

Introduction

So great to be with you on the LAST Sunday of 2019!

- Crazy! It's going to be 2020...in THREE DAYS
 - Where are the flying cars! (Sci-Fi movies)

If I'm being honest, I'm not a huge fan of New Years'...

- In fact, I think New Years' is kind of a lame holiday
- I'll tell you why:
 - Every other Holiday that we have celebrates something specific or tangible.
 - Examples:
 - July 4th - Celebrate the day the Dec. of Ind. was signed.
 - Just a few days ago on Xmas: incarnation of God in Christ.
 - In just a few months: death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - October 31st: consumption of copious amounts of refined sugar.
- We have holidays for literally everything
 - If you can think of it, there's probably a holiday for it.
 - We have holidays for
 - Moms / Dads / Grandparents / Siblings
 - Veterans / Workers / Dead Presidents
 - Pirates! (National talk like a pirate day) - REAL THING!
 - If you're drummer, there's a holiday where people have to hug you (national hug a drummer day)
 - We have a holiday for hot dogs – and for regular dogs.
 - March 27th - National Manatee Appreciation Day
 - March 28th - National Eat an Eskimo Pie Day
 - Anyone like grilled cheese sandwiches? April 12th - National GC Sandwich day.
 - April 15th - You can watch the film *Titanic* while enjoying spiral glazed ham.
 - April 15th: National remember the Titanic Day and National spiral glazed ham appreciation day.
 - The list goes on and on and on...

And I think that all of these weird, random holidays are better than new years!

- Because after all, what is new years, really, other than an arbitrary passage of time?
 - Somebody hundreds of years ago just decided that Jan 1st would be the day that the new year starts.
 - I would have loved to be a fly on the wall during that board meeting!
 - Riff: coldest, darkest, season of year. Everyone 10lbs heavier.

- Springtime: much better time to start new year!
 - Flowers blooming, Hills have green, days get longer, weather gets warmer.
 - That's a good time to start the new year! Not in winter when half of the earth is in hibernation.

And yet despite all of this, New Year's is one of the most celebrated holidays on the planet.

- 92% of Americans celebrate new years - 305,333,267
- An estimated 1 million of those people will flock to times square and freeze their butts off to watch a crystal ball slowly descend to the top of a building.
 - SIDE NOTE: No bathrooms
- On TV, that ball drop will be watched by an estimated 1 billion people...over ten times more than those who watch the Super Bowl.
- New years is big deal to a LOT of people

As I was preparing to preaching this week, I began to ask myself the question: Why?

- Why is it that we ascribe such significance and meaning to a seemingly arbitrary and random passage of time?
- And I believe the answer lies in the Gospel...

So if you have a bible (or bible app), turn (or scroll) to John 4.

- This morning we're going to look at a story from the Gospels that many of us are probably very familiar with...
- But I believe there is a deep revelation for us within these words of scripture as we peek over the fence into 2020...
- This is one of my favorite passages of scripture in the entire bible
 - It's one of the longest recorded individual conversations with Jesus.
 - It reads like a well written film script...full of subtext...there's so much happening behind the words on the page.
- And today we're going to read the whole thing...so buckle up!

John 4:1-30, 39-42 (NLT)

¹Jesus[a] knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ² (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). ³ So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ⁴ He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵ Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷ Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." ⁸

He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.⁹ The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans.[b] She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"¹⁰ Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."¹¹ "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?"¹² And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"¹³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again.¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."¹⁵ "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."¹⁶ "Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.¹⁷ "I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet."²⁰ So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim,[c] where our ancestors worshiped?"²¹ Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem.²² You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews.²³ But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.²⁴ For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."²⁵ The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."²⁶ Then Jesus told her, "I am the Messiah!"[d]²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her?"²⁸ The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone,²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?"³⁰ So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!"⁴⁰ When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days,⁴¹ long enough for many more to hear his message and believe.⁴² Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."

