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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

OCTOBER 3, 2004

9:00 A.M.

PASTOR MARK FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: It's all about Jesus; it's not
2 about us.

3 If you have your scriptures out there we are going
4 to be going to -- it's killing me trying to think of who
5 that Bucket woman's sisters are. If anybody thinks of that
6 fourth sister's name, let me know.

7 Her husband's name is Bruce. She's a piece of
8 work, she's the Bucket woman and she's fabulous, really.
9 It's a great show.

10 Boy, the church looks bad in it, and that's one of
11 the things I love about it, is when they really kind of
12 tweak at the churches, about how mean we are to one another
13 and all that stuff.

14 It's all about choices and we have a view up on
15 this "Purpose Driven Life" and "Purpose Driven Church."

16 Here are the five purposes. We will put them on a
17 slide.

18 Worship, we are going to talk about worship and
19 fellowship.

20 And we've got ministry and we've got evangelism and
21 discipleship.

22 Actually we are going to kind of sequence them a
23 little different than that.

24 Next week we are going to talk about evangelism and
25 the week after that is ministry Sunday.

1 That's the Sunday when we will give everybody
2 opportunities to do stuff, like make coffee, help out in
3 some of those different areas.

4 We really need a lot more people who are available
5 to do those sprint activities, as well as some of the
6 longer-term stuff.

7 That's what we are doing. We are getting there.
8 This week it's all about worship.

9 John 4. Our teacher is this bucket woman, but
10 before we get to her I need to set the context a little bit
11 of kind of what is going on.

12 If you open your Bible to page 89, John 4, there is
13 a key verse.

14 Fourth Chapter, Fourth Verse, he had to go through
15 Samaria.

16 This is kind of like John saying to you, "I'm sorry
17 you had to go through road construction this morning to get
18 here."

19 If he had his druthers he would have rather went
20 around Samaria, because Samaria is a construction site.

21 There are a lot of people there that are
22 damaged.

23 Jesus is tired and he's hot and thirsty and he
24 really didn't want to have to go through Samaria, but he
25 did, and that's a key verse.

1 He goes to the city of Sychar and that's a famous
2 place because Jacob's well is there.

3 Jacob is one of the Old Testament pillars of the
4 community.

5 Jacob, his brother Esau, you may remember the
6 story, Jacob is a planter, Jacob is just this really cool
7 guy. His name becomes Israel. He's a wheel, okay?

8 Jacob's well is there. Notice verse 6. Jesus,
9 tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was
10 about noon.

11 John is such an excellent story teller he is
12 getting us ramped up here.

13 So the context is, literally, it is hot, it's high
14 noon, there's a showdown coming, because the Samaritans are
15 the arch enemies of the Jews and Jesus is Jewish.

16 So this woman approaches and she immediately
17 violates social and religious custom by her mere appearance
18 at high noon.

19 She is supposed to be gathering water in the cool
20 of the evening.

21 But she's there, it's noon, she shows up, and Jesus
22 is violating customs as well, because he's talking to her.

23 Because in those days rabbis considered women
24 incapable of ascertaining religious knowledge.

25 Those were the days, I often tell my wife, man, it

1 was better back then.

2 They didn't think women had any ability to
3 ascertain religious knowledge.

4 But Jesus doesn't think that way then or now. That
5 was just a rule.

6 You see, there is all this stuff going on, and to
7 speak publicly, one-on-one with a woman, was frowned upon by
8 rabbis. They weren't supposed to do that.

9 If you notice closely in the story the disciples
10 had gone into town to get something to eat.

11 So Jesus gets one-on-one right out in the city
12 square, high noon, talking to a woman.

13 Oh, my Lord, he's breaking a bunch of customs.
14 Such conversations, if they did occur, had to occur in
15 groups.

16 And such conversations, if they did occur, had to
17 occur in the cool of the evening.

18 So there's a bunch of strikes kind of going, never
19 in broad daylight.

20 So the point being Jesus is where he technically
21 shouldn't be; Samaria, high noon, talking to a woman, But
22 this woman is right where God wants her to be.

