

Sermon Notes: March 8, 2026

[Lectionary Readings](#)

Focus: Woman at the Well

I really like the story of the unnamed Samaritan woman. It is a story of new life and new beginnings. Jesus walks through cultural boundaries to have a personal conversation with the woman at the well and Jesus has zero problem breaking cultural conventions. He did this because he knew her life and loved her. The pattern of this story is repeated throughout the Gospel of John:

Jesus meets someone who 1st starts confused 2nd they misstep into misunderstanding 3rd have insight and 4th they move forward changed.

A Brief History of the Samaritans (and Jews) extended citation

<https://margmowczko.com/a-brief-history-of-the-samaritans/>

The only things I have changed from this link above were that I removed scripture citations, shortened some sections and changed the British spelling of words to their American counterpart.

The Fall of Israel *The northern kingdom of Israel was overpowered by the Assyrians in around 724 BCE. Many of the Israelites who had survived the attack were taken to foreign lands where they were assimilated into the native populations. These northern tribes are referred to as the “lost tribes of Israel”.*

The Assyrians sent five tribes to live in Northern Israel... The eastern foreigners intermarried with the remaining, much depleted Israelite population. This was the beginning of the Samaritans. The Assyrian Empire fell to the Egyptians in 612 BCE. The Egyptians were subsequently defeated by the Babylonians, and Samaria became a minor capital city of the Babylonian empire from 605 to 562 BCE.

The Fall of Judah *In 586 BCE, the southern kingdom of Judah was also conquered by the Babylonians. The Jewish population was taken in several stages to Babylon. It seems that only the poorest, sickest, and least skilled were ultimately left behind. These remaining people intermarried with their northern neighbors.*

The Returning Jews *When the Persian King Cyrus allowed the Jewish people to return seventy years later, only the most devout returned to Jerusalem with the purpose of rebuilding the city and its temple. The returning Jews were keen to rebuild the Jerusalem temple so that they could worship God in the way he had prescribed. The Samaritans offered to help the Jewish people to rebuild the temple, but this offer was rejected.*

The Samaritans *had developed their own version of Judaism. The Samaritans still believed in the God of Israel, but they worshiped at Mount Gerizim (instead of Jerusalem) with their own adapted worship practices. This caused tension and hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans. Most first-century Jews regarded the Samaritans as ignorant, superstitious, and outside of God’s favor and mercy.*

But... John’s Gospel *this Samaritan woman at the well has longest recorded theological conversation Jesus has with anyone in the Gospel of John. She is the first person to whom Jesus explicitly says, “I am” in a divine way. She is maybe the first*

female evangelist in John -not just the recipient of grace, but also a theologian and missionary.

Five Husbands Connected to the reference above in the Fall of Israel section, there is a serious scholarly argument that the “five husbands” are symbolic of the five nation groups who settled in Samaria and had to contend with Jews coming back during the restoration period. The woman is a real person *and* could symbolize Samaria’s fractured religious history.

My Assumption Every-single-time that I have preached this sermon, I assume shame. I am sure that “shame” is somewhere in her life. But the way I have read the text is “only an ashamed woman would come in the middle of the day to get water.” Why?

The text is silent on shame. John does not mind commenting on other people’s character throughout the Gospel, so his silence is worth noting. Jesus is not playing that card. Midday may be narrative staging for light and clear water. Instead of a scarlet letter. Yes, she has had multiple husbands (see five husbands). Yes, her culture probably would not have thought that was proper. But, instead of *guessing negatively*, what if we *guessed positively*?

She is intellectually sharp when everyone else does not get the importance of their encounter. She pushes back when the disciples are just trying to make nice with Jesus while they are shocked and gossipy about Jesus having a deep conversation with shock...a women. With her moral agency intact and her self-perception evolving, she was becoming a more empowered person. She could testify about a man who told her everything she had ever done. I am guessing that she did this without shame. I want to be clear, I am not trying to banish the idea of her “shame,” but want you to examine assumptions.

Water Jar She came for water and leaves without it. She abandons a finite jar for an eternal spring. John loves to give everyday objects religious heft. All Lent 2026, we are reading long gospel texts to tell the different, personal stories in John. You’ve got Nicodemus visit Jesus at and he fades into the darkness night (until the end). The woman rushes out in the light and brings others in.

Nicodemus (elite, male, insider) | Samaritan woman (female, outsider, enemy)

The outsider becomes the evangelist, and the insiders holds thing close.

Living Water: In John, water imagery consistently points to the Spirit (John 7). This is not just “inner peace.” It is a divine life.

Mountains of Worship Neither Gerizim nor Jerusalem defines access to God. Sacred geography can’t be fenced off with religious tribalism. Jesus says that worship in spirit and truth is the most sacred mount one could climb.

Come and See The woman at the well tells her neighbors to come and see. This is like John 1 where Jesus’ invites Andrew to come and see, and then Phillip invites Nathaneal She becomes a mirror of Jesus’ ways. She doesn’t debate but invites. We could do the same. I pray we all get to move past confusion into clarity and are changed by God into evangelists for God’s love.

Todd