



Theme: Jesus Loves People THIS Much
"The Rejected"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, May 30-31, 2026, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

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." – John 4:10

SLIDE Jesus Loves People THIS Much:
The Rejected

Today we begin a new series of sermons looking at how Jesus loved people and **the kind of people that he loved**. By looking at some of these beautiful stories we find in the gospels **we can find ourselves** and see how it is God meets us during times and spaces in our lives where there is brokenness and hurt. Jesus began his public ministry by proclaiming that he had come to **release the captive and to heal the broken** and reached **the lost**. He wanted to let people know that they were made by God to be loved by God which is why we talk about that almost every week. Yes, Jesus came to give his life and **during his life he showed us**

what it looked like to **sacrificially love** people. I want to start with the question that I think applies to every one of us.

SLIDE WHEN have you been rejected?

Notice that I didn't ask "if" you have been rejected! I don't know about you, but I've been rejected by a girlfriend, an employer, a church, and lot of different people throughout my life. I remember vividly the first time I got fired from Taco Bell. It's one of those moments that sticks with you when you leave the restaurant dejected having turned in your brown uniform and hat. I was going to buy one to show to you but this one cost \$75 and it's made of paper and it says it's lightly stained! I wish I had known and I would have kept that old paper hat instead of throwing it in the trash on the way out.

GRAPHIC Taco Bell hat

It wasn't that important for me to have one as part of the sermon, but the experience of getting canned by Taco Bell did leave a stain. What I know is that most of us carry those scars from times when we've been rejected. We laugh at that experience but sometimes it's much more serious like being rejected because of our sex what are the color of our skin. That's at the core of the story today as we find Jesus interacting with a Samaritan woman at a well.

I realized that I preached earlier this year on this story when we walked through the gospel of John together for Easter, but this is the longest conversation Jesus has in the gospels. There is more time spent on this interaction than is spent on describing the crucifixion because clearly this story is critical for us understanding who Jesus is according to John who wrote this gospel. John is concerned about us understanding who Jesus is as the Messiah and what he means for our lives and this story takes up an entire chapter because it is meant to help us understand who Jesus is and who he can be for us. This story makes more sense if we understand the history of this part of Israel and Samaria.

GRAPHIC Divided Kingdom of Israel and Judah

The first king of Israel brought all the tribes together around 1200 years before the time of Christ. That was King Saul who then was followed by King David and then King Solomon. There were tribes in the north and tribes in the south and they were constantly bickering and struggling to get along. They stayed together until King Solomon dies around 1100 years before Christ. The Kingdom of Judah is in the South where Jerusalem is the capital city. The Kingdom of Israel is in the north which is where you find the Galilee and their capital is Samaria. Sometimes the kings in each region were cordial with the other and there were peace and other times there was war and strife.

GRAPHIC Deportation of Jews by Assyrians

This went on until 700 years before the time of Christ and in 722 BC the Kingdom of Assyria occupied both regions when the northern tribes of Israel rebelled and Assyria came in and wiped-out Israel by carrying them away to be slaves AND importing many others from Assyria into the northern part of Israel. They also put pressure on the southern remnant of Judah to pay their taxes and to stay in line. Part of resettling people meant that people would intermarry and before long the Jewish people from the northern Kingdom had forgotten their identity and took on some of the worship practices from neighboring communities.

GRAPHIC Babylonian Exile

The Jewish people to the South would eventually be carried off around 150 years later by the Babylonian empire. They showed up around 500 years before the time of Christ, and they destroyed the temple and carried the Israelites that were left off to be slaves in what is today Iran and Iraq. The Jews from the southern area around Jerusalem did not intermarry and they kept their traditions from Judaism. They eventually were able to return and when they did, the people in the north looked down on them because they had been gone 50 years.

