indeed, John is the only biographer that tells us directly in his account of the life and the ministry of Christ why he's actually collated it together. Why has he put the biography together at all? You may know that in chapter 20 and in that 30th and 31st verse, John tells us the purpose of his writing.

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. So John says, I've been selective in what I've put together. And what I've put together, these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That's the discovery. You may discover life. You may find life in the name and in the person of Jesus Christ.

That is the great discovery, what we might call the discovery of faith. That in believing, in trusting, in accepting, in acknowledging Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that you may have life, continue to have life in his name. John's gospel tells us about the source and the origin of life.

It tells us about the quality of life. It's eternal life. It's not life as described by humans for humans.

It's a divine life, described by the ultimate divine, by Jesus Christ himself. He tells us what life is. He describes reality for us.

It's his life. The life of Christ is given to men and women who believe in him. Eternal life.

And it's not just eternal in terms of quality, but it is everlasting in its duration. It does not run out. It is not limited.

It does not stop at any point, not even the point of death. It goes on forever and forever. And the source and the origin of this life, John's gospel tells us, is not in a system.

It is not in ritual, not even religious ritual. The source and the origin of this life is in a person. The person of Jesus Christ.

And what John does in his biography, in his gospel, of course, is to introduce us to people. Real people in real places. And these people make this discovery.

They find out not only things about themselves and about the world they lived in, but they find out about God. They find out about his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And they find out about how it is possible for them to have a relationship with this God.

Indeed, throughout John's gospel, you have the description of God as Father. To have a relationship as intimate, a relationship as personal, a relationship as real and as meaningful as that. That this great, invisible, unseen God, made visible in Jesus Christ, can become my Father.

John himself, the author, tells us with that measure of delight, with that measure, indeed, even of excitement, how he came to discover the true identity of Jesus Christ. In the first chapter, we are told of John the Baptist, how he, although a blood relation of the Lord Jesus Christ, how he came to discover the true identity, the true person, the true character of Jesus Christ. Andrew, Simon, these are the names of the people.

Nathanael, in that first chapter too. And then that wonderful verse in John chapter 2, Jesus is in a wedding, you remember the story. He miraculously, supernaturally, changes that water into wine.

He shows his complete and total authority over the elements of nature, as he does, indeed, throughout this gospel. We are told in the first of these miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory.

The disciples discover this isn't just a man. He's not just a man. He is more than a man.

And they see something of his glory, of who he really is. They discover that. And his disciples put their faith in him.

They discover that he can be trusted. He can be believed upon. He can be known.

In chapter 3, Nicodemus comes to a similar realization. He discovers in the dark of night that Jesus Christ is the son of God. And that God so loved the world that he'd given this son.

And Nicodemus discovers wonderful things about the Lord Jesus Christ. So it's a book of discovery. It's a book that touches, if you like, the big issue of every day and every generation.

Discovering. Seeking. Finding.

And John's gospel says we may find in Christ not just the meaning of life, but that it is life from God himself. But I want to concentrate this evening on John chapter 4. That is the chapter that was read, of course. And there in this chapter, the individual and then the group of people in Samaria who make this great and tremendous discovery.

We heard last night about the veil being drawn back. Well, here is a drawing back of a veil. And these people see someone.

And they come to know someone. And we have recorded for us in John chapter 4 the discovery that these Samaritans make. It's a remarkable discovery.

It's a tremendous discovery. And I want to focus on that testimony as it is put for us in that last verse. Verse 42 of chapter 4. This is their testimony.

The very last line. We know that this man really is the savior of the world. That's the discovery.

And just in the very description, in the very profession, in the very testimony of these people, we sense their own amazement. They've come to know something they never knew before. They've come to meet

someone that they've never met before.

They've come to understand. They have come into a knowledge that is new and fresh. We know that this man who has visited our town.

He's been with us here for two days. This man really is the savior of the world. This is one of the earliest Christian confessions.

This is one of the earliest confessions of faith in the church, in the community of believers. This is the foundation of their belief. This is what they believe.

That this man really is the savior of the world. And it's a remarkable confession. It's a remarkable testimony.

It's remarkable because of the sense of conviction you sense as you read these words. We know. We know this.

There are many things we don't know. There are many things we'll be never sure of in this life. But we know this.

We are convinced of this. This is our personal conviction. This is no second-hand, second-generation confession.

This is the fresh confession of new babes who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And it carries all that freshness of conviction. There is an assurance in those words.

It does not have anything of the uncertainty and the lack of clarity that we get in confessions, even from many quarters in the church today. We know that this man really is the savior of the world. And not only the assurance and the conviction, but the clarity.

It's so clear. It's so focused. It's a gift of a text to each and every one of us.

What does a Christian believe? What is a Christian? A Christian is a person that can say, I know that this man really is the savior of the world. It's the language of discovery. It's the language of faith.

Verse 41 tells us they were believers. So it's the language of believers. It's not the language of skeptics.

It's not the language of agnostic or atheist. It's the language. It's the vocabulary of the believing church of Jesus Christ.

The believing community there in Samaria. They'd only had a two-day visit. But that two-day visit had revolutionized their lives, their place in their community, their place in the world, their place in the purposes of God, their place in the saving purposes of Jesus Christ.