PRAY

In 2004, episode 3 of the widely popular television series *Lost* aired that was called "Tabula Rasa"

- ▶ This episode focused on the backstory of Kate—one of the main characters.
- ▶ The episode reveals that Kate has a rather complicated criminal past.
 - ▶ We learn that Kate was on Oceanic flight 815 as a prisoner being extradited by a U.S. Marshal from Australia to America to account for her crimes.
- ▶ If you're familiar with the show, you know that Oceanic 815 mysteriously crashes on a desert island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.
 - ▶ This puts Kate in an awkward situation...
 - ▶ With her captor just barely hanging on to life, she wrestles with whether or not to reveal her nefarious past to the other survivors.
 - ▶ Finally she works up the courage to tell Jack who she really is. Just when the words are about to leave her mouth, he stops her, looks her in the eye, and says, "Kate, three days ago we all died. We should all be able to start over."

Those words are (in essence) the meaning of the concept of "Tabula Rasa"

- ▶ Literally translated = blank slate or erased slate.
- ▶ Derived from the wax tablets that ancient greeks and romans used.
 - ▶ When you wanted to erase the slate, you would heat the tablet which would melt the wax.
- ▶ Since then, the phrase "tabula rasa" has become synonymous with the idea of a fresh start—a new beginning—a clean slate.

We understand this idea—very well...because we think this way all the time.

- ▶ Usually takes the form of this thought: "If I could just start over..."
 - ▶ How many of us have thought that about our careers?
 - ▶ "If I could just go back to when I was in college and pick a different major...maybe I wouldn't be working at a vape shop ..."
 - ▶ Me: Academy awards
 - ▶ How many of us have thought this about our homes?
 - ▶ Confession corner: I regularly fantasize about renting a giant dumpster and just throwing away everything in my house. Ask wife.
 - ▶ Am I the only one?
 - ▶ Though that drives desire: "Maybe if I could just get rid of all this clutter and start over I would finally be able to have some peace."
 - ▶ Parents in the room...you've definitely had this thought before.

- "If I could just go back to the beginning...maybe my kid wouldn't be having this temper tantrum in the middle of Bed, Bath, and Beyond right now.
- Or...for the older parents...maybe my kid wouldn't be working at a vape shop"
- How many couples in the midst of a suffering marriage have uttered those words...
 - "If we could just start over, maybe things could be different."

There is something deep within each of us that longs for Tabula Rasa...

- There is something buried deep within our soul that yearns for the slate to be made clean.
- And I believe that this is why so many people ascribe such significance new years.
- In some strange and superficial way, new years promises us the ability to wipe our slate clean and start over.
- Often said this way..."New Year, New You" - This is the great promise of New Year's!
 - And with this promise in mind, many of us adopt personal resolutions to make our lives, better, cleaner, healthier, more efficient, less cluttered.
 - And what we're really doing with these resolutions is attempting to wipe our slate clean.
 - Trying to clean the messy slate of our lives.
 - And it might work for a little bit. We might get a teeny tiny bit of it cleaned up.
- But we quickly realize that our slate is far too big, and far too messy for us to clean up on our own.
 - What happens so often? We fall into the same old habits, old patterns, unhealthy lifestyles.
 - Soon that little corner of our slate that we worked so hard to clean up becomes messy and tarnished once again.
- We just can't get ourselves out of the mess...

I believe that the main character of our passage today found herself in that same familiar and desperate place.

- The samaritan woman at the well is one of the most intriguing and complex characters in all of the Gospels.
 - There's a deep deep well of nuance to this woman (no pun).
- For a moment this morning, I want us to just put ourselves in her shoes.
 - I want us to imagine what it must have felt like to be in this woman's position, walking to the well...carrying a big empty water bucket during the middle of the day...
 - Remember this is the desert...it's dry...it's barren...and it's really HOT.
 - It was so hot that the women would almost always go to the well in the early hours of the morning to escape the heat.
 - This was something that women did TOGETHER.
 - During this time drawing water from the well was a woman's job...

- And so, every morning the women would gather and come to the well and draw water so that they would have enough to last the whole day.
- Drawing water from the well was a social event.
- The well was like Starbucks of ancient Israel...a place of congregation and socialization.
- News, rumors, gossip about the goings on of the community would have been distributed and disseminated at the well.
- But this woman is alone. Something was preventing her from going to the well in the morning. What?
 - We don't know specifically, but we can hypothesize a little bit...
 - Perhaps she just overslept...could have happened.
 - Or maybe she wanted to avoid the scorn and public humiliation of being seen by the other women at the well.
- Whatever the reason, this woman must have been pretty desperate to go at noon.
- And because of this, she likely would have been tired
 - Not just physically tired...
 - She was exhausted emotionally / mentally / and certainly relationally
 - Tired of going from house to house, husband to husband.
 - We learn that this woman has had five husbands! (a lot)
 - But maybe she wasn't necessarily even the one being adulterous!
 - We assume that sometimes...but maybe it wasn't entirely her fault!
 - Perhaps she got chewed up and spit out time after time by man after man leaving her emotionally crippled.

