

John 4:29

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn to the passage that we read in John chapter 4, and especially words of verse 29. The words of the woman, Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?

One of the great questions that the church in the last part of the 20th century has been considering is the question of the communication of the gospel.

How to communicate Christianity to other people? It's a question that we've had to confront because of the turning away of many people from the churches.

Now, this may have many reasons, that turning away. It may be, in certain instances, very much the part, the blame is due to the church itself.

There may be other reasons. There may be the growing materialism of our 20th century. There may be also the influence of various non-Christian philosophies and ways of thinking.

[1 : 1 9] But that's not really what I'm concerned with here this morning, although that's an important question in itself. What I'm concerned with is this great question of communicating Christianity, because that's really what this passage is concerned about.

In fact, we might say the whole of John chapter 4, as it deals with Jesus' contact with the Samaritans. It's about this question of communicating Christianity.

How to do it. Maybe even how best to do it. I've come to rate very highly, as a means of communicating Christianity, what we call personal evangelism.

That is, one person speaking to another person about Christian things. I've come to that conclusion, first, because I've observed what happens.

I've observed that people who come to know Christ, who come into the churches, they usually come because someone has had personal contact with them.

[2 : 3 7] Someone has asked them to come, but maybe more than that, they have already been talking to them about spiritual things. The most effective means, at a practical level, it would seem, of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ is for individual people to speak to others and to bring others into the fellowship of God's people.

And above all, to bring them to know Jesus Christ. That's the first thing I've noticed. But the other thing is that, in biblical terms, this is a pattern that's laid down.

It's not the only means of evangelism. Perhaps the greatest means is the proclamation of God's word, the preaching of God's word, as we call it, the broadcasting of God's word by a man explaining, expounding what God's word is.

But side by side with that, there is the person-to-person contact. And it's given a very high priority in the New Testament. And we see it particularly in the example that our Lord Jesus Christ himself gave us.

Here we see in this chapter, for instance, his engaging in personal evangelism, speaking to this woman. And I think this is something that we, as a church today, have got to take on board if we're going to have an impact in this last part of the 20th century.

[4 : 1 1] If we're really going to stop just talking about the problems, and are actually going to, in obedience to God, follow out what he commands.

We are going to have to start doing this, engaging in personal evangelism. Well, the thing I want to focus on today is not how Jesus engaged in that.

We've noticed that already in previous weeks and on other occasions. But I want to just focus now on how the woman engaged in this personal evangelism.

Because there is an interesting step here. The woman experiences this person-to-person encounter with Jesus Christ.

And the natural thing, the most natural thing in the world, it seemed to her, was that she should then go and tell other people what she had discovered.

[5 : 16] And that's the pattern that seems to be laid down here very much in the early chapters of John. Remember how John the Baptist said, Look, there's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And the two disciples who were with them, they went and they followed Jesus. Then they went and they got other people. Come and see, they said. And that's how it went on. And that is the pattern that is laid down here.

But I want to focus on what this woman did, how she went about it, bearing in mind who she was and what her problems were. Well, the three brief things I want to notice, first of all, before we come on to what she actually said.

The first thing is that there is at least some evidence here that there was a transformation in this woman.

Something had changed in her life. One little indication of it, and John gives this little detail that helps us, one little indication of it is that he tells us in verse 28 that she left her water jar and then went back to the town to speak to the people.

[6 : 31] Now, why did he mention this fact that she left her water jar? And notice, he doesn't say that she forgot it. Thereby indicating that, well, she was in such a hurry, such a rush to get on with what she was now doing that she forgot about it.

He doesn't say that. He says she left it, and it would imply that she deliberately left it. Well, in the context, of course, in which it occurs, it's quite clear.

Because how had all of this begun? It had begun by Jesus asking this woman for a drink.

Remember how he broke down the barrier? Now, he made the approach. He took the initiative.

And the conversation had developed from there. Now, the woman's attitudes have completely been transformed by this conversation with Jesus Christ. No longer are there the barriers between Jew and Samaritan as far as she's concerned.

And she wants to leave the water that she's drawn for Jesus to help himself to a drink. That's the first little indication we get that there's been a transformation in this woman's attitude.

[7 : 38] A very little thing, you might think. But how important in the context. Someone before who was concerned with such barriers that people put up between each other.

And now she saw that all the barriers were down because Jesus, being the Christ, had explained to her that these barriers were now removed. And there was only one way for people to come to God, and that was through Jesus himself.

