



WORD ON THE
STREET

AN ENCOUNTER
WITH JESUS

An encounter with Jesus will often not be what we expected: ⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to Him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

We see a few ways here in which this unnamed woman is surprised by meeting Jesus. For one thing, it’s noon and she’s probably not used to seeing anyone at the well. Most people would’ve come to the well in the morning or in the evening when the temperatures would’ve been cooler. But as we’ll learn when we see more about her character in a few verses, she probably had reason to want to avoid being there at busy times. There are probably a lot of people in town who look down on her. So seeing anyone there at all is unexpected. She’s also surprised because she knows that He’s a Jew and He should therefore hate her. Most Jews wouldn’t have interacted at all with her because they would’ve thought it would make them unclean. He’s not only interacting with her, but He’s asking her for water. He’s not worried about being made unclean by her. And again she’s surprised because she’s a woman and He’s a man. It probably wouldn’t have been normal for a strange man to be talking with her so casually. So she’s coming up against a lot of unexpected things!

I know in my own life when I come to Jesus, I usually have a lot of my own expectations. But He has His own plan and it’s often different from mine and always better. I might expect Him to give me answers on a question I have, and instead He just gives me more of Himself. I might expect Him to guide me to a specific route He wants me to take in my life, but instead He reminds me to just seek Him first and everything else will follow. I might expect Him to take certain sorrows or troubles out of my life, but He instead just tells me to trust Him and wait patiently. I might expect Him to teach me one thing, but He teaches me another instead. Whatever it is, Jesus likes to surprise us and remind us that He’s got it under control. So when we come to Him, we should learn to expect the unexpected! He addresses questions we didn’t know needed answers!

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” We see her here very focused at first on the literal water at this well. She’s never heard of living water. She doesn’t know to look for it or hope for it. She doesn’t know to ask for it. But Jesus introduces her to this question. But I love that as soon as He explains it to her, she’s all in...even though it seems she doesn’t completely understand what He’s talking about. She’s now the one asking for a drink.

Think about the time in your life before you knew Jesus, or maybe after you knew Jesus but you were wandering or struggling. During those times, did Jesus ever reveal something to you that you didn’t even know you needed? I know that’s happened to me. It’s kinda like how we talked about Him being unexpected. There have been plenty of times when I’ve come to Him wanting Him to help me maybe deal with someone who’s being annoying or frustrating to me. But the question I didn’t know I needed an answer to turned out to be, “What is it in your heart, Keith, that needs to change in the way you interact with this person? In what ways are you not relying on Me? In what ways are you not believing that the gospel applies to this person? How do you need to focus on being more like Me rather than trying to change this other person?” It’s stuff like that. Kind of annoying, right? But really good for us. Jesus is patient and reveals things to us when we need to hear them in ways that we can respond to. That’s what He begins to do with the woman here. But then He gets even deeper.

After just one encounter with Jesus this woman tells everyone she can find that she’s met the Messiah! Now just picture this – the woman who just a few hours ago was going to the well in the middle of the day to avoid seeing people comes back into town running around, gathering up as many people as she can find. What a change! She tells them that He knew everything about her, He’s a prophet, and her enthusiasm for Him makes them want to meet Him themselves. They believed her based on her testimony about Him, but then they encountered Him and believed even more. So this, I think, is the most important thing we need to remember about a true encounter with Jesus. When we truly know Him and He’s done all this work in our hearts, we can’t possibly keep it to ourselves. We should be compelled by what He’s shown us and by the love He’s placed in our hearts to help other people meet Him and be changed by Him. A true encounter with Jesus sends us out to tell others about Him.