I wonder how many resolutions the samaritan woman made...

- I wonder how many times she thought the same thing that we all think around New years.
 - "This time things are going to be different..."
 - "This time I'm going to wait for the RIGHT man to come around..."
 - "This time I'm going to fight to keep the marriage afloat..."
- I wonder if she finally grew tired of making them.
 - I wonder if she finally got sick of having to start over time and time again, each failed marriage and situation slowly chiseling away at her confidence that things could be different.
 - I wonder if she had given into hopelessness and defeat that things could really change.
 - I wonder if she was so hopeless that she just gave up on the idea and the institution of marriage entirely.
 - She's like, "what's the point of getting married if it's just going to end in disaster."

It's at this desperate, hopeless, and exhausted point in this woman's life that Jesus decides to show up at the well.

- And what Jesus does here is going to change the course of her entire life forever.
- Jesus is going to take this woman from desperation to deliverance. And it's so beautiful.
- He's going to give her tabula rasa.
- There are four important things that Jesus does that I want to double click on this morning.
- But first: some context.

Jesus is traveling from Judea to Galilee...

- The rumors about Jesus' public ministry are starting to make their way back to the Pharisees. At this point in John's gospel Jesus has done four public things:
 - Turned water into wine
 - Cleared the merchants out of the temple
 - Confronted Nicodemus (a pharisee) about being born again
 - Traveled throughout the countryside baptizing people.
- V1. - "[they] heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John..."
 - They are starting to see that this whole Jesus movement thing is starting to gain some traction among the people, and it's making them angry.
- So Jesus decides to travel back to Galilee...

And in between Judea and Galilee was Samaria.

- V4 - "he (Jesus) had to go through Samaria on the way."
- This is peculiar...because Jesus didn't really HAVE to go THROUGH Samaria...at least by Jewish cultural standards.
- In fact the opposite was true! As a Jewish rabbi, Jesus actually had to AVOID Samaria!
- Put up map
- When traveling between Judea and Galilee it was customary for any Jew to journey all the way around Samaria (along the Jordan river)...even if it added multiple days to the trip.
- It's kind of like when you have to drive to Orange country on a Friday afternoon.
 - And you pull up Google maps and see the disgusting, hideous web of red traffic lines that is the greater Los Angeles area.
 - And deep in your heart you resolve to do ANYTHING to avoid driving through LA.
 - 14 freeway out Lancaster, cut across some desert road to Victorville and then drop back down into the O.C. if you have to!
 - Anything to avoid the traffic!
- This is what was happening in ancient Israel...
 - Except the Jews didn't hate the traffic, they hated the Samaritans. The reason:
 - A few hundred years before Jesus, Israel was invaded by the Babylonians

- Almost everyone got exiled.
- Lower classes left behind
- Other non-jewish people groups slowly made their way into the region...
- Jews left behind intermarried with these people groups
- and so the Samaritans emerged as a religious and ethnic people group.
- Their faith was a spiritual amalgamation...a combination of Judaism + others. Spiritually messy.

That “messiness” is why the Samaritans were so despised by the Jews.

- They were regarded by the Jews as religious and ethnic “half-breeds”...Many Jews believed the Samaritans to be even worse than the gentiles!
- For any Jew: Association with Samaritan = unclean.
- But Jesus wasn’t any Jew: He was a rabbi! A teacher of the law.

By venturing into the messy heart of Samaria, Jesus was breaking every cultural norm known to the Jewish tradition.

