

COME, SEE A MAN!

John 4:29

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”

These are the words of a Samaritan woman who had just met Jesus. We don't know her name. We don't know what happened to her later in her life. We don't really know much about her at all. But recorded in the Bible for us is this quite incredible proclamation.

Filled to overflowing with the joy of meeting Jesus she ran into the town telling everyone about it, so that they could meet him too.

These words are recored in John's gospel. Chapter 4 verse 29. It's one of my favourite verses in the whole Bible, a part of one of my favourite stories in the whole Bible.

And I think that it's one of my favourites, because in her proclamation, the Samaritan woman takes us to the very centre of the good news about Jesus, and the very centre of telling people about Jesus. If we understand what she is saying, we'll understand the heart of the gospel, and the heart of evangelism. And if we really grasp what she is saying, we will start to say what she says. We'll start running around, running our mouth about Jesus: “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah.”

1. THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

So firstly, John 4:29 takes us to the heart of the gospel. If you want to know why the gospel is such good news, then this verse will help you *a lot!*

Here it is — are you ready?

Jesus knows *everything* about us. And he loves us still.

Let's unpack that even more. Listen again to what the woman said:

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did!”

Now, I don't know about you, but that sounds like a quite terrifying prospect! If someone told me everything I had ever done I would run away screaming as fast as I could!

Imagine someone who could tell you what you had for breakfast last Tuesday.

They could tell you that song you like but are embarrassed to admit it.

They could tell you that you pick your nose when you think no one is looking.

And they could tell you about the books you stole from the book fair when you were in year 2. (Yep, that was really me)

They could tell you about the mean things you said to that person at school that time.

They could tell you about the things you look at on the computer late at night.

They could tell you about *all* the selfish, silly and sinful things that you say and do and think. Pretty scary right?

And this is what the woman experiences from Jesus. Halfway through their conversation, Jesus brings up the woman's love life. Telling her to bring her husband along, the woman replies that she has no husband. And what Jesus says next must have floored her:

"You are right when you say you have no husband." [Jesus said] The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

To have had 5 husbands, and to be living with a 6th man when they weren't even married was a shameful thing. This woman had probably been sinned against by some of these men, and she would have sinned herself. This is why she was out getting water alone and not with the other women of the city. This is why she came out *by herself* in the hottest part of the day.

Other people would have known this about the Samaritan woman and they had rejected her. And wanted nothing to do with her. And you can imagine her heart sinking when Jesus revealed that he knew the truth. Will this man reject her too. Would he turn her away? No, Jesus loves her.

And John wants us to see that this really is a love story.

Firstly, the whole conversation takes place at a well. This is where the great love stories of the Old Testament took place. Isaac met Rebekah at a well. Jacob met Rachel at a well. Moses met his wife Zipporah at a well. And here is Jesus meeting a woman at a well. Love is in the air!

And remember the fact about the **6 men** in the Samaritan woman's life? This whole conversation is charged with romance. That's why the disciples are so surprised and awkward when they get back from the shops!

And here comes Jesus, as like the seventh man in the woman's life. Seven is a special number in John's gospel. There are seven signs performed by Jesus. There are seven sayings that Jesus begins with the words "I AM". Seven is the number of completion and perfection and wholeness and fullness.

And this is what Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman. Not the romantic intimacy we might expect, but the far greater intimacy that comes from truly worshipping the Lord.

Despite her messy past, Jesus offers to her the truly satisfying, living water of full life with God. Jesus offers the thirst-quenching, living water of forgiveness and grace. Jesus reveals to her that he is the Messiah, the promised King. Jesus doesn't reject her, or turn her away, or even scold her for her sin. But neither does Jesus turn a blind eye to her sin and ignore the reality of her past and her present. Jesus brings it out on the open, he looks at her sin and shame and guilt fully in the face. And seeing clearly and completely everything she has ever done...he LOVES her still.

And unlike the other men in the woman's life, Jesus will not use her or abuse her, he will never leave her forsake her, he will never let her down, or let her go.

Jesus is the seventh man, who in himself brings completing and perfection and wholeness and fullness to all who put their trust in him.

This is the very heart of the gospel.

Jesus doesn't come to give prizes to the spiritually successful.

He doesn't come to give moral lessons to the spiritually motivated.

He doesn't come to give pep talks to the spiritually complacent.

He comes to offer living water to the spiritually thirsty.