But then the second thing we notice is that she went back. Again in verse 28. The woman went back to the town and said to the people.

Now that's important also in this context in which we're considering it personal evangelism. How often evangelism takes the form that we go anywhere but to the people that we know.

So often evangelistic campaigns and endeavors are directed to people we don't know. Now there's a place for that. But the pattern being laid down in the Bible time and time again is that people went back to the people they knew.

[8 : 51] Remember what Jesus said to Legion, the man whom he had just freed from the evil power that was binding him. He said, go back to your home. Go back to your own friends.

Go back to your own family. And tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. Well, he did that. But he didn't just stop there. He went right throughout that whole region.

The place where he was known. The place where he was notorious. And he told them what great things Jesus had done for him. It's the same here. This woman on her own initiative.

Without Jesus needing to command her to do it, she goes back to the town to the people she knows. And she tells them about this marvelous man that she has met there by the well.

Now to her it was the most natural thing in the world. But also it must have been quite difficult.

Because after all, remember the people there in that town would know what kind of woman she was.

[9 : 50] And we've already seen that she was by no means a morally perfect woman. And there would have been all kinds of gossip about her, no doubt. But all these things just faded into insignificance as far as she was concerned.

She went back to the place where she was known and she told them what she had discovered. And you see that witness, the witness of this woman and the witness of Legion, had far more effect than sending a whole army of evangelists into these places.

And the reason is because the people in these areas knew the woman and they knew Legion.

And the transformation in these people, in Legion and in the Samaritan woman, was a testimony in itself. This person whom they knew was now speaking of spiritual things.

Speaking of eternal things. Speaking of Jesus Christ. And that, that very detail in itself was almost enough to convince some of these people about Jesus Christ.

[11:07] We can never underestimate the worth and the importance of someone, no matter how insignificant they may think they are, telling people who know them about Jesus.

Because it is what you are, as well as what you say, that's so important. You could get the most silver-tongued evangelist in the world coming to someone and telling them the gospel in the clearest terms.

But yet, it might make no difference at all. Because it was unrelated to their own personal experience. But someone whom they knew, coming along and saying the same gospel, in maybe very faltering words, maybe not the right technical language or anything, but saying the same gospel would have far greater effect because it was coming from someone that they knew.

But then, we see also that she didn't just go back. She went back and she said something. She spoke.

She had something to say. Again, that's important. Because, you see, we've had a trend in the Christian church in this century to say, well, people are fed up with hearing words.

[12:35] They don't want to hear any more words. They want to see action. So we'll just live the Christian life. And we'll do whatever good we can.

And in this way, we will witness to our Lord. Now, you see, there is incredible truth in that. We're told in the Bible to do that very thing. To perform good works.

Because it pleases God. It's of service to Him. And also, it's of good to other people. We're commanded to keep His law and to do good. There is absolutely no doubt about it.

And that is a witness in itself to people. But it is not enough. It is not, we might say, in itself, evangelism at all. Because evangelism is literally good newsing.

Telling good news. And this emphasis of telling, of speaking, must come into it. You cannot have a silent evangelist. You cannot have a silent Christian.

[13:36] Ultimately, Jesus said, by your words, you shall be justified. And by your words, you shall be condemned. Then, we need to regain this emphasis upon the Christian.

The ordinary Christian. The man in the street Christian. Speaking of Christian things. She went back. And she didn't just say, well, I've been very bad in the past.

So maybe I should just show by the fact that I'm changed. I'm a new person that something's happened in my life. She didn't do that. There was a change in her life. But she had to explain to people what the change was.

She had to point people to this man that she had met. Well then, I want to come more particularly now to what she actually says. When she gets back there to our town.

And starts telling everybody she knows about Jesus. This is what she said. Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?

[14:37] First, there's a personal invitation there. A personal invitation. She says, come, see a man. Now that is fundamental to the Christian gospel.

And to any idea of evangelism. It is saying the most important thing about Christianity is knowing a person.

She didn't just say, look, I'm changed. Nor did she launch into some kind of explanation in her own words of what Jesus had just been telling her about the religion of the Jews and the Samaritans really being no longer relevant.

Because Jesus, the fulfillment of it all, had come. She didn't try to get out of her depths into theological things that perhaps she didn't clearly understand yet. But she focused on the very central truth of Christianity.

And that is on the person of Jesus Christ. After all, important though our living and important though questions of ethics and questions of theology and doctrine are, important as all these are, they are worthless if isolated from the person of Christ.