Everything seems to be in this clear, convinced, assured statement. But I want to suggest this evening that there are more reasons why this testimony is amazing. Why this conviction, why this discovery of faith really is so remarkable.

And it is remarkable for every believer. We sing these hymns. We read our Bibles.

We say things about ourselves. I'm sure it's true of all of us. We lose the sense of amazement, the sense of wonder, the sense of tremendous significance, the depth, the profoundness of what we say.

These people here were saying it. And in saying it, they are saying something remarkable. And every true Christian is able to say something as remarkable, exactly as remarkable as this.

2,000 years later, in the 21st century, the statement, if it is upon your lips, if it is found as the controlling confession of your life and heart, it's amazing. It's remarkable that there are people left in Wales tonight, that there are people left in these islands, that there are anybody left in Europe, that there are people tonight. The missionary exhibition, open from 2.30 to 5.30, Stuart Elliot made the announcement last night, tells us that all through the world, there are people and this is their confession.

This is their statement. This is their conviction. This is their belief too.

And I say it's remarkable. It's wonderful. And these are my reasons.

First of all, as we look at this remarkable testimony, this discovery of faith, I want to suggest it's remarkable, firstly, because of the very context we find it. The very environment that this statement arises out of makes it most remarkable. Faith always has a context.

We are not people who are out of this world, we are in this world. And in this world, in a geographical spot in the Middle East called Samaria, these people made this statement. They made it at a specific time, a specific place, and it has tremendous significance just as we look at the context.

And so does your faith and my faith too. Well, firstly, in general terms, if you like the historical context, the social, the political context that these people make this confession. We know that the Samaritans and the Jews together were dominated by the great Roman Empire.

The Romans were the bosses. The Romans were in charge. And the Romans, that civilization, that group, culture of men and women, and they dominated the world.

It was the big power force. It was the big authority. It was the controlling thing in the world at the time.

The great, the mighty, the massive, the impressive, the sophisticated Roman Empire. With all its ideas, with all its philosophies. And here it was.

And the savior of the world wasn't particularly a Christian phrase. We know that many of the Romans saw their own leaders as saviors. They are political leaders.

Indeed, many of the Caesars and many of the Hadrians and the Neros and the other guys we've read about in history, they're actually called the rescuers, the saviors, the deliverers. These are the guys with their chariots. Some of you might have seen the video, part of it.

The gladiators. You see the wheels, you see the fighting, you see the battles, and you see the prestige, and you see the greatness of this great empire and what it entertains itself with. And everything there.

And here is a culture that says, these are our gods, these are our heroes, these are our saviors, the Caesars, the guys with the swords, the guys with the chariots, the guys with physical fitness, the guys with the big ideas, the emperors, the conquerors, the warriors. These are the gods. These are the saviors of the world.

You see the significance of what these, this minority Samaritan group is saying? They are saying in their culture, they are saying in their day, it is not politics, it is not education, it is not the philosophy of the Greeks, it is not the economics, it is not the civil authorities, it is not the Caesars and the Hadrians and the Neros. This man really is the savior of the world. It is Jesus Christ who is the real conqueror.

It is Jesus Christ who is the real king. It is Jesus Christ who is the real Lord. The world has its salvation, not in the Greek and the Roman Empire.

We can read, can't we, that book? You find it mostly, I suppose now, in secondhand bookshops, *The Rise and the Fall of the Roman Empire*. And there it is. There's no salvation.

There's no real deliverance. There's no real rescue. There's no real redemption.

There's no real liberation there. These people are saying, and they know what they're talking about, they were surrounded by saviors. They are saying this man really is the savior of the world.

Christ is the savior. Or think of the more specific religious context. Not just the philosophical ideas, but think of the religious ideas.

There were all these deities, gods were to a penny, and many of these gods, the Zeus's and the others, they were the saviors. They were the rescuers. They were the ones in the unseen heavens.

They were the ones who had the clout and the power. If there was to be any spiritual deliverance, if there was to be any spiritual freedom, if there was to be any spiritual salvation, it was dependent on the whims and the caprices and the fancies and the goings on of the gods. This is where spiritual freedom was to be found.

In other words, here were these Samaritans in a multi-faith culture. Here they were in a pluralistic society. Temples were to a penny.

Gods and beliefs were all around them. And yet they're willing to stand out in their day and in their culture. And they're willing to say, it's not in the Zeus's.

It's not in the Diana's of Ephesus. It's not in the gods of our own culture. We know the Samaritans themselves have their own religious culture.

The Samaritans themselves have their own religious convictions. The Samaritans themselves have their own religious symbolism. And Samaria itself had significance and even based on the first five books of the Bible.

But they're making a confession here that says, no, we know this man really is the savior of the world. So I say that in its context, this confession is remarkable for its boldness. They're willing to stand out and say, no to the gods of the world, no to the gods and to the idols, even of religion around us.

This man, specifically this man, really is the savior of the world. It's a bold, it's a courageous statement. It's dogmatic.

It's dogmatic in a world that didn't like dogma either. It's an absolute affirmation. This man really is the savior of the world.