23 So there is this tension that is being created by
24 this excellent writing style of John.

25 That's true of the whole concept of amazing grace.

1 Jesus is where he technically shouldn't be.

2 I'm a sinful person, but I'm right where God wants
3 me to be, embraced by faith.

4 And so this woman is us and this woman is our
5 teacher this morning.

6 So I wanted to set the stage for that. This woman
7 is the key.

8 Notice her lifestyle. It's high noon. This woman,
9 day-after-day, week-after-week, month-after-month,
10 year-after-year, she routinely goes to the city center and
11 gathers water.

12 In other words, she's just going through the
13 motions, and it's the hottest part of the day.

14 My sister, her name is Ann, and she's a school
15 teacher in northeast Iowa and she's married to a guy named
16 Tom.

17 Tom's a cool guy. He has three sons from a
18 previous marriage, and they are all older now, one is a
19 teenager and two are in their twenties.

20 We found out about two weeks ago that Andrew, who
21 has been in the Marine Corps, was sent to Fallujah.

22 And so now we watch CNN a little differently
23 because we have a family person over there.

24 But I asked Ann the other night, I was talking to
25 her on the phone Thursday, I said, "How's it going, Ann?"

1 She goes, "I'm pretty good. Tom, he's always
2 watching Fox News and CNN."

3 She said, "It's not a good thing. He just dwells
4 on it."

5 I said, "What is going on over there?"

6 She said, "Andrew calls couple of times every
7 week," she said, "but it's hot there right now."

8 I said, "How hot is it?"

9 She said, "It's 115 today."

10 This is a kid from Iowa, who did basic, now he is
11 over there in 115 degrees.

12 That's what it's like in broad daylight where this
13 story is taking place.

14 So this woman, Jesus comes to her and says, "Give
15 me a drink."

16 And she's like, "You don't even have a bucket. How
17 can I give you a drink?"

18 Jesus is breaking a custom there because for him to
19 drink from her utensil would make him unclean, because this
20 is somebody who he's not supposed to be hanging with, let
21 alone drinking with.

22 So he's doing that, but she misunderstands this
23 whole business of water and living water and this is kind of
24 par for the course with John.

25 If you take a look at John 2, right cross the

1 column over on the page, John 2:19.

2 "Jesus answered them destroy this temple and in
3 three days I will raise it up."

4 The Jews misunderstood. They are like, "This
5 temple? It took 48 years to build this thing. You are
6 going to build it in three days?"

7 He was talking about his body, but they
8 misunderstand Jesus, is the point I'm trying to make.

9 Right across the column when Nicodemus is
10 approaching Jesus during the night and he says you have to
11 be born from above.

12 And Nicodemus, Chapter 3, Versus 9, says, "How can
13 these things be? Do I need to be climb back into my
14 mother's womb and be born from above? I don't get it."

15 That's where this woman begins this story. She's
16 confused by this whole concept of living water.

17 We learn real quickly in the story, right where I
18 stopped reading at Verse 15, we have learned that this woman
19 is thirsty.

20 She has been coming there day-after-day, she is
21 going through the motions and she is out of emotions.

22 She is just kind of plodding along. You can almost
23 see her kind of coming there.

24 Now real quickly in Verse 16 we learn that she is
25 not only dry, literally, but she's dry figuratively, because

1 Jesus is going to go into this whole business about go get
2 your husband.

3 She's like, "I don't have a husband."

4 Jesus says, "I know. You've had five of them and
5 the guy you are living with now is not really your husband."

6 So the point is she's dry and she also is empty.

7 So we need to set the stage of that from an Old
8 Testament perspective of matrimony.

9 There is this really cool thing that is happening
10 in the Old Testament.

11 There is a tradition of betrothal, and that sounds
12 kind of high tech, but it kind of means get married and
13 getting engaged.

