

## “John: Secret Food”

Isaiah 42:1-9 • John 4:27-42

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • October 30, 2022

I want you to think for a moment about something you probably would rather not think about but that you can't help think about. I want you to think of your biggest secret. What is the thing in your life that you don't want anyone to find out about? Maybe it's something you've done wrong, something you think is so terrible that people wouldn't want to be around you if they knew. Maybe it's your biggest sin. Or maybe it's something that is just downright embarrassing. Would anybody like to come share? I didn't think so.

We all have secrets – some obviously worse than others. But we all share that feeling that we don't want anyone else to know about it. One of the things that can happen to people, particularly people in public positions, is that if someone finds out their secret, they can use that information to blackmail them.

Let me ask you this: What would you do if you met someone you'd never seen before, and he said, “I know what you did. I know all about you.” Now imagine he goes on to prove that he knows your deepest secrets. He begins to tell you those things you thought only you knew about yourself. I suspect many of us would be very uncomfortable and want to run away.

But that's exactly what Jesus does with this woman at Jacob's Well. He lets her know that he knows all about her, even though they have just met. At first she says, “I perceive that you are a prophet,” but she learns that he is the Messiah that they have been waiting for.

The first thing we want to look at is the woman's response. She is at the well alone at noon because too many people already know a lot of her issues—she's avoiding them. When Jesus offers her the spring of living water that would keep her from becoming thirsty again, she says, “please give me some of that so I don't have to keep coming here and risk seeing *those* people again.”

During her conversation with Jesus she learns that he knows all about her past. He knows her deepest secrets. How does she respond? She leaves her water jar and runs *to* those very same people in order to tell them. In verse 29 she says, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” You see, Jesus met her at her point of deepest pain. But he didn't condemn her. In fact, there is no mention anywhere in this passage that Jesus engages her sin.

Dr. Curt Thompson, who writes and speaks on the importance of “being known,” says, “we will be aware of (know) God, others and ourselves in the same manner as we experience God's awareness of us. There is no hint of shame in his gaze or his voice. Our attention is drawn so irresistibly to him and how he is attending to us that we lose all awareness of the shame that has for so long kept parts of us hiding in the dark. Toward that end we need to pay attention to the things that are the summation of our lives: faith, hope and love. To live faithfully is to trust, to deeply attune to the presence of the Holy Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being. As we live faithfully, we actively imagine that he joyfully delights in being in our presence, and that all we do, we do with God, mindful that we live in dependence on him and each other.” When the woman *experiences* being fully known by God, it transforms her completely and she runs off to share it with others, people she only moments before desperately wanted to avoid.

Next, we need to see the disciples' response. When they return with lunch they can't believe Jesus is talking with this woman – a Samaritan woman at that. *They* at least had the good sense not to talk to her when they made her move out of their way on the path. When she finally leaves they return to what was most important – *eating!* It never ceases to amaze me how often Jesus' disciples just don't

get it. This Samaritan woman understands that Jesus is the Messiah after a conversation that only lasted a few minutes. The disciples, on the other hand, lived and worked with Jesus 24/7.

When they try to get Jesus to eat, he turns it into a teaching moment. He says, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." They can't figure out where he got food while they were gone. Then he says, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." What is this work that Jesus was sent to do? In Luke 4 Jesus is invited to speak in the synagogue and he reads basically his job description from Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And later in Luke 19 Jesus says, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." God entered into the human condition in the person of Jesus of Nazareth in order to restore the broken relationship between us and God. That's what Jesus spends all of his time doing and it's all he wants to do.

You have probably experienced a time when you were doing something so engaging, so thrilling, that you didn't even think about eating. If you like to fish, maybe it's when the fish are really biting, one after another. If you play golf I imagine hitting a hole in one takes your mind off everything else for a while. Whatever it is for you, when you're doing that thing you get entirely focused on it and often get a rush of adrenaline. Jesus is entirely focused on his mission of seeking and saving the lost. He is energized by this conversation with the woman that he walked all the way from Jerusalem to meet. Now she is going to tell everyone, and Jesus wants to teach his disciples about the thrill of doing God's work.

Ministry can be just as exciting for you and for me. The church can be exhausting at times, but when you see the light go on in someone's

life, when they put a little more trust in Jesus and you get to see that change, there is nothing like it. I can tell you that when I get to experience God at work in people's lives like that, I find it extremely energizing. On those Sundays when people show up and genuinely worship, when the Spirit of God is clearly present, when I see God answer prayers, I have a hard time thinking about anything else the rest of the day. Jesus says that same experience was available to his disciples and it's available to you, too.

He uses what seems to have been common saying: "You say the farmer has to wait four months after planting before he can harvest." Then he says, "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." He may have been referring to the crowd of Samaritans in their white robes coming down the path toward the well. The seed was planted and immediately the harvest was ready.

That leads us to the Samaritans' response. As much as the woman had tried to avoid the other townspeople, the truth is that they probably tried to avoid her, too. But now she went and found them and told them about her encounter with Jesus. She said, "Come, see a man who told me all I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" The people were so intrigued by the radical change in this woman that they went to see. Verse 39 says, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony." When they noticed the change in her, she simply invited them to come meet Jesus for themselves, which they did. They asked him to stay with them and he stayed for two days. As a result, many more believed. They said, "we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

That brings us to the final point, *your* response. Jesus knows everything about you. He knows your deepest secrets and he doesn't condemn you. He loves you. His death on the cross takes away any guilt and shame from those who believe in Him. Are you willing to

trust him? If so, if Jesus has changed your life, you will want to share that good news with other people. Jesus shows us how we can be an effective witness for him. First, notice that Jesus took the initiative to start a relationship with the woman. He went to where she was. Next, he began by asking a question. He asked if she would give him a drink of water. This made the woman feel more comfortable with Jesus and it made her curious about his so that she began to ask questions. He let her know that she was valued as a person. He then offered to meet her needs in a way she could understand, talking about water. When the conversation turned to spiritual things, Jesus revealed that he was the expected Messiah.

You and I can do the same thing. We can make friends with people who don't know or follow Jesus. We can love them no matter what, whether they ever decide to follow Christ or not. In Young Life they call that "earning the right to be heard." We can pray for our friends often and work to meet their physical, emotional, and relational needs. And when they begin to ask questions, we can tell them about our own experience with Jesus. If you and I love people well, we will get to her them say, "we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

*Amen.*