[16:08] They are worthless.

Through thick and thin. Who will say to you, and these words will not be empty and meaningless. You will never walk alone. That's what the Christian gospel is saying.

Come, see a man. But notice also, in the wider context of the New Testament and of the whole Bible, her words, come, see a man.

And in light of what she goes on to say, they stress the fact that this marvelous person, this divine person whom she has come to know, is a man.

The things that these people had read about in the Old Testament, they discussed maybe in their religion. These things, the promises concerning God coming and blessing the earth, it had come about.

[17:30] Because God himself had come in the person of a man. Come, see a man. Was the message of this woman.

And that is the message of the Christian gospel still today. It is saying to people, come to a man. Come to Jesus Christ. Who was born in Bethlehem.

Who lived in Galilee and Judea and Samaria. And who died in Jerusalem. And they rose again.

Come see this man. Come to know this man.

Because this man is the very expression of God. This man is the son of God. So that the Christian message is saying something very relevant.

And it's saying something extremely important. But it is saying something that shows that God has come down to man.

[18:31] God has come to us. It's not a case of us reaching up. And trying to grasp. And trying to understand God. People talk about their search for God.

The Christian message is exactly the reverse. It is God's search for man. And it is not a search that is purposeless. It is a search that has been achieved and completed in Jesus Christ.

He came into this world to seek and to save the lost. Come see a man is the invitation. Come to this one. Whom God sent into the world to be our savior.

That is still the message today. To those of you who today do not know Jesus Christ. It is come.

See a man. Come meet with Jesus. Come speak to him.

Talk to him. Let him talk to you through his word. And come to know him. Come see. Come see. Come see a man.

[19:30] It echoes the expression used by Andrew as well. He said, come and see. Come and see. And that was the message that keeps getting repeated throughout these early chapters of John.

People raised maybe questions like Nathaniel and so on. They raised questions. But the answer was, well, come and see. Taste and see, as the psalm says.

Taste and see that God is good. What are you to do? Well, you're urged to read the Bible. To read Christ's words. If you're going to meet with Christ, you have to know his words.

If you're to meet with any person, you've got to hear what they have to say to get to know them. But in the same way, you've got to read what Jesus says. Read the gospel. Hear what he says.

But not only that, we soon discover that not just the gospels, but the whole of the New Testament, the whole of the Bible, are the words of Jesus Christ. And you come to know him through reading that word and asking him to reveal himself to you so that you may know him.

[20:39] Also, use any books that are helpful in explaining the Bible. But also, listen to gospel preaching, where the gospel of Christ is explained, where the person of Christ is explained, where his words are explained and preached.

These are the ways that God has given to us to meet with Jesus Christ. But it's no use going on and on and on doing these things in just a sort of formal way. We are asked to meet with a person.

These things are all living things, the living word of Christ. And if you have not met Jesus Christ through these things, then pray now that this will come alive for you and you will know Jesus through his word.

But then also, the woman told of a penetrating revelation. Penetrating revelation. Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.

This is the message she had to tell these people. It was a very personal message. It was about her own meeting with Jesus Christ. And you know, there's a very important place for that.

[21 : 55] A personal message concerning what we have discovered of Jesus. Now, there were other things in their conversation, as I've hinted at already. There was a discussion about the question of the Jewish and the Samaritan religion.

But interesting, although all these things were unimportant, as all these things were, the real focus of it all for her was this. He told me everything I ever did.

I met someone who had this penetrating insight into me that he revealed what he knew about me. He knew me. He understood me.

He was able to help me. Well, what were some of these things that the woman was no doubt thinking about when she said, He told me everything I ever did. That would imply that she wasn't here just thinking about the very striking instance where he shows that he knows something about her, when he shows that he knows about her checkered career with men, how she was married five times and now she was just living with someone.

That was strikingly enough. But when she says, everything I ever did, that means that every stage of that conversation, it was hitting right home into some particular area of her life.

[23 : 13] As she talked with Jesus, she realized here was someone who knew her, who knew her inside, who knew her inside out, we might say, who knew everything about her.

Think how he started off. He started off by showing that he knew about the barriers and prejudices that she had in her heart. She says, how is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink? He knew and he understood those kind of things. The very fact that he asked for a drink in the first place would imply that here he was setting up some kind of occasion for her to air this problem and for him to deal with it.

He knows the barriers. He knows our barriers. He knows the barriers we put up against other people and against him. He knows our prejudices. That's the kind of penetrating insight that he's here thinking about.