- This wasn’t an issue of convenience
 - Jesus wasn’t doing this to save time.
 - It was an issue of compulsion.
 - I love the way the old KJV translates v4 - “He MUST NEEDS go through Samaria.”
 - Denotes intentionality and purpose
- And just when it seems like Jesus can’t get any more scandalous, this Samaritan woman shows up to draw water from the well.
- As a Jewish man (and rabbi), Jesus had no business even looking this woman in the eye.
- But what does he do? He says, “Please give me a drink.”
- This was absolutely ludicrous!
 - We know because of how the samaritan woman responds:
 - **“You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”**
 - Paraphrase
 - We also know by how the disciples react when they return to see Jesus with the woman.
- Jesus could not have put himself in a messier situation.
- And this is the first thing that I want us to notice here...

1. Jesus isn’t afraid of your mess.

- There’s someone in this room who needs to hear that today!
- What’s the messiest thing in your life right now?
- Jesus isn’t afraid of:
 - Your addiction

- Your depression
- Your anxiety
- Your heartbreak
- That broken relationship in your life that you can't reconcile
- Your marital conflict that you keep falling into
- Your doubt
- Your anger
- Your rebellion
- Your perfectionism your legalism or your pride
- Jesus is not afraid of your mess!
- He doesn't go out of His way to avoid your mess!
- He doesn't tip toe around your mess!
- As humans, we do that!
 - Oh you've got THAT going on? I'm just going to go over here.
- He's not just unafraid of your mess, Jesus isn't afraid to be seen sitting with you in your mess!
 - He wasn't afraid to be seen sitting with the woman at the well.
 - He wasn't worried what the disciples (or anyone else) would think when they saw him talking to her.
- Jesus MUST NEEDS go into the heart of your messy situation because that's the kind of savior He is! He is compelled to go! He can't help himself!
 - He says that in **John 3:17: "God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."**
 - That's Jesus mission statement!
- Jesus is so full of love and mercy and kindness that He CAN'T HELP but go into the messiest, darkest places of your life and make himself known...it's who He is
- Jesus knows everything about you.
 - He is the Alpha and the Omega.
 - He is the author and the finisher.
 - He is omnipotent and omnipresent.
 - He knows every thought you've ever HAD and ever WILL HAVE.
 - He sees when you rise and when you fall (Psalm 139)
 - Jesus is more intimately acquainted with your mess than you will ever be.
- And He's not afraid of it! That is good news today!
- Jesus is not afraid of your mess...

So here Jesus is sitting with the woman at the well...and He asks her for a drink...

- Which again is just so insanely ridiculous. Mind blowing.

- ▶ She responds: what are you doing asking ME for a drink?
- ▶ And then Jesus does something very interesting. Did you catch it?
 - ▶ He turns the tables.
 - ▶ v10 - Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."
 - ▶ Instead of receiving water, Jesus is now offering water. Living water.
 - ▶ This is so interesting. Because there are two layers to living water here.
 - ▶ The first layer: very practical!
 - ▶ In ancient israel: two ways to get water.
 - ▶ First: Dig a cistern – line a trench with clay. Collect rain water. Become stale.
 - ▶ Second: Find a spring or a well. This water was called "living water". Looked alive when it bubbled up.
 - ▶ So when Jesus says "I would give you living water", the woman is thinking, Wait, there's another well around here? There's some other place to get water?
 - ▶ She is still focused on her practical need: actual water.
 - ▶ Look at what she says in v11 - "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket, and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?"
 - ▶ She hasn't quite gotten it yet. She is still focusing on the temporal.
 - ▶ I love how Jesus responds here: "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."
 - ▶ Jesus is leading her to understand the thirst within her soul.
 - ▶ Her thirst for: redemption, reconciliation, true satisfaction, a new beginning.
 - ▶ Her thirst for tabula rasa.

2. Jesus always sees your deeper need.

- ▶ So often in life, we think we have a pretty good idea of what we need. We've got our need situation figured out.
- ▶ This happens so often around new years
 - ▶ This how our new years resolutions are formed...
 - ▶ We take stock of our lives at the end of the year and we figure out what it is that we need...
 - ▶ This year, I need:
 - ▶ a new job. Can't stand my job.
 - ▶ a more stable financial situation. Barely scraping by.
 - ▶ to lose some weight. I'm tired of the way people look at me
 - ▶ my spouse to listen to me for five seconds
 - ▶ my children to do their chores without throwing a fit