14 Take a look in the very first book of the Bible,
15 Genesis 24, it's on page 19, but the audience in Jesus's day
16 and in John's day would have known this.

17 In fact, Barb and I were at a workshop in Bellevue
18 on Friday and we had this wonderful speaker from England
19 that was at a Lutheran church there teaching.

20 He said in the day of Jesus the average Jewish
21 male would have had the whole Pentateuch and all the Psalms
22 committed to memory. The first five books of the Bible and
23 the Psalms.

24 They didn't have Bibles back then. They had to put
25 them in their mind.

1 And so the audience would have known this tradition
2 that is being described in Genesis 24.

3 I won't read Verse 10, but what we're going to be
4 looking at here is Isaac's prayer.

5 Isaac is another one of those pillars in the faith.
6 Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's boy, Isaac.

7 Verse 11: "He made the camels kneel down outside
8 the city by the well of water. It was toward the evening,
9 the time when woman go out to draw water."

10 Remember, I was talking about that earlier. You
11 don't do it in broad daylight; you're supposed to be doing
12 it in the cool of the evening.

13 This is Isaac speaking, praying this prayer, "Oh,
14 Lord God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today
15 and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. I'm standing
16 here by the spring of water and the daughters of the
17 townspeople are coming out to draw water. Let the girl to
18 whom I shall say please offer your jar so that I may drink
19 and who shall say drink and I will water your camels, let
20 her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant
21 Isaac."

22 And Isaac is saying this prayer. "By this I shall
23 know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."

24 This is the Old Testament version of
25 spin-the-bottle.

1 He's praying this prayer and he literally says now
2 whoever comes down here, all these hot gals are coming out
3 here and they are filling up their buckets, and he's saying
4 I'm going to go up to one of them and I'm going to say can I
5 have a drink, and the one who says yes, here, and I'm also
6 going to feed your camels, that's going to be my wife.

7 What a prayer. He's praying for somebody who is
8 generous and somebody whose heart is moved by the Holy
9 Spirit. It's a matrimony betrothal story, see? That's
10 what's going on.

11 And Lo and behold, Verse 15, "Before he had
12 finished speaking there was Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel
13 son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, coming
14 out with her water jar on her shoulder," beautiful young
15 thing.

16 "The girl was very fair to look upon, a virgin,
17 whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, filled
18 her jar, and came up," and sure enough the transaction that
19 Isaac had prayed about now becomes reality.

20 He has just met his wife, Rebekah. Isaac-Rebekah.
21 That's the setting, you see, that John is telling this story
22 about marriage and matrimony.

23 So we come back to John 4 and we learn that this
24 woman is a failure at relationships.

25 John is weaving in a matrimonial theme, for not

1 only is the woman dry of water; she is dry of relationships.

2 "Go get your husband."

3 "I don't have one."

4 "It's true that you don't. You've had five," and
5 that the other knucklehead that you are with now, he is not
6 really your husband either.

7 But Jesus is not condemning her. He is just
8 pointing out the obvious; that she's dry in relationships.

9 In other words, she is literally, as Jackson Brown
10 would write, "Running on Empty."

11 Brad has a little song for us. Here is a great
12 rendition from the '70s.

13 *****

14 "Everyone I know, everywhere I go,
15 people need some reason to believe,
16 (I don't know about anyone but me)
17 if it takes all night, that will be all right,
18 if I can get you to smile before I leave."

19 *****

20 I think that's Jesus speaking. If it takes all
21 night, that will be all right. If I can just get you to
22 smile before I leave.

23 That's what he's really saying to this woman who is
24 running on empty.

25 It takes 29 verses in the case of this woman to

1 actually smile again.

2 She's been hauling water and life has just beat the
3 tar out of her.

4 And her faith is just starting. She thinks Jesus
5 is a man, and then she thinks he's a prophet because he
6 knows her past, and she thinks what is up with that?

