

**“Giving Up Superiority” - John 4:5-42 – Rev. Jeff Childs**

Jesus broke all kinds of social conventions by speaking to a woman in public, a Samaritan no less. Her life was such a mess with broken marriages and living with a man she was not married to, that it could have really messed up Jesus' reputation as a holy man just by talking to her. This was evidenced by the disciples reaction when they returned to the scene. *Just then, Jesus' disciples arrived and were shocked that he was talking with a woman.* (John 4:27) But Jesus brought his message of grace, freedom and power to the woman, knowing that in her humility, she would actually hear and respond. On the other hand, most of the religious people were too busy and self-important to really hear what Jesus was saying. They rejected it and him because it was not what they wanted to hear. But this was what this woman at the well needed to hear.

Notice that Jesus began to engage this woman in a life-altering conversation by asking for her help - a drink of water. It never says in the story that she ever did actually do that. Maybe Jesus wasn't all that thirsty, what he wanted more than a drink of water was a way to engage this woman in a life changing conversation. So, he asks. After the resurrection, in this same gospel, Jesus would also ask Peter 3 times if he loved him. This was after Peter had denied knowing Jesus 3 times. Jesus knew Peter loved him, but I believe he asked over and over and over again to let Peter know that he was forgiven, and to take care of the sheep (believers). What might Jesus be asking you today? And what might Jesus be asking of you today?

Today we will talk about Giving Up Superiority. It's not about getting ahead but getting behind, and more specifically, getting behind Jesus! So, let me ask you? “Just how far will Jesus go?” In a few weeks we will see that he went all the way to the cross. Here he went into enemy territory – Samaria! (BTW next week we will talk about Giving Up Enemies!) Jesus went into a woman's world - the city watering hole. God doesn't care about any of the artificial lines we draw to separate ourselves from others or to allow us to feel superior to others. If we let go of our status hierarchy malarkey and judgmental attitudes, we just might hear Jesus' call more clearly and be able to respond to him more faithfully. Where and how might we meet Jesus and meet the people Jesus wants to reach this week? Where is the Samaritan watering hole in your world? Will you go there with Jesus? You may recall Mother Theresa. She is now a saint, so we should call her Saint Theresa of Calcutta. She left her life of comfort and went to serve some of the world's lowest of the low caste in the slums of India. Or you may recall Princess Diana stepping down from the heights of royalty to offer care and hope to people with AIDS when that was a stigma shunned by most people. I see the same thing happen when UMCOR, Volunteers in Mission teams, and Early Response Teams go to help people and communities devastated by tornados and floods. So, let me ask you, where is the Samaritan watering hole in your world? Will you go there with Jesus?

This story shows us how Jesus modeled what he taught. He walked the walk. He took the lowest place like in the washing of the disciples' feet and speaking to a woman at the well. And he told parables and talked about Giving Up Superiority. *Jesus told this parable to certain people who had convinced themselves that they were righteous and who looked on*

*everyone else with disgust: “Two people went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself with these words, ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like everyone else—crooks, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of everything I receive.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn’t even lift his eyes to look toward heaven. Rather, he struck his chest and said, ‘God, show mercy to me, a sinner.’ I tell you, this person went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up.”* (Luke 18.9-14) Or, as Jesus put it another way, *“The first shall be last and the last shall be first.”* (Matthew 20.16)

Now let me be clear, Jesus does invite us to give up our Superiority. But there are some among us (and this may be you) who do not have that, but rather have the exact opposite – an Inferiority Complex. Some people feel they are not good enough. Perhaps this woman at the well felt that way. Other people were putting her down, but Jesus came to lift her up, to give her new life and a true sense of her worth in the eyes of God. So, if you have low self-esteem, I invite you to give that up as well for Lent and for always. You are of infinite worth and loved by God’s infinite love. Celebrate new life! Walk where Jesus walks. Alleluia and Amen.

*Has someone ever given up their superiority and come down to your level, to be with you?*

*Where is the Samaritan well for you today?*

*Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water. What might Jesus be asking you today?*

*Jesus asked Peter to feed the sheep. What might Jesus be asking of you today?*

### **Jesus Asked a Woman (John 4)**

Jeffrey B. Childs 3/15/25

Jesus asked a woman,  
To give to him a drink.  
Thus started a conversation,  
Where water was the link.

By a drink offered by Jesus,  
Of his life-giving water,  
He affirmed that she was,  
Included as a daughter.

Jesus came and met her,  
Simply there where she was.  
How might we come together,  
In the name of Jesus?

Today someone is out there,  
Somewhere throughout the land.  
Allow the Lord to lead you where,  
You might lend a helping hand.