



## **Theme: B.L.E.S.S.- Loving Others to Change the World** **“Blessed Every Day”**

### **Weekly Memory Verse:**

<sup>10</sup> *Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”* – John 4:10

*For this series of sermons, we invite you to read the book, **B.L.E.S.S. – 5 Everyday Practices to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World** by Dave and Jon Ferguson. We encourage you to pick up a copy, or download one, and **read chapter 8 this week**. The readings below will complement this chapter, focusing on the moments when Jesus invited others to his table.*

**Monday, November 7** – Read [John 4:1-6](#). Jesus went from Judea (southern Israel) to Galilee (the north). In between lay Samaria, an area many Jews skirted. Hatred and distrust between Israelites and Samaritans went back over 500 years, to Israel’s return from exile in Babylon we read about in [Ezra 4:1-5](#). Jesus’ fellow Jews saw Samaritans the way many Israelis today see Palestinians, and vice versa. But Jesus saw Samaritans as people who needed his love as much as anyone else and treated them that way. He went through Samaria on purpose and reached Jacob's well at noon.

 John said Jesus “had to go” through Samaria. Most Jews would avoid this route, being willing to add three days to their journey to around what they viewed as a tainted province not worth setting foot in. Jesus did not need to save the three days one could gain by going through Samaria, but God had sent him into the WHOLE world and not just part of it so that everyone could be part of God’s story. Does God’s love ever call you to go to places that human divisions tell you to avoid? How can you break down barriers between you and other people in your day-to-day life by sharing your story and living God’s story?

 Historic Christian confession has said Jesus was fully divine and fully human. John tells us in verse 6 that, “Jesus was tired from his journey.” [Hebrews 2:17-18](#) said Jesus “had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way.... He’s able to help those who are being tempted, since he himself experienced suffering when he was tempted.” In what parts of

your life journey are you tired today? Share your tiredness with Jesus in prayer. He understands and can offer rest and water for a weary soul.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you needed to rest, and often I do, too—emotionally and spiritually as well as physically. I'm so thankful that your steadfast love never rests and is always there to support me. Amen*

**Tuesday, November 8** – Read [John 4:7-10](#). John gave modern readers the key background to understand why this conversation was remarkable in verse 9 when he wrote, “Jews and Samaritans didn’t associate with each other.” According to Jewish tradition, a Samaritan woman was continually unclean. As a result, it would have been impure to drink from her container. But Jesus initiated contact, asking simply in verse 7, “Give me some water to drink.”

 British author Malcolm Muggeridge wrote that he had achieved some fame, success, pleasure, and fulfillment. He went on, “I beg you to believe me, multiply these tiny triumphs by a million, add them all together, and they are nothing...measured against one draught of that living water Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty.” In what ways has Jesus quenched your inner thirst(s)? In what areas of life are you still thirsty?

 Rabbi Eliezer, who lived not long after Jesus’ day, wrote, “He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine.” Yet in addition to Jesus asking the woman for a drink, his disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food in verse 8. How can asking another person for help of some kind break down barriers that may separate you from them? Are you willing to ask for help when you need it?

**Prayer:** *Dear Jesus, you were willing to ask for, and accept, help even from unlikely people. Give me that spirit. Keep me open to the ways your living water can quench the deepest thirsts of my heart. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 9** – Read [John 4:11-15](#). Jesus’ offer of “living water” (in common speech, that meant the freshest, cleanest running water, not stagnant water that had stood in a cistern or well) was intriguing. But the woman at first showed skepticism in verse 11 when she said, “Where would you get this living water?” That didn’t discourage Jesus. He described the spiritual water he offered in such appealing terms that the woman’s thirsty soul responded in verse 15, “Give me this water!”

 Jesus said in verse 14, “The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life.” What choices have helped you make your walk with Jesus one that “bubbles up into eternal life”? In what ways are you able to let that joyous, bubbling quality show as you go about your day-to-day life?