He comes to pour out his love on sinners and sufferers.

This was the good news for the Samaritan woman at the well. And it is the good news for you and me too. This is the heart of the gospel: Jesus sees everything about us — the good, the bad, and the very ugly, — *and he loves us still.*

2. THE HEART OF EVANGELISM

Is it any wonder that the woman is so excited? Instead of running away in terror, she runs away in absolute joy. Jesus has filled her up with the living water of his love, and she can't help but overflow to the people around her:

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." [She says] Could this be the Messiah?"

And this is what evangelism is all about.

Evangelism is not about selling a product. It's introducing people to the person of Jesus.

Evangelism is not about philosophical debate. It is introducing people to the person of Jesus.

Evangelism is not about winning arguments. It is introducing people to the person of Jesus.

When we encounter Jesus we will be compelled to run into our schools and our workplaces and our families and our communities telling people to come and see this man Jesus, this man who knows us fully, and loves us completely.

The heart of evangelism is being so excited about knowing the love of Jesus, that you want everyone else to meet him too. *Evangelism is the overflow of a heart that has been filled up with the good news of the gospel.*

I want to tell you about an *awesome* book that I read over Christmas. It is called *Everything Sad is Untrue* by Daniel Nayeri. It's written for maybe 13-18 year olds but I think everyone should read it — it was amazing.

It tells the story of Daniel's life as a refugee in Oklahoma — told from the perspective of his 11 year old self.

And the reason why Daniel was a refugee is that he and his family were forced to flee their home in Iran when his Mum met Jesus.

Actually, not just that she met Jesus, but because she told everyone else that they needed to meet Jesus too. She risked her life, left her job, gave up her wealth, and moved to the other side of the world, because she knew that Jesus was better than money, and safety — even her very life.

And there's one scene when Daniel's Dad is trying to convince his Mum to stop speaking about Jesus. But she refuses to be silent and secret about her faith, and Daniel remarks:

"My mom had the enthusiasm of somebody who just played *Chrono Trigger* for the first time and has to tell everybody about it."

I love that. And don't we just naturally do that all the time?

When we see a great movie, we want our family to watch it too.

When we play a new video game we want to share it with our friends.

When we eat at an amazing restaurant, we want to take others along to share what we have enjoyed.

When we read an awesome book, we say "you just *have to* read it." Just like I'm doing with you now! (Seriously, you should read it...)

And it's the same thing with Jesus and the gospel.

True and effective evangelism won't happen just by people like me giving you a pep talk, or running a training course, or teaching you a 6-step outline of the gospel. Those things might be helpful, but they are not the heart of the matter. True evangelism will happen as we spend time with Jesus and become so enthusiastic about *him*, that we just have to tell other people "*Come, see this man!*"

So if you want this year to be a year where you take big and bold steps to share the good news with people around then you. Then the first thing you need to do is spend time with Jesus and revel in his love. Listen to him speak to you in the Bible. Talk with him in prayer. Open yourself up to him and confess your sins to him. And then receive the stunning good news of his full and free forgiveness. Marvel at the fact that he sees everything about you and loves you still. Fill yourself up with the good news of his grace.

And then ask for his help to simply overflow to others with your love for him. The most helpful line that I have heard for my own evangelistic efforts is just this: "One thing I love about Jesus is ... "

How could you finish that sentence? You could say what this woman says: One thing I love about Jesus is that he knows everything about me and still loves me.

It could be: One thing I love about Jesus is that I don't have to earn his love, he gives it freely as a gift.

What would you say? And could you say that to a friend or a family member in the next couple of weeks? Could you invite them to come and see this Jesus for themselves? Could you bring them along to church, or ALIVE, or kids' church so they can meet Jesus too?

Evangelism is not meant to be something which sucks us dry. It is meant to be something which overflows from us because we are so full of joy in Jesus.

That's what Jesus says to the woman in verse 14. Jesus says that the water he gives "will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

He pours his love into our hearts and it fills us up. It fills us up so that we can have eternal life. But it also overflows from us so that others can receive eternal life from Jesus too. I think that is pretty cool.

And it's actually what happens at the end of this story as many many people meet Jesus because of the words of this woman. That's because her words take us to the heart of the good news of the gospel. And these words which reveal to us the heart of sharing the gospel in evangelism. And these are words which we can all take on our own lips and make our own:

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"