

50 Days Ablaze! Sermon Series 2
Fourth Mission Response – May 7, 2006
John 4:27-42
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“Tell” Sermon: “He put it in our hands?”

Let's pray: Almighty God, tell me the story of Jesus again, lest I forget. Tell me the story of Jesus so I can understand again what He did for me and all people. And tell me story of Jesus so I can tell others. In His name we pray. Amen.

You and I have heard the story of Jesus, right? We are familiar with the story of Jesus. We've traced the timeline of His life. We have looked at the life and ministry of Jesus many times. Well, so do they...the disciples. They have seen and heard the story of Jesus firsthand.

They have celebrated and were comforted by the words of the birth as Jesus enters the world by a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, taken as a son by a carpenter, ultimately fathered by God, announced by angels, placed in a manger, and gifted by Magi.

They know the story of Jesus. They have followed His ministry. Teaching as a Messiah...making miracles and mentoring people...healing the hurting...casting out the demons...and pointing people first and foremost to God and the Message of a Savior...are all things they know.

They know the story of Jesus. They know of that last week. They know of the palm procession and the temple tables being overturned. They know of the Pharisees' hatred and the teachers' jealousy. They know of the scourging and the beating, the trial and the torture, and the death of our beloved Savior. And they know of His glorious resurrection on Easter day.

Their names we learn from Scripture...Simon called Peter; James, son of Zebedee and his brother, John; Andrew; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot.

Their record of conduct and understanding wasn't exactly stellar during the Gospels. For most of them little is mentioned other than the general “the disciples didn't get what Jesus was saying or doing,”...but for some denial, betrayal, and running away were added to the list of unbelief and misunderstanding.

And of all the things that I have learned and we have looked at about Jesus...what happened at the Ascension is one of the most amazing things. Having breathed on them the Holy Spirit, Jesus ascends into heaven and He leaves the Spirit with the disciples. And He essentially leaves the story of Jesus—the most important story that the world has ever heard or will hear—with this bunch of misfits, mistake-makers, and bunglers. Scared and struggling, they face the days ahead ready by the Spirit to tell the story of Jesus...He placed it in their hands to TELL.

Well how would they go about TELLING this great story? What is TELLING the story of Jesus about? Surely Jesus had given them many times of teaching and opportunities, but they also had some great examples...one of which shows up in a very familiar account. We have heard this story before...that of the *Woman at the Well – John chapter 4*. Would you take a look at that please? John 4. You can find that on page “_____” of your pew Bibles.

Allow me to quickly recount the story for you because we actually want to look at just a small part at the end of the account. Understand this is just a paraphrase:

There is Jesus next to Jacob’s well in Samaria. The disciples have left to go to town to buy food. And there is Jesus reclining next to the well, alone in the noonday sun.

Now off in the distance a form appears on the horizon. It is a woman carrying a jar for water. As she draws closer, she appears to be Samaritan, but what is more curious and readily noticeable is that she has come in the noonday heat—not in the morning—to draw water as the other women would.

Jesus asks her for a drink. She is blown away by this, for men don’t ask women for a drink, especially Jewish men of Samaritan women. From this comment, Jesus offers her living water. Without a bucket to draw with or the appeared greatness of Jacob, she questions the source of this living water. Where can I get this living water?

Jesus entices her with the promise of never thirsting again—not even unto eternal life. She grabs on. “Where can I get this living water?” “*Go call your husband and come back,*” says Jesus. “I have no husband,” she replies. “*That is right. You don’t have one, but you have had five, and now the one that you are with you are not married to.*” “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain—but the Jews claim that we should worship in Jerusalem.” “*Believe me, woman; a time is coming when worship will not happen on this mountain or in Jerusalem. The Father desires worshippers that worship in Spirit and in truth. God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.*” “I know that the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will explain all things to us.” “*I who speak to you am He!*” Jesus placed His story in her hands.

Now verse 27 is where we start to see what TELLING the story of Jesus is about...what the disciples got to see about TELLING...and what now we can learn about TELLING from this. Let’s read together verses 27-30...