So we're saying tonight, if you were to trust, if you were to believe in Christ, if you are to take this affirmation, if you were to make this your statement of faith, if this is to be the basis of your life, it's going to cost. It's going to cost. People will say you can't say that salvation is only in one person.

You can't be as exclusive as that. But true faith, true belief has always been exclusive. It is channeled, it is focused in one God, not many, in one Christ and in one savior.

The New Testament is insistent, one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one unique, and here it is. This man really is the savior of the world. They are saying Jesus only.

They are saying no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. They are preparing the way for the great statement of Christ himself in John 14. I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one, no one, no Samaritan, no Greek, no Jew, no Barbarian, no Scythian, no one comes to the Father but by me. And these men and women, they've seen that. They've seen the exclusive nature.

They've seen how special, how unique. They've seen that Christ is not just the best way. He's not just the best savior that's on offer.

They are saying this man really is the, he's the only savior of the world. And that makes it remarkable. You know, it's remarkable.

I visited a Christian union in a school and they always apologize in this particular school that there's not many there. On this particular day, there was only one there. And that one boy who was in year seven, so he was about 11 or 12, was telling me that he thought that he was the only Christian in the school.

And he told me what he believed and how he'd become a Christian in one of the camps during the summer. He was standing there on his own, the only one. He knew that this was the only savior of the world.

And he was already at 11 years of age, bearing the cost, bearing a little of the stigma of being a Christian. It makes it remarkable. There are men and women tonight, I think it's still 80 pastors in Vietnam.

They're in prison, why? Because they believe that Jesus Christ is the only savior of the world. We heard last night of missionaries who have labored for years and for years in different cultures, had opposition. They have died terrible, horrible deaths.

Why? They believe that Jesus Christ is the only savior of the world. But let's be more immediate again, even in the context. How were these people brought to this wonderful discovery, this bold, this courageous affirmation of faith? How were they brought to it? What is the immediate context? Well, we know that there are two aspects recorded for us in John chapter four.

Firstly, there is the aspect of the power of personal testimony. It is an amazing story, isn't it? The woman of Samaria, it is through her testimony, her personal understanding, little, small, even insufficient, you would say, as it is. It is this that has brought these people to faith and to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Her testimony is strategic. There's no doubt about this. Her testimony is strategic in bringing a community to believe, a significant number of people to believe in her community.

Her own personal discovery of who Jesus is and what he has told her about herself and about himself acts like a bridge to bring these people close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's take a step back and ask this question, and it's an important question for us all, isn't it? How do you reach Samaritans? How do you reach people in this particular community? They have their own belief system. They have their own culture.

They have their own convictions before this woman opens her mouth and before Christ spends those two days there. They are locked in, and some would say, well, could you ever penetrate? Could you ever get into that particular kind of culture? How do you do it? How do you cross the big, great cultural divides that separate these people from Jesus Christ? You see, the discovery of faith is made in that context of real-life challenges. We think we have problems.

We think we have difficulties. Well, here they are. They face the Son of God, and he was here on earth.

Here was what you might call a resistant group of people. And how was the Savior himself to penetrate? How was he to come in? What was his strategy? What was his way? How did he cross those divides? Verse 9 summarizes, doesn't it, the divides, the woman herself, the Samaritan woman. It's very interesting.

Ten times in this chapter we're reminded here is a Samaritan woman, a person who would have not had any standing, let alone from her moral background and her immorality. Some have said it may be prostitution. We'll look at that in a moment.

But here's a woman with a background. Here's a woman with... But she's a Samaritan woman. She had no place.

She had no voice. There'd be no authentic credibility about this woman if she said anything, really. But to say something about religious matters, and yet this is the difficulty.

And she says, you are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan, divide number one. You are a Jew, and I'm a Samaritan woman, divide number two. How can you ask me for a drink? Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

And there's a baggage, isn't there, of divides there. Real life challenges, real life obstacles. And yet we're about to see that faith and conviction is about to rise on Samaritan ground where all this cultural baggage and where all these difficulties abound.

You see, this discovery and the faith that these people come to, yes, it's in the context of geography and history and religion, but let's remind ourselves it's in the context of the ministry of Christ when he was here on earth. And in the context of Christ's ministry, in the context of Christ's teaching ministry, in the context of Christ's preaching ministry, in the context of Christ's caring ministry, faith, the discovery of faith is about to blossom. All the commentators tell us of the great significance of verse four, he had to go through Samaria.

The divine mission, the divine mandate, the divine plan which we heard of this morning, the divine plan of God had to be executed, had to bring its fruit here in Samaria. What are the wonderful features of Christ's ministry here? And in the context of this ministry, this woman herself comes to simple, simple faith. Well, of course, he first of all identifies with her.

That context of his ministry is always amazing in the gospels, isn't it? Who Christ identified with. He comes close to this woman. Many have suggested she's at the well at this particular time of the day because she would not have had to mix with others.

Others didn't want to identify with her. Other people didn't want to know her. There were some who wouldn't be seen dead with this woman.

She's out there in the loneliness of that hot sun. The well was a place for community gossip. The well was a place for community gatherings.

