**Series: What Jesus Would Say**

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

John 4:1-26

May 11-12, 2013

**“The Power of Acceptance”**

The film 42—currently out in theatres

-tells the story of Jackie Robinson, the first African-American player to break the baseball color barrier, and some of the prejudice he faced

-taunted by baseball managers

-intentionally hit by pitchers

-denied access to washrooms

-it’s part of our fallenness that chooses to exclude—make people outsiders

-I notice it when I fly coach and the curtain is drawn to separate compartments from the holy of holies and the court of the Gentiles

-it is there on campus, in churches, in workplaces—little groups of people on the inside—and others on the outside

-Jesus seemed to specialize in reaching OUTSIDERS—have you noticed?

-preferring to fly economy

-hangout on the perimeter of campus, where the outsiders usually have lunch—*Jesus is attracted to the unattractive*

Illus—YFC—strategy—reach the influential, the important

-but one would be hard pressed to see this as Jesus’ strategy

-nowhere is this more evident in John than chapter 4

-Jesus engaged in a conversation with a woman—who gives new meaning to the word *mess*

-John seems to intentionally place the two conversations—one with Nicodemus and one with this woman side by side to underscore her fallenness

-he is a named man—she is a no—name woman

-he is Jewish—she is Samaritan

-he has seen signs—she has seen nothing

-he is in the city—she is on the outskirts

-he has a noble heritage—she has a shameful past

-he has it together—she is broken

-he is powerful—she is powerless

-he is connected—she is estranged

-he is clean—she is unclean

-he is orthodox—she is a heretic

*-he is the consummate insider*—*she is the supreme OUTSIDER*

-the only thing they had in common was that they both needed Jesus

BUT here’s something else

-he was seeking Jesus—Jesus went out to find her

-he comes by night—Jesus comes by day

-underscoring something about God

-He did not come to this earth to hob knob with the powerful

-separate Himself from the unrighteous, condemn failure

-go along, blend in with culture

-rather—He came to restore, rebuild, redeem, repair the most broken

-break down the walls that separate, discriminate, exclude

-invite Himself into their lives (like Zacchaeus)

-John 4 is God’s statement that He came to tear down walls

-there are five in this story—maybe in yours—

1. *THE BARRIER OF SEPARATION*

-in every gospel, Jesus was always moving, closing in

-John presents Jesus on a continual road trip—always relocating

-and that is because God has this thing for us

-He was always going after people—particularly the excluded—*read vs 3-6*

-something compelled Jesus to go six hours north

-the verb implies necessity, obligation, and urgency

-there was something He had to do—something His compassion, His divine will, His mission, His eternal purpose required Him to do

*-and those who follow Jesus must listen for the same divine compulsion, divine urging*

*-it will direct everything Jesus does*—*it must direct us*

-“Anybody who wants to meet Jesus, to understand or be with Jesus, must be willing to relocate” —Willimon

*-it may be to go across the street*—*across the river—PRM*

*-it might be to leave Portland and head abroad*—*we never know where His compulsion will force us next*

-there was second, formidable barrier

1. *THE BARRIER OF RACIAL PREJUDICE*

-Samaria was on the other side of the tracks—still is today

-Samaritans were despised half breeds—it was the area where immigrants from pagan cultures of the past—Assyria, Babylon, Persia—came, settled, mixed with the Jews left behind—believing they had no value in the deportation

-common was the saying—*to eat the bread of Samaritans was to eat the bread of swine*

-but Jesus ignored 500 years of prejudice and hostility—He crossed ethnic lines

-rejected the route the pious took—the longer, alternative route to avoid defilement (*see map*)

-He went directly to the least, the unclean, the impure, the unworthy—still does

-and calls us to do the same

-loving my neighbor is not about likeness—not about people who share my ethnicity

-it’s about people I would not normally choose to befriend

-people who might even make me feel uncomfortable

*-this is why we are committed to be a multicultural ministry*

1. *THE BARRIER OF GENDER*

-verse by verse—Jesus is crossing barriers—moving ever closer—*read vs 7-8*

-John’s introduction of the woman is terse, concise, almost abrupt

-likewise—Jesus just invited Himself into her life—intruded into her space

-but this is what the gospel is—*the story about Jesus’ choice and decision for the lost*

-but what can be lost on us here is that this conversation was scandalous

-it was an exchange that crossed cultural lines—a man in this culture does not even make eye contact with a woman in public (hence His disciples’ shock when they returned)

-but Jesus did, placing His needs under her—humbling Himself under her services—seeking to drink out of her bucket

*-this is salvation—Jesus getting down on our level so that we might rise to His*

-naturally—her guard was up—was this stranger flirting? Pushing prejudice and propriety aside to get something for Himself?