7 What we will see next is now her faith becomes
8 understanding that this guy is the Messiah. Holy Moly, why
9 are you talking to me?

10 That's what we see in the next part of the story.
11 In other words, cool things happen around water. People get
12 hitched around the water. They get married.

13 Jesus can make people smile again, even if it takes
14 twenty-nine verses, but it does happen.

15 I love the bumper sticker that says "Change is
16 inevitable - except from a vending machine."

17 Change is inevitable, except for Christians, so
18 many people don't want to change.

19 They don't want Jesus to go from man, prophet,
20 Messiah.

21 They don't understand that in Him they get wet and
22 their relationships rise to other levels.

23 They don't understand, because stagnation is always
24 a possibility in the church.

25 But what he's teaching us in this fascinating story

1 is that monogamy does not equal monotony.

2 This gal has been sleeping around, but it teaches
3 us we have a jealous God.

4 What this woman needed was a man named Jesus. What
5 you need is a man named Jesus.

6 Whether you are male or female, you need Jesus.
7 That's what worship is.

8 It's coming to the conclusion that this Guy is it,
9 and you have to fall in love with this Guy.

10 Divorce statistics are out now that say that
11 born-again Christians are just as likely to get divorced as
12 non born-again Christians in this culture of ours.

13 Some people are surprised by that. I don't know
14 why.

15 It doesn't surprise me in the least, because a lot
16 of people, they always come to me and they go, "I can't
17 believe they are getting a divorce, and he used to even come
18 to church with her."

19 That's not worship; that's going to church.

20 Here is where it gets really kind of interesting
21 when we use this woman for our teacher.

22 We need to be like this woman, but we need to
23 beware of becoming like this woman.

24 Because notice closely what she's doing. She is
25 doing the exact opposite of what we want to do.

1 She has an assumption in John 4, beginning at Verse
2 21.

3 "Woman," Jesus says, "believe me. The hour is
4 coming when you will worship the Father neither on this
5 mountain nor in Jerusalem."

6 Because she says our ancestors worshipped on this
7 mountain because they knew it was all about the place.

8 It was about all going to this building where we
9 worship, going to this mountain top, going to this
10 particular worship service.

11 That's what worship is, isn't it? But notice what
12 Jesus says.

13 "You worship what you do not know. We worship what
14 we know, for salvation is from the Jews, but the hour is
15 coming and now is here when the true worshippers will
16 worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks
17 such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who
18 worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

19 What does that mean? What it means is, God is
20 spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit
21 and truth, not just on mountains, not just in churches, not
22 just in synagogues.

23 This woman was running on empty, so she thought
24 I'll go to the well to get filled up.

25 I am honored when people tell me they love to come

1 to worship because it fills their cup up. I love that.

2 I love when Gene and his posey over here do what
3 they do. That's not all there is to worship.

4 We cannot run around like this woman going from
5 empty to full, from empty to full.

6 It's like running around with this metal bucket.
7 It just runs out and, "Oh, if I can only get to church on
8 time this week and get my cup filled up."

9 That's good, but it has a down side to it. That's
10 what Jesus is teaching.

11 He says you have the water within you, and it needs
12 to be circulating and it needing to be bubbling.

13 It needs to be like an Alka-Seltzer that is
14 constantly bubbling up to eternal life.

15 You have the water in you. Don't start thinking
16 you have to go to the well to get filled up.

17 God is spirit and truth. Those who worship him
18 must worship in spirit and truth, not just on mountains; not
19 just in churches.

20 The church has gotten so good at worship
21 performances we fool ourselves into thinking that we can't
22 worship without Gene. We can't worship without Jerlene's
23 flute and Alan's guitar and Ed's steel and Don's drums and
24 all the wonderful vocalists.

25 That's worship. That's part of it. But you are

1 called to worship in your cars, in your homes, in your
2 families, all the time.

