

St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
The Third Sunday in Lent  
March 19, 2017  
John 4:5-42  
The Reverend John P. Carr

## The Savior

How can we know that Jesus is the Savior of the world? If one were to pick up the Gospel of John and begin reading it one would discover that John is making a case for the reader to understand just that, Jesus is the Savior of the world, the Messiah.

- He says that the Word has been made flesh. In other words, Jesus has become one of us.
- John establishes the foundation of the ministry of Jesus by revealing that the ministry is founded in grace and truth.
- John makes that case that John the Baptist arrived as a herald of the coming Messiah and then identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God and the one that he saw have the Spirit descend and rest on him.
- When John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, he is referring to Him as the Messiah, the one who would be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world.
- Jesus calls his disciples, and gives a glimpse into a life that is very different and exceptional. When Nathanael is brought to Jesus by Philip, Jesus reveals his supernatural abilities when he says that he saw Nathanael when he was still far away under a fig tree. This event is closely followed by His first miracle when he turned water into fine wine at the wedding feast in Cana in Galilee.
- John tells us that Jesus then spent some time at Passover in Jerusalem and while He is there, He clears the temple of the money changers.
- He spent some time with the Pharisee Nicodemus explaining that God had sent His only Son that all who believed in Him, would have eternal life.

But things were getting a little too hot for Jesus in Jerusalem, so he decided to return to Galilee. Rather than go the usual route around Samaria, as most Jews would do, Jesus took the road straight through the heart of Samaria stopping at midday for a drink of water at a well in Sychar where he encountered a woman of the city.

Now, keep in mind that Jesus knew Nathanael even before he met him so let's believe that Jesus knew the heart of the woman at the well. He knew her true need and addressed it through a surprising conversation. Surprising because He as a Jew should not even be talking to her, a Samaritan.

He will lead her from a simple request through a bit of theology to an amazing admission, that He is the Messiah.

To most Jews she was at best a second class citizen. The Jews looked down on the Samaritans as half breeds because they were descendants of the Jewish remnant from the exile of the Jews to Assyria. They had married foreigners who were imported to inhabit the land.

Jesus asks her, *“Will you give me a drink?”* He might well have ordered her to give Him a drink but He asked if she would *give Him* a drink. She avoids the question. Jesus lets her know that she is missing a great chance by not giving Him a drink. If she knew who He was, she would do well to give Him a drink of water.

Then he turns the table on her and offers her a drink. He lets her know that ***if she had only asked*** He would give her a drink of ***living water***. This living water is a gift from God. *She is missing her chance to receive it by not asking.*

Now she is interested. Intrigued by the offer of living water, she takes him up on the offer. She was now ready to receive the gift but Jesus holds out and instead asks her about her personal and married life. His deep knowledge of her life astounds her and she declares him a prophet.

This leads into a comparison of the Jews and the Samaritans who worship the same God but in different places. For the Jews it is Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, and for the Samaritans, Mt. Gerizim in Samaria. Jesus deflects that whole line of reasoning because it is not important where you worship but *how* you worship. How they worship, He instructs, must be centered on their spirit, they need to worship with the whole of their being, their soul. God the Father does not live in house or a man-made temple but in the hearts of his people and he communicates with the spirit of his creation in their hearts and souls. *“I know the Messiah is coming,”* she tells, Jesus. And then Jesus declared, ***“I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”***

About that time, the disciples return with food for Jesus but he declines it saying that, ***“He has food to eat that you know nothing about.”*** Jesus has revealed in the conversations with the woman and His disciples that there is *ordinary water* and there is *living water*. There is *food for the body* and there is *spiritual food*. Jesus wasn't there to eat. He said, ***“my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”*** He directed His disciples to the work at hand, to the people of the city.

Through his further conversations with the woman and the townspeople, Jesus shares the message of the kingdom over the next two days and the people declare that Jesus, ***“really is the Savior of the world.”***

Once again Jesus has turned the ordinary into the extraordinary. He has turned our conventional understanding upside down. He took the woman whose heart he knew to be that of a believer and a seeker and opened her heart to a greater spiritual truth.

He can do the same for us.

The first four chapters of the Gospel of John have been leading up to those two important lines. Jesus tells the woman by the well that *He is the Messiah*, and the people of Sychar agree that *He is the Savior of the world*.

For the people of the day who heard Jesus speak, to those who hear his words today read from the Bible, they have heard that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

So, where does that leave us?

Do we believe that Jesus is the Savior?

This is not a gradual thing, it is a decision to believe, or not to believe, and if we believe, to embrace the love of God, that He has shown to us, in the flesh, in the person of Jesus.

Have you decided? Have you decided to give your love to God, to relinquish control and embrace the One who came to save you?

If you haven't, then take a moment *now*, or in some private moment soon, and ask for Jesus to come into your life. You will decide, sooner or later.

Your Savior is waiting with outstretched arms, embrace His love.

Amen