The well was the community place. But there's no community there for her. She may well have been an outcast.

There may have been certainly four or five women who didn't want to see her. She might have been the one who'd stolen their husbands, who'd upset their family life, who'd brought heartache to children and others in the communities. And there she was, isolated, cut off.

This is the context, her context, and Christ comes in to that context and he identifies with her. Like Ezekiel of old, he sits where she was sitting. And there he sits and he's interested in her.

We know that he actually knows everything about her. There's nothing that she can really tell him. But he comes and he's interested in her.

There's that wonderful personal touch. There's that wonderful personal contact, that wonderful personal interest. That is the context, always and ever of faith.

I'll at least mention in his prayer this evening, somebody prayed, somebody was interested. Somebody came in the name of Jesus Christ. Somebody showed an interest.

Somebody spent time. Somebody was there. Somebody, in the name of Christ, minister, did what he did.

Sat in the lonely chair in the kitchen. Sat in the lonely hospital ward. Sat with you, perhaps on the lakeside in a camp, or sat with you next to a conference.

Nobody else knew about you. Jesus Christ knew about you. And the context here, the interest, Christ knows.

Knows everybody here. It is interesting, isn't it, in a large conference, who knows who and what we know about each other. We heard in our prayer this morning from this platform, God knows you're here.

This woman wasn't here by mistake. And Christ wasn't there, certainly not by mistake or chance. He was there, the right time, the right place.

And he had the right words. He wasn't just interested in her, but he was actually interesting as he spoke to her. They were by a well.

The great concern of this woman was to sustain her life, to get water to drink. She lived in the Middle East. You don't have to be in the Middle East.

We all know what thirst is. We need to be sustained. And here's the picture, the picture of water.

The water that sustains, the water that refreshes, the water that washes, the water that cleanses, all the pictures of water in the scripture itself. The water of life that Jesus will later talk about in John chapter 7, 2. That picture of eternal life, the life of God, the real life, the real meaning, the real purpose, the real relationship that we were created for. All these pictures come to mind.

And Christ is interesting. And he talks to her about this water. Well, it will sustain you physically.

But I can give you a water that will bring you to life and sustain you spiritually forever, eternally and everlasting. And he says to this woman, that water is a gift. And throughout the verses at the beginning of this chapter, the gift that I give, give, give.

He's telling this woman that God is generous. Whatever else she thought about God, whatever else she knew about God, from that day on, she would never doubt that God is kind, that God is generous. So many people today, perhaps ourselves as Christians, we are sometimes tempted to think that God is some celestial scrooge in heaven and he just wants to take things from us.

That is not the view of the Bible. The water that I give. Why does God give? Because that's his nature.

That's how he is. From the very beginning of Revelation, he gives a world. And what kind of world does he give? The best kind of world with a variety of color.

The majesty of mountains, the vastness of seas and all the creatures therein, sun, moon and stars. He gives this world. And he gives to Adam in that world great dignity.

He gives to Adam great identity, great status made in the image of God. And he gives to that first man, he gives him a wife. And he gives them responsibility.

And he gives them liberty and freedom to enjoy and to subdue and to create and to do all the wonderful things of discovery, to discover names for the animals, the God who gives. And even when they sin, they turn their backs on this God, he gives them a promise to sustain them in their fallenness, in their shame and in their disobedience. He gives them a promise to lean on.

And the whole of the Old Testament is a testament to God giving, giving leaders to his rebellious people, giving grace to sinful men and women, giving them kings, giving them his law, his royal law, giving them, the great climax of the giving is recorded here in John, the God who gives his only begotten son, the God who looks into himself and gives of himself in the Lord Jesus Christ and who gives eternal life to all those that will believe in him. He tells this woman, I have a gift for you. God has a gift for you.

The God who is generous, eternal life. And in this context, giving this woman a relationship, that's where she'd failed, isn't it? She'd failed in relationships. She'd failed in human relationships.

I don't really know whether this woman was a prostitute. Scripture doesn't tell us she was a prostitute. It's always two ways of looking at everything, isn't it? It was this woman's story.

There she was, looking for love, looking for relationship, looking for meaning, looking for purpose. She's made like that, like every other woman, like every other man, young person and child, looking for what we were intended to be. And so much of that comes in human relationship.

And man after man used her, abused her. Who knows? Usual tendency to blame the woman. The men that had used this woman, the men that had abused her, the hurt, the rejectedness, the sense of being

used, and the sense of cheapness, and the sense of hurt, and the sense of bitterness, and all that had come into her life.

And Jesus puts his finger on it and says, well, it's all because of sin, personal sins, personal choices, personal habits that you have developed. It's all there and I know about it all. And there is not one word of condemnation.

There's not a word of affirming this kind of lifestyle. But John chapter three tells us, he had not come to condemn the world, he'd come to save. Here it is, remember? The savior of the world.

I have not come to condemn. And he's coming to rescue this woman out of all that. He's coming to save her, to deliver her from all that collapse of human relationship.

And she comes, and this is the context of faith. She comes, that great awareness. She thinks to herself, he knows everything about me.