 There was a natural humanness Jesus showed toward this woman. He clearly is at ease with her, which frees her to confront her deepest needs. Who are the people who, because of beliefs or lifestyle, make you uneasy? How can Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well help you find ways to relate more naturally and comfortably to them?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you told Nicodemus in John 3 that you had not come to condemn the world. You didn't condemn the woman at the well, and you don't condemn me. Thank you! Please teach me how to relate as you did. Amen.*

**Thursday, November 10** – Read [John 4:16-24](#). Shame probably led the woman to come to the well alone. Jesus frankly stated the facts of her life, though we sometimes forget her context. Healthcare was limited then—some of her husbands may have died. And women could not initiate divorce, so men, not she, would have ended her marriages. She at first tried to shift the subject by raising a Jewish/Samaritan religious debate in verses 19-20. Jesus refused the bait. He said the key to worshipping God was not finding the “right” place but worshipping, “in spirit and truth.”

 In verse 21, Jesus told the woman, “The time is coming,” when you will not worship either in Samaria or Jerusalem. He repeated the phrase in verse 23, and then, finished off the sentence with an emphatic, “...and is here!” One paradox in Christian faith is that in God’s eternity, the battle has been won, the battle is raging still, and the battle will be won. How do you understand and value Jesus’ words: “the time...is here”? What feelings does it trigger in you to need to keep waiting in faith for the full arrival of God’s Kingdom in all its glory?

 Jesus said God is “Spirit,” a word that also meant “breath” or “atmosphere”. In other words, God is with us always and already knows all about us. What’s more, knowing each of us fully, even better than we know ourselves, God loves each of us deeply! We can come to God in total honesty with worship and praise for his love, mercy, and grace. What’s on your heart today? What do you need to bring to the Lord in full honesty, knowing that God loves you as his child?

**Prayer:** *Jesus, sometimes my shame makes me shrink from being completely honest with you. Help me to trust you and embrace the truth of your love and mercy so that I can more fully worship you. Amen.*

**Friday, November 11** – Read [John 4:25-30](#) and [20:11-18](#). The Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well became his first preacher. This story found its echo 16 chapters later when Mary Magdalene became the first witness to the risen Messiah, and in turn became the first preacher of this new miracle. John called his past and present audience to listen to women’s voices. Jesus did not ignore or devalue any voices. He recognized women, and others who were routinely silenced, as being powerful conduits for His miraculous message.

 In [Isaiah 42:14](#), the prophet used an image of God as a woman in labor. God promised to gasp, pant, and deliver his children from exile. That image, and Jesus later making the woman at the well and Mary Magdalene the first preachers, showed that God identified with women and invited women to identify with God’s amazing story. What images of God particularly compel you? Do you most often think of God as a shepherd or a king? How would it deepen and enrich your faith if you focused on Isaiah’s image of God as a woman in labor? How might this help you bless others as you see them differently than any stereotypes our culture might have?

 Scholar and priest Lauren Winner invites readers of Isaiah 42 to picture God as a pregnant woman in prison, because forty-thousand women experience childbirth while imprisoned each year in America. Winner reminds readers that God regularly identifies with people who are suffering and marginalized and asks: “What can I do to meet this God? How can I serve this God? How can I befriend this God?” How can you intentionally listen to the voices you may usually ignore, but who God readily identifies with?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, I know that you have chosen to carry out your great story through me and others. Call me to recognize the holiness in the people around me. Bless the women in my life who gather water, share your good news, and labor to create new life. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 12** – Read [John 4:31-42](#). Jesus’ disciples reentered the scene with the Samaritan women. No doubt still ill at ease with Samaritans, and “shocked” to find him talking with a Samaritan woman in verse 27, they urged Jesus to eat. He told them that doing God's will, reaping a harvest of willing followers, nourished him in a deeper way than any physical food could. At the Samaritans’ invitation, he stayed on in Sychar for two days.



Scholar N. T. Wright asked in his commentary *John for Everyone*, “When were you last so excited about something that you didn’t need to eat?” In an hour or less, the woman went from a social outcast trapped in a messed-up life to being “the first evangelist to the Samaritan people.” And Jesus had seen, firsthand, that here, outside the boundaries of the chosen people, away from Jerusalem itself, there was a spiritual hunger which was ready to hear what he had to say. What excites and “feeds” you most about the ways in which you currently serve God? What would you like to get involved in that might deepen that joy and excitement? How can you begin to plan to make that happen?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you said that people who hunger and thirst for righteousness are the ones to whom your kingdom belongs. Grow that appetite in me—and then feed and sustain me as I join in your mission in this world. Amen.*