[read verses]

The first thing that we can draw from this about TELLING is that:

I. TELLING IS REVEALING! (vs. 27-30)

And one aspect of that is: ***Telling is revealing yourself.***

Notice in verse 27 that the disciples have just walked in on this conversation. It is probably apparent that this woman is a Samaritan, and they know the cultural barriers both for religion (Jews and Samaritans weren't to be together) and for communication (males and females were not supposed to converse alone in the open or in the closed places). But no one asks any questions—maybe they have learned by now not to question the Master.

But this woman goes back to her town and tells everyone in that town that she has met someone who “told me everything I ever did.” Talk about *telling is revealing yourself!* This woman probably has a character that is known and a reputation that is joked about in that town, but she goes back and boasts about this man knowing all about her as an astonishing thing. Now while this is new for her, this happens to Jesus a lot. People come and meet Him and go away changed...and they are people of many different kinds and characters.

Consider this list of people that have come in contact with Jesus and go away telling: *a despised tax collector, an insane hermit, a Roman governor, a prominent leader, an expert in the law, a fisherman, a homemaker, a young boy, a criminal, a synagogue ruler, a king, a poor widow, a Roman centurion, a group of children, a prophet, an adulterous woman, a Jewish Council, a sick woman, a rich man, a blind beggar, political members, a high priest, an outcast with leprosy, a young girl, a traitor, a paralyzed man, an angry mob, a doubting follower, an enemy that hated Him, and a Samaritan woman.*

These are all people that have come in contact with Jesus and, no doubt, by **telling** what they had seen or experienced, they exposed themselves and their various backgrounds and characters too. But then maybe that is what makes them so relatable. “Telling” is revealing “us,” but then that is part of **telling**. Telling reveals who you are and what you were about and what you were involved in—because people can relate—and by revealing yourself, you can get to the other aspect of “Telling is Revealing”—which is **Telling is revealing Jesus**. Now see how these go together...

I have had the privilege to get to know some of you and the “pasts” that you have. And you have openly told me about that. But what I found most amazing about that—and what should make you want to tell more people—is how Jesus took you out of that place and has redeemed and changed you and made you whole again. By revealing yourself, you get a chance to reveal Jesus and His story.

Remember 1 Corinthians 1:26-30...

26Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29so that no one may boast before him. 30It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

That is an amazing section that reminds us all of the past mistakes and sins that we have had and the life that God has brought us from—and now how God has brought us from those times, redeemed and changed us, and made us able now to tell about Him. The woman at the well gets

a chance to tell about her life and about how Jesus has already changed it...that is ***Telling is Revealing.***

II. TELLING IS FREEING (vs. 39)

Notice...the Samaritan woman has gone back to town and has gotten a whole lot of people to come and see Jesus. While she was gone, the disciples urge Jesus to eat, but He responds that, [read verse 34-38].

Now read with me verse 39 [read verse]. Isn't it astonishing that this simple phrase is told twice in this account? John doesn't just say that it was "the witness of the woman," but he points us again to these very words of the woman that help us to see something about **telling is freeing**, and that is: ***Telling is Freeing by Forgiveness.***

Now I know in this section that Jesus doesn't actually say the words to her, You are forgiven! But also notice some things that have changed in her life suddenly:

- She leaves her water jar to tell—the main reason she went to the well she now abandons.
- She boasts in her life what she was before keeping under wraps.
- She goes directly to get the people that before she was trying to avoid.

Talk about "Telling is Freeing by Forgiveness!" The promise of the Messiah and the allure of forgiveness and freedom that He will give is so strong she goes and tells so freely about Jesus. Remember:

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36(NIV)

This woman has been freed by Jesus!