Could this be? Is this the Christ? The anointed ruler of God? The one who knows everything? The one who God has said will be everything? Will be the king? Will be the Lord? On his government, on his shoulders, the government will rest? The mighty God, the wonderful counselor, could this be him? She's just asking the question. She's the first awakenings of this woman's faith in the context of Christ's ministry. And in the first awakenings of faith, she goes with that testimony.

And she shares it with other people. The potential, the power of the potential of one testimony. I do not know many things this woman could have said.

I do not know how God's wonderful grace works. I do not know the mechanics of faith. I have little theology.

No time in Bible college. No course that I've been on at all. But she has been for that short while in the presence of the Son of God, the King of kings.

He's seen right through her. He's identified the emptiness, the sin, the broken relationships, the lot. And into that he said, I have come to give you eternal life.

Although you are a broken sinner, although the cisterns of this world have failed you and the waters have all fled, I'm coming to give you eternal life like water to wash, to cleanse, to heal, and to restore. You see, this is what makes the testimony of these people so wonderful. That's what brought them to the Savior.

That's what brought them to the foot of the Savior. The brokenness, the hurt, the confusion, the little uncertainty even of the woman. Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Could this be the Christ? She brought an interest. Here was the woman of Samaria. And in that context, tells each and every one of us tonight, doesn't it? You have a neighbor.

You have a friend. You have a child. You have a mother, a father.

There is somebody. And you are witnessing to them. And you don't know.

And most probably, you don't need to know the potential, the possibilities of your witness, even of your questions of honesty, the impact they can make on a community. I mean, this is a remarkable passage for

each and every one of us involved in different aspects of mission in our own communities, which are now, I mean, it's cross culture just going over the fence next door. It's cross culture all over the world.

And we think we must have this plan and this action and this system and this course and this teaching and this training and they'll all help in some way. But the power of the testimony of somebody who has been in the presence of Christ and Christ has touched their lives. You just don't know.

Teach me, we have sung tonight, the value of a soul. I mean, we'd have gone into Samaria in different ways. Jesus went through this frail jar of clay and he brought out a congregation.

And this, of course, leads us to the second aspect of the context, which makes it wonderful. It was not just the testimony. The testimony was powerful and that is not denied.

We no longer believe just because of what you said, but what you said has had an impact. We cannot deny that. It has had its impact.

But that has been that there may be another impact and that is far greater. And it is this context, the context of the ministry of Christ then to these people. We no longer believe just because of what you said.

Now we have heard for ourselves. Look at verse 41. Because of his words, many more became believers.

That's how people come to faith. How will you become a Christian? How will you come to discover that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world? There may be many things that bring you to the point of interest. There may be many instruments used to bring you to that place.

But true faith, faith like these Samaritans had, faith which focuses specifically in the saviorhood of Christ is impossible without being exposed to the word of Christ himself. Because of his words, many more became believers. This is the great context of faith discovery.

You see, we're emphasizing here that faith is discovered not in the same way that the enjoyment of music is discovered or the interest in literature may be discovered or the way that we discover in science or technology, human effort, human cleverness, human ingenuity. No. The discovery of faith is made in the context, in the atmosphere, in the environment of the word of Christ.

And that is vital to understand. And it's a great relief. Takes the burden off everybody's shoulders.

It's not my word. It's not my testimony. Has a part to play.

But ultimately, Jesus will do his work in his way through his word. And in case we think, well, surely there must be another way. Look at what the words of Christ actually are.

In chapter 6 and verse 63, Christ himself tells us, the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. It's not just abstract teaching up there in the air somewhere. The words.

The very words that I speak as you watch my lips and as you hear those words coming to you. Those words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. So how did the Samaritans come to the discovery of faith? The same way as you and I came to the discovery of faith.

Romans 10 verse 17. Faith comes from hearing the message. And the message is heard, says Paul, through the word of Christ.

A Sunday school teacher brought you the word of Christ. A camp leader brought you the word of Christ. A parent brought you the word of Christ.

A tract brought you the word of Christ. A sermon brought you the word of Christ. A hymn brought you the word of Christ.

The testimony of someone else brought you the word of Christ. And it is that word that brought these men and women in Samaria to say, this man really is the savior of the world. He has told us.

He has testified. The authentication we seek is in him and his word. So important, isn't it, to see this.

In all discoveries, communication is vital. Communication here of Christ. It's not in mime, can't be.

It's speaking. Not dances, not drama. It's eyeball to eyeball.

He's looking at these people and he's speaking to them. This is the greatest act, actually, that any human can be a part of. The Bible tells us our God is a speaking God.

Our God communicates. Our God spoke. And the world was brought into being.

And when he created men and women in his own image, one of the glories of that image is that they too can speak and communicate to each other in this world, even fallen as it is. Here is word-centered communication from Jesus Christ. The word.

It's the big theme, isn't it, of John chapter 1. How does God express himself? Well, Jesus is the expression. Jesus is the word. Jesus is God revealing himself to us.

This is the revelation. This is how we discover. We discover nothing.

If God were to close his mouth, if God were not to speak, the heavens declare they speak something of the glory of God's power and his majesty. But here these people are talking about salvation. Not talking about creation at this point.

