

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Ministering While Physically Weary John 4:1-9

Jesus, though 100% God, was also 100% human. And as a human he would become weary in very much the same way as we might become weary. If He started working at sunrise and would continue to work until sundown His body would become just as tired as our body would become tired. There were times that I am sure that He was so tired that His body would become like a limp rag while aching and throbbing. And when He finally came to the end of His day and was able to lay His body down to rest there would be this wonderful sense of relief.

But even though this was true of Christ He never used the weariness that He might have felt as an excuse to avoid opportunities to minister. He would each and every time, no matter how physically tired He might be, extend Himself to whatever need He encountered.

Let me read for you **John 4:1-9**, “**When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were) (3) He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. (4) And He had to pass through Samaria. (5) So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; (6) and Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (7) There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ (8) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. (9) The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?’ (For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)”**

When Jesus asked this Samaritan woman for a drink, even though He was tired, it was more about Him ministering to her need than her ministering to His need. This fact, will become clear to us this weekend as we examine the text.

This weekend we will be examining the *request* that Christ made of the Samaritan woman in **John 4:1-9** and her response.

I would hope that as we examine this request and the Samaritan woman’s response that we would be personally challenged not to let our physical fatigue prevent us from seizing whatever opportunities God may bring our way for ministry.

Let us now begin our examination of **John 4:1-9**. And what is the first thing that we see as we look at this text?

Christ’s initial request for a drink of water from the Samaritan woman on the surface appears very *self-serving* (John 4:1-8). Let me read this text for you one more time and see if this is not true, “**When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), (3) He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. (4) And He had to pass through Samaria. (5) So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of**

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ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; (6) And Jacob's well was there, Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. (7) There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (8) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food." So here we have Jesus sitting by Himself at this well, weary and apparently thirsty and in need of a drink. What led up to Christ asking for a drink of water from this Samaritan woman? What were the events that led Christ to reach out to this Samaritan woman?

Jesus though ministering in Judea felt compelled to travel to the area of Galilee (John 4:1-3). Why would He have been compelled to leave the area of Judea to travel up to the area of Galilee?

John 4:1-3 which is all one sentence gives us the answer in **verse 1**. **Verse 1** tells us that Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard that He was making and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist. Why would this particular fact have compelled Christ to leave Judea? Jesus felt compelled to leave Judea for Galilee because the Pharisee's negative view of John the Baptist would invariably be directed toward Himself in light of His success.

The Pharisees negative view of the ministry of John the Baptist has already been made apparent to us in **John 1:19-28**. In **John 1:19** the Sanhedrin had sent a group of priests and Levites out from Jerusalem to ask John the Baptist who he was. And he responded by telling them in **John 1:20**, "**I am not the Christ.**" The group that had been sent by the Sanhedrin then pressed John the Baptist further asking Him if he was Elijah or "the prophet." In both incidences he denied that he was. This group then challenges John the Baptist once again to identify himself. This time he comes back by saying, "**I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord,**' as **Isaiah said.**" Now after hearing this response the group that had been sent by the Jews, or in other words the Sanhedrin, was more specifically identified as a group that had been sent by the Pharisees.

Even though the Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin, the highest religious authority in Palestine, the apostle John makes it very clear that it was the Pharisees amongst the Sanhedrin who had directed this group of priests to go out to John the Baptist. And it is this group representing the Pharisees amongst the Sanhedrin that then challenges John the Baptist with these words in **John 1:25**, "**Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?**"

They responded in this way because this is the way the Pharisees themselves would have responded if they were there. The Pharisees did not look favorably upon the ministry of John the Baptist. They felt that his baptism of Jews was unnecessary.

Since the ministry of Jesus was similar to John's ministry but even more successful the negative attention of the Pharisees would be shortly be focused on Christ even though Christ Himself in contrast to John the Baptist was not actually doing the actual baptisms. How do we know this? All we have to do is to look at **verse 2**, (**although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were**).