- But Jesus knows the need the lies underneath the temporal.
 - Jesus knows that what you need more than a new job is a sense of divine purpose and motivation in your life that transcends vocation.
 - Jesus knows that what you need more than financial stability is the assurance that He Himself is the firmest of foundations and that nothing built upon the solid rock of Christ will ever crumble.
 - Jesus knows that what you need more than losing a few pounds is losing the weight of shame that's been heaped onto your shoulders year after year after year.
 - He knows that what you need more than a listening spouse is to be seen and heard and valued by the eternal lover of your soul
 - He knows that what you need more than obedient kids, is to understand how dearly loved and cherished you are by your heavenly father.
- Jesus sees the deeper need, even when we aren't able to.
- And if we let Him, he is faithful to reveal to us those deeper needs, and give us the abundant living water that can satisfy those needs a hundred times over.
- So often the deep needs that Jesus reveals are less about where we are and more about who we are.

3. Jesus is more concerned with changing your "self" than your situation.

- Jesus could have changed this woman's situation in an instant.
- He could have snapped His fingers and changed everything around her.
 - He could have manifested a private spring so she would never have to endure public humiliation again.
 - But Jesus was after something far greater than changing what was around her.
 - Jesus wanted to change something within her.
 - All her life this sought to find living water in all kinds of places, and it failed her.
 - But Jesus puts living water INSIDE of her, and it changes everything.
 - A woman who was once afraid of being shamed by those around her is now telling everyone she possibly can about what Jesus has done for her! And the entire village is transformed!
 - That's what living water does!
 - None of this would have happened if Jesus just changed her situation.
- Maybe you've been praying for years for God to change your circumstances...but what if what he REALLY wants to change is you.
 - What if instead of removing you from that toxic work environment, God wants to cultivate the kind of character inside of you that can change the culture of an entire company?

- What if, instead of giving you that perfect relationship that you've been asking for, God wants to make you into the kind of person who is so in love with Jesus, that you aren't dependent on others for emotional satisfaction?
- What if, instead of giving you that conflict free marriage you've been praying for, God wants to make you into the kind of spouse who can handle conflict with grace and love and mercy and kindness?
- What if, instead of healing you from that affliction, what if God wants to grow in you the kind of faith that isn't swayed by the afflictions of this life?
- So often we pray and ask God to change what's around us, but how often do we ask Him to change what's within us?

4. Jesus isn't afraid to be honest with you.

- The samaritan woman was willing to sit in the presence of Jesus and have an honest (and even uncomfortable) conversation with Him.
 - She didn't run away when the darkest places of her soul were exposed...
 - She didn't run from the light. She pressed into the light.
 - She had every reason to bolt when Jesus called her out!
 - I would have....
 - But she didn't...and because she didn't, she found true living water...
- When was the last time that you sat down with Jesus and let Him be honest with you?
- When was the last time you said, "Jesus, I give you permission to tell me the truth...about who I am...the good, the bad, the ugly"?
- I would imagine that for many of us, it's been awhile since we REALLY allowed Jesus to be honest with us.
 - Maybe you've never had that conversation with Jesus.
 - Maybe you're cool when Jesus says the good things, but you push away when He starts bringing up the hard stuff.
- Maybe today is the first time you allow Jesus to speak to you openly and honestly.
 - And I'll be honest, it might not be the most comfortable conversation
 - You might feel exposed...
 - But if you press into the light today I promise it will set you free. Just like it did for the Samaritan woman.

So if (As we end this year), you're tired, weary, short on hope and desperate for something in your life to change, the good news for you is that there's a man sitting at the well today—His name is Jesus, and he wants to give you living water.

- Friends let this year be the year of living water.

PRAY – Jesus speak to us, we give you permission. More than any new years resolution we need you to speak to us openly and honestly.

Friends, today is the day to have that honest conversation with Jesus.

- ▶ The carpets are here at the front of the stage for you to come and sit and talk with Jesus today.
- ▶ Communion is available to remember the cost of the living water that Jesus gives away freely and abundantly.
- ▶ If you're struggling to hear Jesus today, there are some lovely people to the left and the right who would love nothing more than to lead you to His voice.

Let's not leave today without sitting in the presence of Jesus and allowing Him to speak to us.