But also, notice another aspect. Telling is Freeing by Forgiveness, and also ***Telling is Freeing to Witness.***

In the song at the end of service we will sing, *If you cannot speak like angels...If you cannot preach like Paul...*

I think too many times we think that to tell someone about Jesus we need to have the perfect words...only someone with silver tongue please apply. But this woman here at the well says what some might consider by Billy Graham standards to be sub-par. This is seemingly not Rick Warren at work, or Joel Osteen filling a stadium, or Beth Moore talking to a sold out crowd, and this is not eloquent or elegant speech ...but look at the result! Her words convince the whole town to come-a-running to Jesus. Telling is Freeing to Witness because you don't have to have the perfect words; in fact, the Spirit will give us the words when we need them. That is what He is all about. Freeing us to Tell about Jesus and His love to others even through our broken words...and broken lives...and broken witness—mine included!

Freeing by forgiveness and freeing to witness...that is **Telling is Freeing.**

III. TELLING IS SCATTERING AND GATHERING (vs. 40-41)

Take a look at verses 41 and 42 [read verses]. When the Samaritans came to Him, they wanted Jesus to stay a longer period of time with them. Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus...the miles or the time that He had spent so far wasn't enough; they wanted more. So there was obviously a change in the hearts of the people. A harvest of sorts had happened.

But to see this a little bit deeper go back to verses 36-38 again [read verses].

See, "Telling is Scattering and Gathering" simply means this: there are those that scatter seeds and there are those that reap the harvest. There are those that spend time working and reading and singing and letter writing and preaching and teaching and praying...and on and on, working and telling people about Jesus, but they may just be scattering the seed. The same is true of those who gather the harvest. They are diligent callers and caregivers and singers and letter writers and readers and prayers...but they only see the harvest. But really these two groups work together for the joy of Telling about Jesus. Here is the only catch...you don't always know if you are scattering seed or harvesting the crop...but it really doesn't matter. We are all working together to tell people about Christ. And in the end, all of the Telling in a particular person's life comes together into a loving witness and picture of Jesus.

It's kind of like those picture mosaics you see where a ton of little pictures makes up the whole picture we see from a distance. All the telling we do in life is scattering or harvesting, but it's all for Christ. Paul would say, 1 Corinthians 3:6-9...

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Some scholars would say that that there is a possibility that the town that the Samaritan woman went to (possibly the town of Sychar) was the town that Philip evangelized a few years later recorded in Acts 8:4-8. And part of the reason why the city converted so quickly and easily to the faith in Jesus was because of the ground work of TELLING that the Samaritan woman did right here.

We are given a task of telling, and we are all part of the process for the glory of God and the witness of His death and resurrection for all people. When we tell, we may be scattering or gathering...but it's all about CHRIST.

IV. TELLING IS CELEBRATING (vs. 42)

Take a look at verse 42 [read verse]. This is a verse worth lifting high. It's a verse Pastor Barry will mention to the confirmands right at the beginning of the year. Pastor says that up to this point it is about the faith that their parents have. But now they (the confirmands) get a chance to say what the people of that town said: We no longer believe because you told us, but now we

ourselves believe. Suddenly there are more people that are going to TELL about Jesus and His love, and that's worth celebrating!

Now, not only that is worth celebrating, but the depth of their understanding is worth celebrating too: They know Jesus as Savior of the world. This is the first cross-cultural ministry here at work. Remember...a Jewish man in Samaria talking to a Samaritan woman. And the people BELIEVE, which is huge, but they also recognize the Savior of the *world*. Jesus has come to die on the cross for *all* people and for *all* sins for *all* time. And that shows me that Telling should never be a done deal for any of us. May we continue to place ourselves in a position daily to be told again by the Word, by song, by stranger, by saint or by sacrament the story of Jesus and what He has done for us all...and to then TELL of that depth all the more.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world (Romans 1:8).

Your faith is being reported, is being told, all over the world...that is worth celebrating!

See that the story of Jesus was placed in her hands to TELL. Remember those disciples. The story of Jesus was left with them, and because of their witness in the Word, we now believe. **And now this story of Jesus is placed in our hands...**to TELL the whole world about Jesus...

May our telling be:

- Revealing
- Freeing
- About Scattering and Gathering
- And about Celebrating...

...what Jesus has done for all people. I Love to Tell the Story. In Jesus Name. Amen.