Since the negative attention of the Pharisees toward Christ was inevitable, Jesus therefore must have felt that it would be best in terms of His overall mission to place Himself in a different situation.

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He therefore left Judea to go to Galilee. Look at **John 4:3**, “**He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.**” Now we come to a very interesting part of the text.

Let us read **John 4:4**, “**And He had to pass through Samaria.**” The route normally followed by Jewish travelers heading north from Judea to Galilee or south from Galilee to Judea passed through Samaria according to Josephus an ancient Jewish historian. However, they certainly did not have to pass through Samaria. The necessity of passing through Samaria was not geographically absolute. Travelers could also choose to circumvent Samaria by crossing over to the east side of the Jordan River. In fact, the Pharisees would regularly do this.

If passing through Samaria was not absolute in terms of geography, we again have to ask the question, why did the Apostle John say, “**And He had to pass through Samaria?**”

Perhaps someone might simply say that Jesus was being constrained by certain events to travel rapidly and therefore of necessity had to pass through Samaria to save time. This might sound good but the necessity of passing through Samaria was not dictated by the need for rapid travel. Jesus had left Judea before any crisis between He and the Pharisees had developed. If the necessity of passing through Samaria was not dictated by geography, if the necessity of passing through Samaria was not dictated by the need for rapid travel then what led John to say, “**And He had to pass through Samaria?**”

The expression “had to pass through Samaria” points to Christ’s mission. He was not just the light of the Jews but of the world, which included Samaria (John 9:1-5). Let me read for you **John 9:1-5**, “**and as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. (2) And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?” (3) Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents, but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him. (4) We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work. (5) While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”**

And being the light of the world would also include being the light to the Samaritans. This is why Jesus in deciding to go from Judea to Galilee had to pass through Samaria. I believe that He was in the process of fulfilling His God given mission. I believe Him passing through Samaria was a divine necessity.

In order to appreciate the story that will now begin to unfold while traveling through Samaria we need to understand a little bit about the history of Samaria. Israel after the death of Solomon divided into the northern and southern kingdoms. King Omri named the capital of the northern kingdom “Samaria” (1 Kings 16:24) and the name was then transferred to the district and sometimes to the entire northern kingdom.

After the Assyrians captured Samaria in 722 BC, they deported all the Israelites of substance and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites. After the exile, Jews returning to their homeland, the remains of the southern kingdom, viewed the Samaritans as racial half-breeds, whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements (Nehemiah 13).

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About 400 BC, the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim; toward the end of the second century BC this was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler of Judea. This combination of events fueled religious and theological animosities. Certainly by the first century the Samaritans had developed their own religious heritage based on the Pentateuch, continuing their focus worship not on Jerusalem and its temple but on Mount Gerizim.

The Jews and Samaritans both would claim that Abraham was their father but they were now two distinct groups with open animosity toward each other. But Christ as the light of the world in leaving Judea to go to Galilee felt that He had to pass through Samaria. He was on a mission.

So what happens next? Let us now go down to **John 4:5**, “**So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.**” We don’t absolutely know the identity of this particular city that was near the parcel of ground that Jacob had given his son Joseph but we know that this city was at or near Jacob’s well.

Let us read **John 4:6**, “**And Jacob’s well was there.**” Knowing that Jacob’s well was there at or near the city of Sychar and because we can even today visit the well. Most people believe that the city of Sychar is now the village Askar which is only a moderate walk away from this well where we find Jesus sitting. And why was He sitting at the well? Let us continue to read, “**And Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well.**”

The word for wearied (KEKOPIAKOS) means to “toil excessively.” Jesus was, in other words, exhausted. He was bone weary tired. And it was only the “**sixth hour**” or in other words, noon, but apparently He was spent.

So while He was apparently sitting by this well by Himself a Samaritan woman approaches the well. Let us now read **John 4:7**, “**There came a woman of Samaria to draw water.**”

Now this is interesting. It was not unusual that a woman should do this for the simple reason that the drawing of water was a common chore for the women. What was unusual was the time. Mostly the women came at around sunset, when the heat of the day was over. It could be very hot in the middle of the day, and few women would typically choose to carry water at such a time.