-she was used to this—to be near a man was to be in danger

-and wells weren’t merely places like Laundromats where people compare fuel band scores, mini-van mileage

-they were also the place to pick up women—think Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses)

-so she expressed reservation—*read vs 9*

-respectable Jewish males—especially respectable Jewish Messiah males—do not associate with strange women

-but Jesus is from another realm—where cultural distinctions are irrelevant

-there is no preferred gender for Jesus

-there was yet another huge wall to cross

1. *THE BARRIER OF RELIGION*

-in this story—both Jew and Samaritan created religious barriers

* 1. From the Jewish side—Samaria was the symbol of heresy

-the place where religion got screwed up—Torah, paganism, and alternative temples all mixed into a strange brew of beliefs

-so the Jews developed a segregated policy under Ezra

-over time—the kind of prejudice that radicalizes an orthodox Muslim to attack the Druze or the Alawites (heretical Muslims)took hold of the Jews

-in the second century BC—the Jews burned down the Samaritan’s temple

* 1. But the Samaritans had their own prejudice—their own religious barriers

-the Samaritans recognized a different Bible

-looked for a different Redeemer—a messiah along the lines of Moses

-worshipped in a different temple—Mt Gerizim was believed it to be the true place for worship

-they made their own attacks on the temple area of Jerusalem

-they assumed a certain superiority—*read vs 10-12*

-her earth boundness, her own religious prejudice prevented her from penetrating the deeper meaning of Jesus’ words

-missed Who was sitting next to her—missed what He was willing to give—how often do we?

-for her—Jesus was claiming superiority  
-comparing His flowing water with Jacob’s well

*-“If this is about Your religion is superior to mine*—*than here’s what I want to say—Your water isn’t better than Jacob’s water*—*and You are no Jacob!”*

-you can’t help but ask—has she ever read his story?

-but Jesus will not get side-tracked into religious arguments-allow religious barriers to get in the way

-He knows that the yearning to love and be loved is the deepest longing of the soul-*read vs 13-14*

-He simply comes back to what He knows we are all desperate for

-the kind of water that satisfies the soul—not the body

-the kind that turns our spiritual wilderness into a fruitful life

-something living, eternal—something internal, not external

-He is describing something that cannot be easily explained—temporal language falls short

-living water is like opened heavens, born again, bread of life

-and while she was getting closer—but there was at least one more wall—even more formidable—

1. *THE BARRIER OF MORALITY*

-she was a serial fornicator—*read vs 15-18*

-there were signs already of her brokenness

-why was she drawing water in the heat of the day—alone?

-it suggested that she was damaged goods

-a moral outcast, socially isolated, a complete outsider

*-and if you are kicked out by the Samaritans*—*you are really outside!*

-but Jesus did not care—He reached across the racial, religious, and moral divides—*from His holiness to her ungodliness*

-piercing her defenses, exposing her life, her guilt and shame and need

*-He knew all about her pastas He knows ours*

-He understood the dehumanizing cycle she had experienced

-trapped in a non—satisfying, non-fulfilling cycle of filling and emptying water jars, marrying, divorcing, re-marrying

-year by year accumulating wounds and scars—the kind that come from being the source of someone else’s gratification—leaving her dry

-and so she did what most broken people do in the sight of holiness—they evade, change the subject

-she attempted to throw religious sand in Jesus’ eyes—raise disputed points of theology to distract Him from her sin—*read vs 19-25*

-thanks for that abstract lecture on worship—but one day it will be clear

-but Jesus said—let’s make it clear today—*read vs 26*

He unambiguously declared Himself to be the Messiah—not to His own people

-not to the religious—but to a Samaritan woman

-and just as abruptly as the conversation ended with Nicodemus—it ends here

-for there is still one barrier left—but she has to remove this one—as we do as well—UNBELIEF

APPLICATION

*Why do we need this story?*

-every week I get a print out—sprinkled through our congregation—good people whose lives have been paralyzed by feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt—guilt

-Jimmy—pray for my enemies

-Jeanne—pray for my husband who is dealing with deep depression

-Sue—pray for my son, who is trying to keep a job he is being forced out of

-Ted—pray for my deteriorating job situation

-Ann—pray for my marriage that is falling apart

-Tom—pray that my addictions will not have the day

1. This story is Jesus saying—you are never too outside for God’s piercing love—His love can overcome any barrier—but one—UNBELIEF

-will you believe?

-receive His living water?

1. To those who have received—will you cross the barrier?