

Introduction

Refresher on the story

- Jesus and disciples going through Samaria
 - Jews and Samaritans hated each other
 - men and women didn't talk
 - religious folk didn't talk to sinners!
 - disciples went off for food... and Jesus meets the Samaritan, woman, sinner at the well
 - there he challenges her in her most sensitive area, while holding out to her the offer of living water
 - "he always disturbs the comfortable before he comforts the disturbed"
- So what happened next?
 - how did the story develop?
 - what more can we learn from Jesus' dealing with the woman here?

A seeker sensitive strategy...

- Introduce the whole "seeker sensitive" strategy:
 - making folk feel comfortable coming into church
 - using culturally appropriate music, atmosphere, style where possible
 - thinking in terms of "felt needs" as well as "real needs" - peace, satisfaction, relationships are felt rather more than reconciliation with God
- Lots of good here!
 - though we should also be careful that we don't water down the message in our haste to be sensitive - and the best examples don't
- How's this for a seeker sensitive strategy?
 - Jesus says: *"The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."* (4:18)
 - the woman says: *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"* (4:29)
 - not only did Jesus "go for the jugular", notice also how the woman reported back to her town!!
 - remember, she's almost certainly been collecting water at midday to avoid these very townspeople!
 - so she meets Jesus... and runs back to town and starts, if not spilling her guts, then certainly being an awful lot more up-front than she was!
- Point is simply that Jesus disturbs the comfortable before he comforts the disturbed:
 - we may well be welcoming, gentle, clear in explaining things, accommodating to people who don't yet know the Saviour...
 - but at some point the hard challenge of acknowledging sin, of bowing the knee to Jesus' Lordship over our lives will need to come
 - unless it does, folk cannot come to faith!

Food is a great motivator!

- Food is a great motivator:
 - "you do something for me and I'll feed you" is often a good way to get something done!
 - witness the desperate efforts people will go to when sources of food are cut off...
- Here Jesus uses a classic initial mis-understanding to get his disciples to think:
 - we've seen it come up often in John - Nicodemus and being born again, Jesus' body and the Temple (*Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*, (John 2:19))
 - here the disciples have been, got food, and think Jesus' words imply he's

- received physical food from someone else
- which opens the door for Jesus to explain something about his fundamental motivation - to do God's will, and in particular to bring someone to know salvation who has previously been an outcast and a rebel

- What is our food?
 - and what does that mean - what kind of satisfaction do we receive?
 - how are we motivated to communicate Jesus to others

You just can't get the staff these days!

- Jesus then goes on into the famous section on the harvest:
 - possibly the fields around were ready for harvest, possibly the thought of food and of harvest were much more closely linked for them than for us!
 - his point is that now people are ready to come to faith, and "all" it takes in God's providence is people willing and ready to go in obedience to God!
- Hints towards process in folk coming to faith, analagous to seed planting, growing, harvested
 - unclear whether others were specifically involved in a Jewish mission to the Samaritans - seems unlikely - or whether God was more directly at work in the hearts of these Samaritans! - perhaps doesn't really matter
 - other interesting thought is that Jesus here asks us to pray **not** for those who are not yet Christians, but for **workers**. cf Andy Bathgate/Capt Stephen Anderson pointing out that rarely in NT do we find prayers for non-believers, but rather for believers to be faithful in sharing the gospel...
 - ...has made me think - can we cop out by thinking of an area as "hard" to the gospel, when in fact it is God's people in the area who are "hard" to his call on their lives!

The power of personal testimony

- Something "real" rather than abstract about a personal testimony
 - which is exactly what seems to have what happened here
 - that change in the woman, her personal, incomplete experience of Jesus, spoken out to others, drew them to him in a remarkable way
- I fear one legacy of our evangelical heritage is that we are suspicious of the personal experience
 - we value - rightly - what Scripture says
 - but are less happy with, less comfortable with the ambiguity of people's experiences - which may not dot all the 'i's, or cross all the 't's
 - so we are afraid, uncomfortable, put off talking about God at work in our life - as if it is wrong to talk about ourselves, when we are actually drawing attention to him at work in us!
- We certainly need to round out the picture, bring people to Jesus:
 - but personal testimony reflects Jesus' own incarnational move, from heaven to the particular life of a 1st century Jewish carpenter from Nazareth...

How will we apply those principles to ourselves today?

A seeker sensitive strategy...

- not copping out challenging people about sin, about Jesus' Lordship

Food is a great motivator!

- what is our motivation? God's will? Our own comfort?

You just can't get the staff these days!

- do we pray for God's people? Do we take responsibility for our calling to be witnesses?

The power of personal testimony

- do we share of what God has worked in our lives?

- *Point towards the discussion questions!*
 - 1. how do our evangelistic strategies compare with what happened here?

- 2. what motivates us to tell others about Jesus?
- 3. how should we be praying, knowing that so few know Jesus as Saviour?
- 4. when have we seen the power of personal testimony of God's work in someone's life?