
Buy Me a Cup of Coffee

**A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler
Atlanta, Georgia
The Third Sunday of Lent**

John 4:5-42

So Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, "'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."

26 Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." 27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" 28 Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29 "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" 30 They left the city and were on their way to him. .

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

Well, a few years ago, the story you just heard -this long gospel lesson - well, it happened again. Only it happened in a little different way.

It was in Detroit, Michigan, right outside the Starbuck's -the Starbuck's Coffee Shop. Jesus was not supposed to be in that city. He was supposed to be on tour in the glitzy and affluent places, places like Atlanta and New York. He had taken a strange detour, through one of the tougher places in Detroit.

Can you imagine Jesus going through Detroit?

All sorts of different people and different cultures live in Detroit now: white, black, and Hispanic. And Detroit has a huge Muslim population now. We all know that Jesus is Jewish.

So, he stopped into this Starbuck's coffee shop, and there was a woman there. In that part of town, there are lots of strict rules after men speaking with women. It's just not done between strangers.

Jesus was tired. And Jesus was a bit fatigued, maybe a little sleepy. He wanted a cup of coffee. And Jesus made a peculiar request of the woman.

He said, "Hey there, buy me a cup of coffee."

And the woman said, "What are you doing talking to me? Don't you know that men are not supposed to talk to women here?"

Jesus said, "Woman, if you knew who it was asking you to buy me a cup of coffee, you would be asking me for some living coffee."

She said, "Dude, where would you get any coffee? How would you get it? You don't even have a wallet, and the price of the coffee here in this shop is very expensive! Where do you get that living coffee? Are you greater than the guy who started this coffee industry? Do you have access to Columbian coffee or Peruvian coffee or Costa Rican coffee or organic Dancing Goats coffee?"

Jesus said, "Whoever drinks this coffee will be tired and sleepy again. But the coffee that I will give them will be like a well of energy giving them eternal life; they will be awakened from sleep the rest of their life!"

She said, "Dude, give me some of this living coffee, so I won't have to come back to this coffee shop ever again!"

Jesus said, "Well, go get your husband,"

"I do not have a husband," she replied.

"You are right!" Jesus said. "You have had five husbands, and that guy you are sleeping around with right with right now is not really your husband, either. You are surely right about that!"

She said, "You are a man in the know! Our ancestors said we ought to worship in special places, or in Jerusalem, or in Mecca, with our own people. You say that worshippers ought to go into Atlanta, to one of those big and fancy places like the Cathedral of St. Philip!"

Jesus said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship God neither in this city mosque, or in that city cathedral, or in Mecca or in Jerusalem. God is spirit and truth. The true worshippers will worship God in spirit and in truth."

"It will not matter whether you are from the country or the city. It will not matter whether you are from Atlanta or Detroit or Indonesia or Egypt. It will not matter whether you are Jewish or Muslim. It will not matter. Wherever there is spirit and truth, there is the God we worship."

The woman was completely startled. She was overpowered. So she resorted to what she had learned as a child. "Well, I know that when the Messiah comes, the Christ, he will teach us all things."

"I am he," said Jesus. "I am he. I am the One you have been waiting for."

Just then, the disciples came back, and they were not astonished at all that Jesus was at the coffee shop. They were not even astonished that Jesus was talking to a woman. The disciples had already tasted a bit of the living coffee of Jesus. That coffee had opened their eyes from sleep before.

The disciples knew that Jesus deliberately walks into foreign territory. Jesus is not subject to the same rules of worship that most of the world understands. It does not matter to Jesus where one prays, or what words we use, or even what tradition one claims to follow. What matters to Jesus is spirit and truth.

Well, the woman left her full cup of coffee right there on the table; she went back into her section of town. And she talked a lot. To everyone she said, "This man -this Jesus-- told me everything about myself. He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

I was one of those guys who heard what the woman said. She told one guy, and he told another guy. Finally, someone told me. I was one of those who went out to see Jesus. I invited him into my house. And then I invited him into my heart.

That's why I am here telling you the story today. I believe, no longer because of what that Samaritan woman said, wherever she may have been from. I believe, no longer because of what anyone said, really, even those great gospel writers like Luke and Mark.

I have seen for myself. I have tasted and seen, and I believe.

This Jesus is spirit and truth. He is the messiah, the One who was sent to wake us up. He is the One sent to bring God's love and God's justice into the world. I have heard his truth and sensed his Spirit.

This Jesus has the power to be the Savior of the World, not just the Savior of my hometown, not just the savior of my denomination, not just the savior of my religion, not just the savior of my country, not just the savior of my favorite coffee shop. This Jesus is the Savior of the World.

AMEN.

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