It's salvation. How do we know anything about being saved? How do we know anything about being right with God? Jesus, we are told, because of his words. Precious words of Jesus.

Wonderful word of life. He speaks. He speaks.

John's gospel tells us this is the voice of God. God is speaking in Jesus Christ. Wake up.

The creator is addressing you. This is what John's gospel says. Jesus Christ, the word.

He is the creator of this world. The one who made you is speaking. Listen.

It's important. The words of the creator. They are words of wisdom.

They are words of knowledge. They are words of love. In this gospel, we find a little phrase time and time again.

The old version. Verily, verily, they are words of truth. I tell you the truth.

This is not a pack of lies. This is not myth. This is not fantasy.

This is truth. Jesus speaks the truth about himself. He's not a liar.

He's not a deceiver. He's not a charlatan. He speaks the truth in his word.

We will never discover faith without paying attention to the words of Christ. That is why any strategy, any little training course, anything that brings people to the word of Christ, we lose it. Anything that helps people to open the Bible and to read from John in a Discovering Christianity course, or read Mark's gospel in a Christianity Explained course, bring them to the word of Christ.

Let the word do its work. It's never failed. The word of God is sent out.

It will accomplish. It did here in Samaria. In this difficult, hard context, leave the word.

Do its work. His word is light in darkness. These are the pictures of John's gospel.

His word is bread to the hungry. Creates the hunger. Fulfills the hunger too.

His word creates the thirst. Never thought about that before. Wonderful moments, aren't they, in Bible studies, preaching or teaching, Sunday school class, even with your own children.

Never thought about that before. Or the word brought that to mind. You thought about it for the first time.

I never thought I was a sinner. Never forget an evening. It's related to our morning speaker.

And the only thing that ties us together in this way is that we both arrived in Bangor in the same term. And Dr. Davis had come to pastor the church. And I'd arrived in my first year.

And having a service to induct Dr. Davis to the ministry. And a famous preacher came to preach. I decided to ask as many friends as I could.

And one of our friends turned to me and said, after the sermon that night, I have never been told before that I am a sinner. I thought to myself, we've told him for two years that he's a sinner. We've told him for two years.

We've been telling ourselves this is why we need... He heard it. The word of God was being preached. And he became aware of his sin.

He became aware of how tragic his sin was. He became aware of how dangerous it was of his sin. You see, the word was doing its work.

And I'm asking tonight in this context, what will you do with the word? You will never come to this confession without it. What will you do with the word? Because in the word, God speaks to you. God addresses you in his word.

Some of you have already been on another camp. Some of you have been in other conferences. Some of you have Christian parents.

Some of you have Christian children. Some of you have heard sermons time and time again. What have you done with the word? Because it's the word of God.

It's the word of Christ. Those that are not ashamed of me and my word, Christ has tied himself to that revelation of himself in the word. It is the word that triumphs in the book of Acts.

It is the word of God in testimony. As the Holy Spirit comes upon it. What will you do? Have you heard the voice of Jesus? Have you heard the voice of Jesus pleading? Have you heard him explaining who he is? This is the context that faith came in.

It gives great possibilities for the triumph of the gospel throughout the world. There are faithful men and women tonight throughout the world. Go to the missionary exhibition and there you will see a wonderful display of what the word of God is doing.

What the word of God is doing. The word of Christ is doing in modern situations like Samaria. That was the context.

But secondly and finally, what was the content of that word? We've looked at the context of faith. But what was the content? What do they actually hear Jesus say? What was his two-day teaching program all about? What was his ministry focusing on? I'm sure we'd love to know how long he preached and what he said and what he taught. What parables? What pictures? What illustrations? What intensity? When did he plead? When did he stop perhaps and pray? I don't know but we know this.

We know that this man really is the Savior of the world. That was the result of it all. Christ himself had brought them to that place of conviction, of knowledge, of assurance, of clarity.

Whatever else they'd forgotten. Whatever else they'd not picked up on. They picked up on this.

The man who came to our town. The man who sat there and taught us. He is the Savior of the world.

That is the remarkable aspect of their confession. The content of it. The context is thrilling but the content.

This man really is the Savior of the world. Their faith is focused on him. That's the greatest thing about faith.

It is object. Who is the one they look to? Who is the one they speak of? Who is the one they talk of? Who is the one they testify of? It's him. You see it's not even their own experience at this point.

They don't say this man is my Savior. You know we really mustn't meddle with Scripture. Even evangelicals are wonderful at meddling with Scripture, aren't we? For God so loved the world.

Now I'd like you to take out that little phrase and put your own name there. Why? The Bible says God so loved the world. And here these people say this man really is the Savior of the world.

They are in that world. They belong to that world as we shall see in closing. And they have an interest in this Savior of the world.

They have come to believe and put their faith in the Savior of the world. They are confessing something big and something great. They're not just talking about their own experience and their own understanding.

There is a declaration here. There is an objective assent and a realization about who Jesus is. And that is vital.

You cannot be a Christian without such a confession about the Lord Jesus Christ. Who he is and what he has done. The person, the work of Christ.

Our faith rests on it. Indeed faith cannot be without it. Faith will never come into existence.

