

## So Jesus Came *John 4:4-15*

### Introduction

See if you recognize this poem:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost, right? The Road Not Taken. It was one of the poems I had to memorize in high school literature class. Now, it has been long enough that I had to read it today, not recite it. But it was still present enough in my mind that I thought of it when I started to read today's Gospel text.

Come with me into the Scriptures. When the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of John begins, we find Jesus and his disciples in Judea. Judea is in the southern third of the greater region where Jesus lived and ministered.

- It was in Judea that Jesus met Nicodemus, as we saw in last week's Gospel.

Most of His ministry, however, was in Galilee, which is the northern third portion of the region. And as our story begins, Jesus has made the decision it is time to go back north.

So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. (John 4:3)



This is where Robert Frost comes into play. Hang with me ...

The shortest distance between any two points is always a straight line, so the most direct route between Judea and Galilee would be a straight line through the middle of the third section of this ministry region. That middle third was known as Samaria. That was the shortest way, but it was not the only way. Now you need to know that:

Good Jews NEVER took the short way.

In fact, we might call the short way "the road not taken." There's my Robert Frost connection.

In Jesus' day the Jews hated the Samaritans so much they normally took the eastern route in order to avoid Samaria. They went the long way! It took twice as long, but it avoided Samaria! No good Jew ever went through Samaria, so deep was the hatred.

- There is an old legend that former Ohio State football coach Woody Hayes ran out of gas while in Michigan, so he pushed his car back across the state line because he was not about to spend money in the state up north.

It was worse for a Jew. The Samaritans were a mixed race, part Jew and part Gentile. This race grew out of the Assyrian captivity of the ten northern tribes in 727 BCE when the conquering Assyrians forced the Jews to intermarry with the Assyrians.

- They were rejected by the Jews because they were not pure Jews. They were only half Jews.
- Because they were not purebred, if you will, they were not allowed in the Temple in Jerusalem. So the Samaritans established their own temple and religious services away from Jerusalem ... which only fueled the fires of prejudice all the more.
- So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans that some of the Pharisees prayed that no Samaritan would ever make it to heaven.
- And if you wanted to call someone a bad name, your best option was to call him a Samaritan!

Notice how our Gospel text for today began:

Now (Jesus) had to go through Samaria. (John 4:4)

No, He didn't. There was another way. There was the usual way. There was the way around. The truth is that:

Jesus CHOSE to go through Samaria.

There was a divine purpose awaiting him. He "had" to go through because He needed to talk with this Samaritan woman.

In this series of Lenten sermons, we are learning what it means to pray the second

petition of the Lord's Prayer:

THY KINGDOM COME

This Samaritan woman experienced the coming of the kingdom. It came and met her at a well outside the village of Sychar just inside the border. I make three observations.

### **#1: THE KINGDOM COMES EVEN THOUGH SHE DID NOT ASK FOR IT TO COME**

I want to take you into today's epistle reading. Look at Romans 5:8:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Before we ever asked ... before we ever knew it was possible to ask ... Yes! Even before we were ever born, Jesus came and died for our sins.

- One of the greatest theological truths you will ever learn is that your sins were paid for 2,000 years before you ever committed them.
- People will sometimes tell me they don't know if God can forgive their sins. And I respond, "He already did."
- Nothing you can say or do is beyond the redeeming power of what Jesus did on the cross.
- In the verses after the part I read, this Samaritan woman will confess to a whole bunch of sins.

In fact, she was so sinful that no one wanted to be around her. That's why she came in the heat of the day to get her water. She was avoiding the crowd and the nasty things those people would say about her.

So here she was, carrying around a bucket full of sins, when Jesus came. She didn't ask Him to come, He just came.

My friends, long before you ever started to look for God, He had already been looking for you. And He has already come to you. In fact, right now He is sitting there in the center of your daily activity, just waiting to be noticed by you.

Before you even asked, the kingdom comes.

### **#2: THE KINGDOM COMES TO MEET HER AT HER POINT OF DEEPEST NEED**

What does this woman need?

- Let me ask it this way: What does this woman think she needs?

Look at the text:

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water... (John 4:7)

She needed water. There was no indoor plumbing at her house. She needed to make this trip from her village to the well at least once a day to get the water for cooking and bathing. From her point of view, she needed water. That's why she came.

- One commentator said:

She had not grasped the reality of her own need. Her vision stretched no further than her empty bucket.

In other words, she didn't know what she needed. But Jesus did. She thought she needed water from the well, but what she really needed was what Jesus called "living water."

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. (John 4:9)

He continued:

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:13-14)

Here was a woman who had a physical need for water – yes! – but the greater issue was her spiritual need for living water.

She came to Jesus in search of water. Jesus came to her to offer what she really needed: living water.

There have been many times a saint of God has come before the Lord in prayer, saying "Here is what I need" only to hear God respond, "I have something better."

- Maybe God is saying that to you right now.

### **#3: THE KINGDOM COMES AND CHANGES HER LIFE**

I didn't read far enough into the story to tell you how her life turned out. If you don't know this story – and even if you do – I encourage you to look it up and read it for yourself. It is in John chapter 4. Here's the overview:

When she finally grasps the idea of living water, she loses track of her water bucket.

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." (John 4:28-29)

She left her bucket and went back to the very people she had been trying to avoid to share the good news with them. And instead of ridiculing her, they believed her!

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony ... (John 4:39)

Her life was changed and an entire village was changed ... because the Kingdom came to her.

### **APPLICATION**

No matter what is going on in your life, this text reminds us that Jesus is sitting right there in the middle of it, waiting for you to pass by and notice him.

- He is not distant. He is not disengaged.

He is there because we pray "Thy Kingdom Come."

Our memory verse for this Lenten season:

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

Amen