3 The woman's understanding moves from Jesus being a
4 man to a prophet to Messiah, because now the lights come on.

5 It's not about a place; it's a person. Yes, that's
6 the deal, Lucille.

7 It's often said that misery loves company. That's
8 why some people come to church. They can at least be with
9 other miserable people, but it's not true.

10 Really, it's miserable to be alone, and it's
11 exhausting being exhausted.

12 It's definitely below average to just run on empty
13 all the time.

14 It's not much better to have your seventh day fix,
15 because then you are just going to be, oh, oh, oh.

16 Those Bible camp experiences are great. Mountain
17 top experiences are wonderful.

18 But there is down side. God designed us to be
19 people of the plains and the valleys and we need to keep our
20 cups full so that we can keep filling other people's cups as
21 well.

22 Harold Best said it best when he said, "We don't go
23 to church to worship; we go to church because we are
24 worshippers."

25 Think about that. We don't go to church to

1 worship; we go to church because we are worshippers.

2 Because Jesus has grabbed ahold of me I need to go
3 back to that place where other people have been grabbed
4 ahold of, or want to be grabbed ahold of, and I need to hang
5 with them, and I need to serve with them, and I need to give
6 with them, and I need to get with them and I need to hear
7 the promises that those kids sang about.

8 That's part of worship, but it isn't all of it.
9 You have to be careful of that. It's hot out there.

10 It's more than 115 degrees where you guys work,
11 live and breathe.

12 You can't go seven days without water. You're no
13 camel. You're a Christian. Keep that cup full.

14 Worship, by its very definition, in the "Purpose
15 Driven Life" and "Purpose Driven Church" brings God pleasure
16 and makes God smile. God smiles when we smile.

17 For this woman it took twenty-nine verses. For us
18 sometimes it just takes a couple verses of those songs to
19 get us to smile again, but we have to sing those songs in
20 our cars on the way to work, in our cars on our way home
21 from work, where we need to worship and be constant.

22 Your face might be the only sermon a person hears,
23 and that's not just at church. God can make people smile
24 again.

25 My favorite verse then, John 4:28, check it out.

1 It's one of my favorite verses in the Bible, actually.

2 You'll notice the disciples, they come back, they
3 were off getting food.

4 Verse 27, the disciples came, they were astonished
5 that he was speaking with a woman.

6 Remember, I told you how scandalous that was.

7 Jesus, don't you know the rules?

8 They come back, but no one says, what do you want,
9 or why are you speaking with her, they kind of knew also
10 this guy is a little smarter than we are, they aren't going
11 to confront him with the truth, because he would have
12 probably told a story or done something else that would have
13 driven them crazy, because they just really couldn't get
14 Jesus, even those really close to him can't get him, can't
15 figure him out, why he's always loving, not condemning.

16 But notice what happens in Verse 28. "Then the
17 woman left her water jar and went back to the city."

18 If you have your own Bible underline that verse.
19 As far as I'm concerned, that's the coolest verse around,
20 because that symbolically says that this woman realizes it
21 isn't about the well anymore.

22 It's well with my soul, but it isn't about the
23 well, it isn't about having water in the jar, or gas in the
24 tank.

25 She leaves her jar behind, and what does she do?

1 Look closely at what she does.

2 She goes from performing a chore to being a
3 missionary.

4 Jesus transforms the routine into an opportunity
5 for service.

6 Verse 28, "Then the woman left her water jar and
7 went back to the city."

8 This is the same city who knew her reputation, the
9 same city who knew where she had been and all the miles on
10 her, all of the husband's she had not had, and what does she
11 do?

12 She says to the people, "Come and see a man who
13 told me everything I have ever done."

14 What is the big deal of that? Turn your Bible to
15 John 1, Verse 39.

16 John 1:39, starting at 38, "When Jesus turned and
17 saw them following he said to them, what are you looking
18 for?"

