

The Chosen – Week 1

The Woman at the Well



So we come to the first of a 4 week series, looking at our Gospel stories through the eyes of The Chosen. If you haven't come across The Chosen, it's an American television series, created by filmmaker Dallas Jenkins. It's the first multi-season series about the life of Jesus. Amazingly, the first series, which came out in 2019, was financed completely through crowdfunding. It was supposed to be available on subscription, but during the early days of the Covid lockdown, the producers decided to temporarily make it free to watch. Of course, it went completely viral and has been free ever since! The Chosen has now been watched by an about 280 million people worldwide, a third of these are not Christians. It's amazing.

So far 5 seasons have been aired in the UK, following Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, to the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Season 6 comes out in November and follows Jesus' trial and crucifixion. The 4 snippets we will be looking at over the next 4 weeks are The Woman at the Well – season 1, The healing at the Pool of Bethesda – season 2, The Raising of Lazarus – season 4 and the Palm Sunday story – Jesus entering Jerusalem at the start of Holy Week – season 5.

So today, we begin with the story of the Woman at the Well. It's such a well-known story when it's read from the Bible, but today, we get to watch an interpretation of it. As we do, I invite you to think about how well it fits with the image you have in your own head of the story. Are there things that surprise you or perhaps challenge you? Are there bits you don't agree with? Are there bits which perhaps make you see the story, or Jesus in a new way?

VIDEO:

This can be accessed at watch.thechosen.tv/video/184683594341

Today's clip begins at 41 mins 20 secs.

If you are not able to access, a script of the scene is included at the end of this sermon.



So – what did you make of it?

I think the thing that really stood out for me is the absolute transformation we see in the woman. I know that The Chosen is an interpretation, they have to make a call on how to represent the characters, they have to add dialogue to create an actual conversation. But the image they create of the woman, her anger, her sadness, her downright hostility towards Jesus is really striking. She can barely even look at him. She's sarcastic, she's suspicious, she really challenges him. It's not at all the image I had in my head. When we read conversations in the Bible, we don't get to see facial expressions, we don't really get to hear tone of voice. When in the Bible we read, the woman's

words, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' I've always imagined a polite chat. Yet, now I see it, The Chosen version, is probably far closer to the truth. This woman has been rejected by everyone. She's been hurt by men. She's an outcast in her community. And here comes a Jewish man, no less. A member of a religious group who rejected the Samaritans, saw them as impure, even rejected their place of worship as invalid. She absolutely would be hostile, suspicious. Her attitude, her response to Jesus would be full of her anger, her hurt, her rejection. And the fact that in this

clip we see that hostility so clearly, then shows so much more clearly the transformation that short conversation brings about.

In the clip, we watch as she goes from anger, to confusion and intrigue, as she recognises that Jesus is more than she bargained for. A prophet, someone who really knew her. To deep sadness and heartbreak, as she admit to Jesus just how broken she is. And then, of course, to absolute joy, as she finally realises – this really is the Messiah. She really can trust him. Everything he says is true. And off she runs, nothing is going to stop her sharing this news!



The transformation we see in that clip is way beyond anything I've ever imagined through reading that passage in the Bible. And there's one particular moment, where I think we really see that transformation happen. 'I'm rejected by others' the woman says, 'I know' says Jesus, 'but not by the Messiah.' This is what she needed most of all. To know herself accepted, not rejected. To know herself seen and known and loved. And that of course is how Jesus continues to bring transformation today. To some extent we are all that woman. We have all done things we regret. We all carry wounds and past hurts. We have all no doubt had times we've felt rejected, judged, mistreated by others. We've perhaps all had times when we've felt unlovable, we've felt unworthy of God's love, we've doubted God's love. And yet – as we watch the transformation in the woman at the well, we can be sure that Jesus' gentle words are for us too

'I am rejected by others'

'I know – but not by the Messiah'

Amen.

Revd Ros Wilshire

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman - Script

(Adapted from The Chosen, based on John 4)

Jesus: Would you give me a drink?

Woman: Did you hear me?

