

Introduction

Contrast with encounter with Nicodemus

- man/woman, Jew/Samaritan, well known ruler/unknown citizen, upright Pharisee/notorious sinner
- but equal in worth before God, and equally in need of the the Lord Jesus Christ
- Also, as well as learning something about the person who Jesus encountered:
 - Nicodemus needed the new birth
 - the woman at the well needed the water of life
- But also in each we learn something about Jesus Christ:
 - particularly true here, Jesus revealed himself to her during the course of the conversation
- Ever a pressing question for the church: [who is Jesus?](#)
 - for who we see Jesus as, who we believe him to be, will shape how we follow him, how we know him
- This incident contributes substantially to the portrait that John paints of who Jesus is:
 - *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."* (v. 10)

Jesus is both human and divine

- Humanity is evident: noon, he was [tired](#), sat to rest, [hungry](#), needing food, [hot](#) and [thirsty](#) also - so asked woman for water
 - real human, real body, real emotions, and real temptations as we learn elsewhere
- But [also divine](#)
 - offers [living water](#), symbol of eternal life - but only God can give eternal life
 - also had supernatural knowledge - knew about her marital situation in all its complexity
 - he was also conscious of a unique relationship with God as his Heavenly Father
- Always been hard to maintain [both](#) and not present him as either:
 - a man with divine qualities...
 - or as God pretending to be a man!
- Trust is equally human and divine - evidence in the gospels overwhelming

Jesus is both conservative and radical

- Conservative wrt to Scripture - conserve it as the Word of God, the revelation of the Father, and he submitted to its authority in his moral standards and in his understanding of his mission and in his controversies with the Pharisees
 - whole incident is steeped in OT theology - expecting Messiah, I am he; not just another prophet, but the Messiah, to whom the prophets point and testify
 - he was conservative wrt to the OT Scriptures, he believed what they taught and shaped his living on the basis of their teaching
- Radical on culture, prepared to reject conventions and traditions of his culture if they were not consistent with Scripture.
- Here this is illustrated as follows:
 - she was a woman - not done for man and woman to speak to one another in public - disciples astonished
 - she was a Samaritan and he was Jew - v.9 - Jesus did what wasn't done
 - she was a [sinner](#) - respectable people wouldn't mix with such as her - but Jesus did what wasn't done
- He deliberately breached the social barriers of his day - completely free of [gender](#)

discrimination, of ethnic prejudice and of moral priggishness
 - even put himself in this outcast's debt!

- Why do we polarise today, and regard ourselves as either conservative or radical?
 - talk about OR in computer science?!
 - conservatives conserve culture as well as scripture
 - radicals are determined to conserve nothing - even Scripture

Jesus is both Satisfying and Disturbing

- Finally we come to the heart of the story, the heart of the encounter
 - so far we've seen things about Jesus...
 - but now we focus on the encounter itself between Jesus and the woman
- Core of the story is Jesus offering to quench her thirst
 - so though he begins by asking her to give him water, he soon goes on to offer her a drink, of living water, to quench her thirst
 - she was completely mystified by this!
 - how could he both ask for a drink and offer a drink - she was biblical literalist, and thought he was talking about the water in the well! (v.11)
- But there are two different kinds of water, two kinds of thirst - a spiritual thirst as well as a physical thirst
 - he was speaking figuratively, not literally
 - life giving water for her spiritual thirst
 - a thirst that her sexual promiscuity, her seeking after satisfaction in relationship after relationship, had not satisfied
 - the water Jesus offers, by contrast, will satisfy that deep spiritual longing, for relationship with God, for satisfaction, for acceptance
- Jesus' did not only offer to quench her thirst, he also disturbed her conscience:
 - *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."* (v.25)
 - strange reply - at first sight - get husband!
 - but she didn't have a husband... she was almost certainly at the well in the midday heat precisely because she wasn't married to the person she was with, because of the accusatory comments she'd receive if she was with the other women at dawn or dusk....
 - Jesus is opening up the conversation to precisely that area where she would have to face her sin
 - for she must face her sin, indeed must repent of it and turn away from it, before she could be forgiven
- I doubt we'd react in that way if we were in Jesus' shoes!
 - in name of compassion we tend to overlook sin, condoning it by default
 - we so often end up compromising, allowing sin to be covered up and quietly ignored
 - and we offer what Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace", forgiveness without repentance, compassion without integrity, tolerance without discipline
 - not Jesus - he knew her raging inner thirst until and unless she faced the reality of her sin and repented
- When that happens with someone facing cancer, when they first become aware of symptoms that might indicate a cancer, we know that the best thing is to face the fear-inducing reality and go and speak to a doctor:
 - but we have also heard of many people who refuse to face the evidence... and as a consequence lose out on the treatment available
 - as Jesus did, and like a skillful doctor with a cancer patient, we too need to help people face their sin
 - so he pricked her conscience before he quenched her thirst
 - he always disturbs the comfortable before he comforts the disturbed

Application

- So, reject unbiblical pictures of Jesus:
 - he is human and divine
 - he is radical and conservative
 - he is disturbing and comforting
- And so also follow in his footsteps:
 - seeing more to life than the the merely human, but never so super-spiritualising things that we become "so heavenly minded we're no earthly use"
 - become radical to culture without being unfaithful to Scripture - and that requires thinking, challenge, reading, discussion... to continually ask the question: "is it OK to....?" or "can a Christian ...?" and "how can we make contact with those people...?"
 - in our conversation with people will we have the courage to open up issues of sin? That doesn't mean to condemn or judge - Jesus didn't do that here - but he does raise the issue...