Faith will never be there. It will never let alone flourish and survive. And thrive without the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

And here they tell us about who Jesus is and about what he's done specifically in him as the Savior of the world. They focus on salvation. It is a wonderful thought isn't it? They're young believers and they have this world vision.

They haven't been to an EMW missionary exhibition. And yet they know that the man who's been in their town is not just the Savior of their town and the Savior of their families. He's the Savior of the world.

They have a world vision at a very young age as Christians. They've already seen the international scope of the work of Jesus Christ. They've already come to understand in a little way the universal significance of this man who's been in their town.

It's remarkable. You see the confidence is not in self. It's not in personal merit.

It's not in religious observance, religious pilgrimage. They tell us nothing of that. They just say Jesus is the Savior of the world.

But in closing let's look at the specifics. They say this man. They don't see before them some remote robot.

They're not looking at some kind of mythical genie who's come out of a lamp for a few minutes. They're not looking at some nonsensical ghost. They're looking and they're saying this man.

This real human being. He came here. He arrived in town.

He was thirsty. He was tired. He's got the dust of Samaria on his feet.

John's gospel tells us this is a real man. Tired, thirsty. A man who knows loneliness.

A man who was misunderstood even by his closest. A man who suffered. A man who knew what pain was.

A man who looked at the grave of a friend. With all the significance that death and the grave had, he wept over it all. He was vulnerable.

The world's Savior is not removed from the world. He is in this world. And they've seen a real man.

They've spent two days and they've had exposed to them the perfect transparency of his life. He's a man of sorrows, says the Bible. He's touched with our infirmities.

Sympathizes with all our human needs. He's real. He's genuine.

He's true. He's an authentic man. In this world, this vast, vast humanity, a real man.

A human. A human being has come. And he has not just revealed God to us, but he is God.

God who made the first man in his own image, in his own likeness. We saw something of the fall, the collapse of that just a little. He's come now as a real man, a perfect man.

To save and to rescue this sick world. And this is his greatness. That as a man, as the God-man that John portrays him to be.

He is God, but he is man. And as the God-man, he saves and he rescues and he delivers. This man really is the Savior of the world.

This world has no other real Savior. There is no other real man that can save this world. There is no other person who has entered in to this world that can save it and redeem it and deliver it.

He's a real man. He can come as close as he needs to come to each other human being. Even as ascended glorified Lord.

We read that wonderful title in Timothy. He is still the man in the glory now. There is a man, a real man in the glory tonight.

He's not lost his capacity to understand, to sympathize with humanity. And this is his great genius. You may ask, as many have asked, why does the world need to be saved? Why did Samaritans need to be saved? Why did Romans and Greeks need to be saved? Boy, they had a wonderful culture.

They had a wonderful life. Buildings, a lot. Philosophies, Olympic games.

You didn't have to wait four years for them. Games all over the place. What a life.

It looks like that on the outside. John's gospel tells us this world needs to be saved because it's a dark, miserable place. I was on a beach in Temby last week listening to those wonderful beach missionaries who speak to children as if nobody else is around.

And they get these children to be involved and to listen to gospel truths while their fathers, some of them, were swigging lager. Others sleeping and crosswords were being done. And there was a high of activity.

And here was this man. And he was telling people about the deep, dark, empty feeling one little boy had. This is what John's gospel tells us about.

It tells us that humanity is dark. The darkness. Light has come into the world.

What kind of world? It's a dark world. It's actual, personal, active darkness. It's a symbol, isn't it, in John's gospel of sin.

It's a picture of sin. Sin is darkness in John's gospel. Particularly in John's gospel, the darkness of sin expressed in unbelief.

The rejection of God. You know it in John chapter 1, don't you? He was in the world. The world was made through him.

The world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own. His own did not receive him.

No thank you. We don't want God in our lives. We don't want the Son of God in our lives.

The rejection of God. The rejection of Christ. That is the darkness.

That we have a testimony. We have in John's gospel and the other gospels the evidence. Nobody's asking you to leap in the dark.

Actually, faith is quite the reverse, isn't it? It is out of the dark. Not into the dark. It's out of the dark, into the light.

But naturally, by nature, by habit, by choice, by desire. We are in that darkness of sin. Expresses itself in unbelief.

It's what one commonly does call the declaration of independence. There's a generation here who know the song, I'll do it my way. That's it, isn't it? My way.

I don't want God. I don't want Christ telling me what to do with my life. It's the darkness of separation.

Bible tells us our sins have cut us off from God. We're separated from God. And the Bible says that isn't just some kind of neutral state.

It's a dangerous state to be in. Because this Bible says that the darkness doesn't get less. The darkness increases.

Indeed, the Bible tells us that darkness will one day become outer darkness. It's one of the titles of hell. Hell is a place of total separation from God.

The road to unbelief might be very popular. But it leads to death. It leads to hell.

It leads to a place of being cast out of God's presence. Nobody in hell is saying this man really is the savior of the world. We don't believe it.

No salvation. No redemption. No freedom.

No liberty. No light in that place of outer darkness. Jesus taught these things.

He always taught these things. You can't understand his saviorhood. You can't understand what it means to be saved.