In fact, this may have been the very reason why this woman chose to come at noon. She could be sure that there would not be many others drawing water at that time, and it may be that that suited her fine. As we see later in the story she may not have been a woman with the best reputation. But the bottom line is that even though it might have been an unusual hour for a woman to come to draw water from the well we really do not know why she came at that hour.

But even though we do not know exactly why she was coming at that hour we do know that Jesus asked her for a drink. Let us continue to read the verse, “**There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’**” I know that He doesn’t use the word “please” but the Greek construction communicates a *polite* request.

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Why hadn't he asked the disciples to find a way to draw up from the well? Look at **verse 8**, "**For His disciples had gone away into the city, the city of Sychar, to buy food.**"

You might be thinking at this point if Jesus was thirsty while waiting for His disciples to return with food why had He not gotten up and drawn the water Himself? The reason why He hadn't done this was because He had nothing with Him to draw up the water from the well based on **John 4:11**. But it was more than this. Though the request for a drink of water was a sincere request based on real human thirst Jesus was about to seize his first opportunity to bring light to a non-Jew.

If we had water and someone near us was thirsty and asked us for a drink I doubt if we would think a whole lot about it. But this was not the case with this Samaritan woman.

The Samaritan woman sensed that there was more to Christ's request for a drink of water than simply satisfying His thirst (John 4:9). Let us read **John 4:9**, "**The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)**"

Obviously His request for a drink had startled the Samaritan woman. What did she say? "**How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?**" She obviously knew how the Jews viewed the Samaritans and did not expect Jesus to behave in this way toward her.

John in an attempt to apparently clarify this would have been the case adds the words, "**for the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.**" On the surface this might appear as if this would mean that they were not to talk with the Samaritans or to interact with them on any level but this obviously is not what is meant by the words of the Apostle John. Why? The disciples had left earlier to go into the town of Sychar, a Samaritan city to buy food. The disciples of Jesus were obviously dealing with the Samaritans.

Then what does John mean when he adds the words, "**For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans?**" Although "dealings" (SUNCHRASTHAI) can mean, "to associate with" it can also mean, "to use together with." This I believe is the better understanding of the word and this I believe can help us to see exactly what John meant to say when he said, "**For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.**" What John I believe meant to say is captured in the footnote in the NIV translation "For Jews do not use dishes Samaritans have used."

Now we can understand why the Samaritan woman was so surprised by Jesus request. The Samaritan was startled because His request involved the use of her utensil and she knew that from the Jewish perspective that this would spiritually defile Him. She knew what Jews in general believed but she did not know Christ was the light of the world had to pass through Samaria to shine His light upon her.

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CONCLUSION

Our Lord was weary in the performance of His ministry. And He reacted like any other weary man as He sat beside this well near the city of Sychar. He obviously was more weary than his disciples because he did not accompany them into town.

Perhaps our Lord had His eyes closed as He reclined by the well when He heard the footsteps of this Samaritan woman. It would have been easy for Him to rationalize in this situation, “I have been ministering to thousands, and I am tired. I have just got to relax!”

That choice was available to Jesus, but that is not what He did! He chose through a very simple request to open the door so that His light could shine on this woman.

Oswald Sanders said, “The world is run by tired men.” Though many Christians faithfully serving the Lord need to take care of themselves and from time to time get some R & R it is also true that the Christian world is run by tired men and women. How could they not be? The fields are white unto harvest but the laborers are few.

But weariness is not an excuse to pull out of ministry. Anne Ortlund once said, “Nowhere in the Bible are we told to slow down and take it easy.” Rather what does the Bible call us to do? We are to press on. We are not to be weary in well doing. We are to run the good race.

Most souls are won by tired people!
The best sermons are preached by tired men!
The best camps are run by exhausted youth ministers!
The best children ministries are run by tired children workers!

We will never do great things for God until we are *willing* to minister when we are tired.