19 And they said, "Rabbi," which means teacher, "where
20 are you staying?"

21 And he said to them, "Come and see."

22 John 1:46. Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything
23 good come out of Nazareth?"

24 The disciples could never get Jesus. Philip said
25 come and see, check it out. This guy is unbelievable. This

1 guy is so believable.

2 That's what this woman, you see Jesus in her
3 perspective has gone from being a man to being a prophet to
4 being the Messiah.

5 She has gone from being an outcast to a curious
6 onlooker to a full-fledged disciple of Jesus Christ.

7 Because what she is doing is she's leaving the past
8 behind and she is saying to somebody else come and see.

9 This gal has gone full circle, and it's not going
10 to be easy for her.

11 Her faith, however, gushes over into witness. She
12 is running around now wet and wild and witnessing. Come and
13 see.

14 We don't have time to go through the rest of the
15 story.

16 That would be a good one for you guys to do at your
17 Bible study tonight at your tables.

18 How about that for worship, when you are eating
19 with your kids, or your spouse, or whoever else you are
20 eating with.

21 She is going to basically go around and tell all
22 this stuff and then more confusion and everything else.

23 They said to this woman in verse 42, "It's no
24 longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have
25 heard for ourselves and we knew this is truly the Savior of

1 world."

2 She all of a sudden really starts turning it up,
3 racheting up the whole witnessing thing.

4 A woman, who wasn't even supposed to be able to
5 soak in religious knowledge, all of a sudden is a
6 missionary.

7 See how drastic and how dramatic that is, her
8 transformation?

9 Jesus has gone from man to prophet to Messiah, and
10 this woman, outcast, curious, confused, misunderstanding
11 woman, to full-fledged disciple, evangelist and missionary.

12 We'll look at that next week, evangelism, that come
13 and see this.

14 Worship isn't just coming here on Sunday or
15 Saturday or Wednesday.

16 It's not about a place; it's about a person whose
17 name happens to be Jesus, Messiah, Prophet, Best Friend,
18 Brother, Master, Teacher, Bread of Life.

19 I close with two other verses from the Gospel of
20 John, the 6th Chapter and the 7th Chapter.

21 John 6:35, "I am the bread of life," this is one
22 that has always troubled me, "I am the bread of life.
23 Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever
24 believes in me will never be thirsty."

25 If you look at that by its very nature it's almost

1 contradictory.

2 If I'm eating bread I am going to get real thirsty,
3 but later on he will call him himself the water of life.

4 From John 7, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me
5 and let the one who believes in me drink."

6 Unfortunately churches have had kind of a
7 temperance problem, telling people they shouldn't drink.

8 And part of that has to do with the demon of
9 alcoholism and all that sort of stuff.

10 But what Jesus is talking about here is you have to
11 keep full so that you can fill others.

12 "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me." Not to
13 Bethany, not to church, not to Willow Creek, not to
14 Bellevue, or wherever else you go to get filled up.

15 That's part of it, but he says, "Come to me and
16 let's the one who believes in me drink deeply of the water
17 of Christ."

18 Would you join me in a moment of prayer?

19 Lord, there's that one old song, fill our cups and
20 let them overflow.

21 We thank you for the privilege of worshipping
22 together in the form of church, and music, and talented,
23 gifted leaders. We thank you for that.

24 We also thank you Lord that the water is in each
25 one of us. It just needs to be stirred a little bit.

1 So would you give my friends the tools, that they
2 might worship you in their cars, in their homes, in their
3 schools, and in their hospital beds, in their nursing homes,
4 in their families, in their churches, in their Bible study
5 groups, in their Kiwanis Club, their Lion's Club.

6 May we worship you and talk to you and listen to
7 you and love you.

8 Because we know, Lord, that when we worship you,
9 you smile at us, so teach us to smile again.

10 Thank you for this day. Would you please write
11 your name on our hearts again, so that we can go and sing of
12 your mercy and invite others to come and see.

13 All this is prayed in the name of the Man, the
14 Prophet, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

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