What am I saved from? I'm saved from death, from hell, from despair, from darkness. You know the Bible is so clear, isn't it? In chapter 3 and verse 19. It tells us this is what the world is like.

This is why we need to be saved. This is the verdict. Light has come into the world.

But men love darkness. Men and women are loyal to it. They are committed to it.

They are deciding for it. Darkness rather than light. Anyone but Jesus will be our hero.

Everyone but anyone but Jesus to save us. Don't want him. And you can be in a Christian conference.

You can be in a Christian camp. You can be in the company of Christian people. But that's the controlling factor of your life.

I want Jesus to tell me what to do. Don't want God to interfere in my life. I don't want to be told.

What to do? I'll do what I want to do. My desires, my hopes, my aspirations. My big discoveries.

Not the discovery of faith. Men loved darkness. And it's expressed, isn't it, in the context of John chapter 3. In that terrible phrase.

And their evil deeds, they show it. And we're seeing darkness all around us. The drugs, the drink, the adultery, the pornography we heard of this morning.

The broken homes, the broken marriages. Darkness everywhere. And who can save us from darkness? Sin and hell and the results of it.

And the chaos it's reaping in lives. And can there be any family? Can there be any life not touched by it here tonight? No, the Bible says. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Who will save? Who will rescue? Can't rescue myself. Religion can't rescue me. Going to Christian meetings can't rescue me.

Jesus rescues. Jesus saves. This is what this text is saying.

This is what these people had come to understand. I've already said it, but let's underline it. It's a dangerous place to be in.

Darkness. We need to understand why we need to be saved. John chapter 3 again, verse 18, says we stand condemned.

God is not neutral to this state of darkness. And this state of sin and rebellion and rejection. He condemns it.

It's terrible. It is awful. It is abhorrent to him.

And in chapter 3 in the last verse, God's wrath remains. Notice, not that God's wrath will one day come. God's wrath is on those now.

Even those sat here tonight who may not yet know Jesus. God's wrath remains. And what eternity will do is to confirm that wrath.

And to actualize it. It's a horrible, dangerous place to be in. Darkness.

The people that walked in darkness. And here they were in Samaria, in the darkness. And yet the day came when the light of the world walked into town.

And he came to save and to rescue there in Samaria. This is where the hope of Samaria was. This is where our hope is this evening.

It's in the Savior who delivers, who rescues, and who liberates. And John's gospel wonderfully tells us how he did it. He came down from heaven.

The Savior came to Bethlehem. He not only sees its darkness. He lives in the context of darkness.

He feels the darkness. And as we heard this morning, taking the sheep. He took the darkness on himself.

He goes into the darkness. You know that picture as he hangs there on the cross. What's happening? Well, he's in the darkness.

The darkness symbolizes sin. It's separation from God. The shame of sin.

The guilt of sin. The burden of sin. The punishment.

Darkness, death, despair. And he goes in. And he defeats it.

Takes the punishment. Takes the burden in our place. And the light of Christ triumphs.

The love of Christ. The love of God in Christ triumphs on the cross of Calvary. And on the cross, we can say this world has a Savior.

This world has hope. This big world has a big and a great and a mighty Savior. But this bad world, that is what makes the love of God so great.

Not really the extent of the world. What is that? To God. But this bad, this dark, this sin-sick world has a Savior.

And I'm saying in closing, what a discovery. To find that my salvation, my safety is in Him. He is the Savior of the world and no other Savior.

And I'm asking in closing, where do you stand in relationship to the Savior? Where do you stand in relationship to Him? The whole destiny of nations is in the answer to this question. Samaria, Rome, Greece. All the nations of the world.

Where do they stand in relationship to the Savior of the world? If salvation is only in Him, they can only be saved in Him. It's the only hope of the nations. The destiny of nations, of peoples, of tribes, of tongues.

The last book in the Bible tells us all circles and centers around a relationship and a response to this great Savior of the world. The discovery of faith says if I trust, if I believe, if I accept, if I embrace, if I recognize this Savior, the Savior of the world to be my Savior too. I live in His company and I travel with Him all the way by faith.

Listening to His word, trusting Him for everything in my life. Recognize Him, acknowledge Him. He is the only Savior of the world.

We know that now by faith. One day He will declare it to be so. The Savior, the Savior of the world will return to take His people unto Himself.

This is a wonderful statement of faith. We know this man really is the Savior of the world. Can you say tonight to that, Amen? I believe that.

I accept that. I understand that. This man only really is the Savior of the world.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we know so little and yet what we know through the word of Christ is indeed remarkable because we cannot know it by human discovery. We cannot know it by human ingenuity.

You have taught us all we ever know. We thank you for the grace. Thank you for the mercy.

Thank you for the love. Thank you for the patience that you've displayed with us in teaching us of who Jesus really is. And Lord, we do have in our hearts tonight a little desire that all that the world might know and see how great, how big, how mighty, how sufficient, how relevant the Savior of the world is to them.

Pray for any here tonight who has yet been undecided. May for many years have just taken a casual glance at him. Tonight they may survey and look.

And together we shall look forever in hope at the only Savior of the world. Amen.

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