But Jesus also showed that he knew her curiosity because obviously she was the kind of person who was very curious about many things. She was curious about the stranger at the well, for one thing.

[24 : 22] And Jesus knew that and he played on that. He talked in terms that would make her even more curious, wanting to know what on earth he was talking about, about this living water. Jesus knew what kind of person she was.

A person who was curious to find out about other people, who was interested in people. Jesus again knows that same kind of thing about us. He knows what kind of personalities we are.

And he knows maybe what problems that kind of personality has got us into. Then again, Jesus demonstrated to her that he knew her longings.

Her deepest, innermost longings. He appealed, remember, to her longing for satisfaction. And when the woman says, Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Here's another point that she was focusing on. This man understood that through all the ups and downs of my life, all these problems, yes, all these sins, I've been searching.

[25 : 25] I've been looking for something. I've been looking for someone. I've been looking for living water. This man understood me. He knew that. And he was speaking of that very thing, of that inner longing that could only be satisfied in him.

And again, it's exactly the same for ourselves. The message to you today is, Come, see this man who told me all things that ever I did. The message that the Christian is saying, He knows, he understands me.

He has shown it to me. He can also show it to you. That he understands your longings and your deepest needs. It's also very clear that the woman would be thinking about the fact that Jesus knew about her sins.

He said, Go, call your husband. Right away, he had put his finger on the problem, the present problem in our life. He said, I have no husband.

Trying to cover up what was wrong. And then it came out. Jesus revealed it. You've had five husbands, and the man you're now living with is not your husband. You've said, Right, you have no husband.

[26 : 37] But Jesus wasn't doing that in any kind of way that was mocking her or looking down on her. But he was showing again that he knew everything she ever did.

He knew what kind of person she was. He knew her sins. He knew her guilt and her shame and her need for forgiveness. Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did, the woman says.

And again, that's the Christian message still. Come and see and meet with this man who not only knows your guilt, but he understands it, and he has come to deal with it.

Come, see this man. But also the woman would be thinking about the fact that Jesus knew about her questions. He knew that she had all kinds of questions about religious things.

And he didn't sort of poo-poo that whole idea of her being interested in religion. Not at all. He took her question very seriously and answered her question very seriously and brought out of it things that perhaps she had never dreamed of.

[27 : 45] Jesus knew that he had these serious religious questions and concerns, as every person has, because we're made in the image of God. And what person can go through this life never thinking about eternal issues, about what happens after death, about what true religion is all about, about what God is like?

No matter how sinful we may be, we have got those kind of questions. And Jesus knows that. And he has answers to our questions. But this penetrating insight of Jesus was revealed to the woman. She said, He told me everything I ever did. He didn't just know it, but he told me about it. And that's one of the great steps forward in coming to know Jesus Christ.

When we discover that his word is not just speaking to the world in general, not just speaking to sinners in general, but it's speaking to me. You read a passage and you suddenly discover, that's describing me.

That's talking about my needs. That's the kinds of sins I've committed. That's the kind of guilt and shame I've got. That word is speaking to me. Jesus is speaking directly to us and telling us what kind of person we are and what he has done to deal with those problems and needs.

[29 : 15] But then the woman had a perfect question for the people in her hometown. She said, Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Could this be the Christ? There was a question, you see, at the end of it. There was the personal invitation, come and see. Then she spoke of the penetrating insight that this man had.

But now there was a question, a perfect question I would suggest. A perfect question to elicit some kind of response from the people.

It was perfect in that it was a very open question. She didn't just say, Look, I found the Christ, you come and see him.

She had a question about it. Could this be the Christ? It's a question that's very difficult to translate because it's a question that's got a little bit of uncertainty in it.

[30 : 22] It's not even, I don't think, as strong as saying, Could this be the Christ? It's really something like this. He's not the Christ, is he? Or something like, Is he the Christ, perhaps?

It's got that kind of uncertainty, that kind of demanding some kind of response from the people themselves. She wasn't prejudging the issue for them.

She already knew, I believe, whom Jesus was. She had already made up her mind. But she was inviting them to make up their minds. And you know, that is what the gospel is still.

Yes, there is information. The woman gives information. She tells what she knows of him and who he is. But then, there is an invitation to consider for yourself.

There is the open question. You decide, Is this the Christ? Now, not only was it open, but it was a very pertinent question.