Jesus: That bad, huh?

Woman: What?

Woman: You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan? And a woman?

Jesus: I'm sorry. I should have said, "Please."

Woman: You know, it's not safe for you to be alone out here.

Jesus: Nor you.

Jesus: Why haven't you come with others? And why so late in the day? Don't women go to the wells in the cool of the morning?

Woman: Yeah, well, none of them will be seen with me, so I have to come at noon in the heat, as you have so kindly reminded me.

Jesus: Why won't they be seen with you?

Woman: Long story.

Jesus: I'd still like a drink of water, if you can spare it.

Woman: Amazing what a parched throat will do. Aren't I unclean to you? Won't you be defiled by this vessel?

Jesus: Maybe some of my people say that about your women, but I don't.

Woman: Yeah? And what do you say?

Jesus: I say if you knew who I am, you'd be asking me for a drink.

Woman: Really.

Jesus: And I would give you living water.

Woman: Would... except that you have nothing to draw water with, and this is a deep well. Besides, what do you need from me if you have your own supply of "living water"?

Jesus: Long story.

Woman: But Jewish water is better than Samaritan water, hmm?

Jesus: That's not what I said.

Woman: Are you a better man than our ancestor, Jacob, who dug this well? Your water is better than his?

Jesus: I know Jacob. And everyone who drinks this water will thirst again. But whoever drinks the water that I give will never be thirsty again.

Woman: Wouldn't that be nice.

Jesus: The water I give will become in a person a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Woman: Really.

Jesus: Yes, really.

Woman: Prove it.

Jesus: First, go and call your husband, then come back. I will show you both.

Woman: I don't have a husband.

Jesus: You are right. You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now is not your husband.

Woman: Ha-ha-haa! I see. You're a prophet. You're here to preach at me.

Jesus: No.

Woman: Usually the one good thing about coming here alone is I can escape being condemned.

Jesus: I'm not here to condemn you.

Woman: I've made mistakes... too many. But it's men like you who have made it impossible for me to do anything about it.

Jesus: How?

Woman: Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews insist Jerusalem is the only place for true worship.

Jesus: They say that because the temple is there.

Woman: Yeah, exactly where we're not allowed.

Jesus: I'm here to break those barriers. And the time is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

Woman: So where am I supposed to go when I need God? I've never received anything from God, but I couldn't thank Him even if I did.

Jesus: Anywhere. God is spirit. And the time is coming, and is now here, that it won't matter where you worship, but only that you do it in spirit and truth. Heart and mind. That is the kind of worshipper He's looking for. It won't matter where you're from or what you've done. Do you believe what I'm telling you?

Woman: Until the Messiah comes and explains everything and sorts this mess out, including me, I don't trust in anyone.

Jesus: You're wrong when you say that you've never received anything from God. This Messiah you speak of. I am He.

Jesus: The first one was named Ramin. You were a woman of purity who was excited to be married, but he wasn't a good man. He hurt you, and it made you question marriage and even the practice of your faith.

Woman: Stop it.

Jesus: The second was Farzad. On your wedding night his skin smelled like oranges, and to this day, every time you pass by the oranges in the market, you feel guilty for leaving him, because he was the only truly godly man you've been with, but you felt unworthy.

Woman: Why are you doing this?

Jesus: I have not revealed myself to the public as the Messiah. You are the first. It would be good if you believed me.

Woman: You picked the wrong person.

Jesus: I came to Samaria just to meet you. Do you think it's an accident that I'm here in the middle of the day?

Woman: I am rejected by others.

Jesus: I know... but not by the Messiah.

Woman: And you know these things because you are the Christ.

Jesus: I'm going to tell everyone.

Woman: I was counting on it.

Woman: Spirit and truth?

Jesus: Spirit and truth.

Woman: It won't be all about mountains or temples?

Jesus: Soon... just the heart.

Woman: You promise?

Jesus: I promise.

Woman: This man told me everything I've done! Oh, He must be the Christ!

Runs away towards the town

Jesus: Hey, wait! Your water! You forgot your—

Woman: Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!