[31 : 26] And that's why, again, it was perfect. It was open, it was asking people to consider for themselves, but it was very pertinent or relevant, because it focused on the person of Jesus and the question of who he is.

Could this be the Christ? She raises the whole central issue of what biblical religion is about.

From beginning to end, it concerns this man. This man who is promised the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of Judah, the seed of David, and so on.

A promised man who is called the Messiah becomes clear that he is the anointed one, anointed to be king, anointed to be prophet and priest, the anointed one.

A pertinent question asking them to consider, is this one, this man that she met by the well there in Samaria, is he the Christ, this one promise?

[32 : 38] Now, that is still the great question, the great relevant question to be decided, not only by Jews and Samaritans, but by the whole world. Is Jesus the one whom he claimed to be?

Is Jesus the one that the Bible says he is? Is one, is Jesus, this one that the Old Testament prophesied? And that the New Testament makes clear that Jesus actually is?

This is the question to be decided. Because, if he is not this one, if he is an imposter, or if he is misguided or misled, then, surely he is not to be followed in any sense whatsoever.

But if he is the one whom he claims to be, then, he demands that we fall at his feet, that we serve him, that we obey him, and, that we receive eternal life through him.

This is the question to be decided. Is this the Christ? What think ye of Christ? As Jesus said, what think ye of Christ?

[33 : 46] Here the woman puts it round in a different way, in different words, but the same kind of idea. That is what we are to consider, the person of Jesus Christ. So, if we are to draw something out of what we have been thinking about here this morning, to focus on, in personal evangelism, it is on the person of Christ himself, whom he is, and what he came to do.

And, that is what we want to communicate to everyone in the world today. And today, if you do not know that one, then, this is the invitation to come and see this one, come and meet with him, and answer for yourself the question, is he the Christ?

Notice that there was a permanent result of what the woman said. In verse 30, we see what we might call the immediate result of it. They came out of the town and made their way towards him. But then, if we jump on to verse 42, we see, they said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the savior of the world.

What tremendous results came from this one woman doing a very simple thing. She didn't need any great sort of publicity campaign.

[35 : 10] She just went and spoke to the people she knew. She told them the surprising thing that had happened to her. And they were so interested that they wanted to come to see for themselves.

And they came to see not only that he was the Christ, but they kind of put together all that they had learned from Jesus and from the woman in these days. and they said, he is the savior of the world. He's not just the savior of the Jews. He's not just the savior of the Samaritans. But he is the savior of the whole world. He is the seed of the woman, all right. He is the one who has come to defeat and to destroy Satan's work in every conceivable way.

He's the one who will deliver this world from the power of sin and evil. And this effect of what the woman did was not just a fleeting result.

It was something permanent. They didn't just sort of come out of interest and drift away. They came, they heard, they saw for themselves, and they came to a firm and a lasting commitment to Jesus Christ.

[36 : 18] And perhaps that's something else that we noticed. Someone who comes to know Jesus Christ through the personal witnessing of someone else, the personal friendship of someone else, they are those who very often have lasting commitment to Jesus Christ.

They have really come to know him. Many people who may react emotionally at a big meeting or in some other place, some other way, without any personal commitment or relationship with the living church of Jesus Christ, very often, it was just that, an emotional reaction, and they drift away.

But here we have this lasting example given by the woman, that here, by speaking to people whom she knew and bringing them to Christ, they themselves went on to that same kind of commitment that she herself had.

That is the challenge to the Christian church today, to follow that example of Jesus himself and of the woman. and that is the good news, the same good news to be announced to everyone here today and to everyone whom we may speak to.

Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ? Let us pray. Our gracious Lord, our loving Heavenly Father, we bless you for that good news of Jesus Christ.

[37 : 51] Christ, we thank you that we today may come to know him personally as that woman did. We thank you for every person here who knows Jesus Christ already in that personal way, those who walk with him and talk with him along life's way.

And we pray for those who as yet do not know him in that personal way, who may know about him, who may have been taught about him, but who do not yet know him and talk with him and live for him.

Lord, draw them graciously to yourself and we pray that you would please cause them to walk with you and to live for you all the days of their lives.

We bless you that your salvation is firm and sure, your promises are certain. we thank you that no one who has ever come to you is disappointed if they have truly committed themselves to you.

And so we ask that today many people here and elsewhere would do that very thing, that Jesus Christ might be glorified as the one whom he is, the Christ of God, the Prince of Glory, the Savior of the world.

[39 : 12] We ask these things in his name. Amen.