Those who returned looked at the people in the north and saw them as worshipping other gods and being tainted. They rejected them

as real Jews because of their strange worship practices, and they were no longer seen as part of the real family of Israel. They used words like unclean and “half-breeds” to describe their neighbors to the north. They each looked at each other as foreigners.

The Jewish people that returned to Jerusalem began to build their temple and the people from the north offered to come and help but they were rejected because they were not pure. They began to look at each other as objects and as “the other.” The people in Samaria build their own temple on Mount Gerizim which is close to where this story of the Samaritan woman at the well takes place. They have competing places of worship until around 100 years before Jesus when a group from the South went up north and destroyed the temple the Samaritans were using for worship. There is a sense of hatred of the Samaritans towards the Jews and the Jews toward the Samaritans that is critical to understand when reading these stories that include Jesus and Samaritans.

During the time of Jesus, Samaria was right in the middle of the region. You can see on this map the Galilee at the top and the area of Judea at the bottom. Mt. Gerizim and Sychar are right in the middle of that region of Samaria.

GRAPHIC **Map of Samaria**

GRAPHIC **Google Maps Jerusalem to Nazareth**

When you put together a trip on Google Maps from Jerusalem to Nazareth which is the route that Jesus was going it will take you over here to the left side of the map and not through the middle of the country on Hwy. 60. During the time of Jesus, you didn't go down the middle of the country through Samaria and even today this area is considered the West Bank and if you are Jewish you don't go through this territory. To get to the place where this story takes place, which is today the modern city of Nablus, you would go down the middle of Samaria and Jesus and his companions, if they were faithful Jews, would

avoid this area. The story tells us that Jesus had to go through this region, which is not entirely true, but it's clear that it's part of his mission for this trip in John chapter 4.

GRAPHIC Google Maps Nablus

The bad blood that we witness between Palestinians and Israelis goes back thousands of years, as does the tension between Israel and what used to be Assyria and Babylon but is now Iraq and Iran. These are not conflicts that just showed up but they have been boiling and simmering for more than 3000 years. That's why I always remind people that peace in this region is complicated. Every trip we take from the Holy Land when it's safe and it's possible for us to travel down the middle of the country, we take Hwy. 60 through the heart of the country. We do that even though many tour groups don't because we can support both Palestinians and Israelis. There's a beautiful mountaintop restaurant in Samaria that we have been to as well as a restaurant that is owned by an Alabama Crimson Tide fan.

GRAPHIC Nablus Restaurant

Just to be clear, Palestinians are not Samaritans. There are still some Samaritans that live in this region but now it is occupied by the group of people we call Palestinian. The scripture story begins in John 4 by setting the stage.

BIBLE

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.

BIBLE

⁸ He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

While it says that Jesus had to go through Samaria, the truth is that

he really did not, but he had a divine appointment. The mission of Jesus was to go and meet those who are lost and rejected. He is very purposeful about going through the city of Samaria because there is something that he needs to do as he meets a woman on the outside of town. Let's look at how *The Chosen* depicts this scene.

VIDEO The Chosen – Samaritan Well (00:45 to 03:46)

John intends for us to remember as we read this story about the stories in the Hebrew Bible where men meet their wives at a well. Moses meets his wife Zipporah; Isaac meets his wife, Rebecca; and Jacob who would later be known as Israel meets Rachel. You might remember if you're old enough that the place where people would sometimes go to meet a partner were bars which were called "watering holes." That name comes directly from these stories. John is not intimating that somehow Jesus is going to this well to find a wife, but he is reminding us that this is the kind of woman that Jesus loves. Jesus loves people so much that he is willing to go to a place that no other Jewish people would go, Samaria, and go to the well at the middle of the day to meet someone that no one else will associate with. John wants us to pay attention to the kind of person that Jesus cares for and what he offers to them.

It's important to remember that women couldn't divorce men in the 1st century and that the man's family actually paid a price to purchase the bride but then he could discard her for any reason. One of the reasons for Jesus being stern about the topic of divorce is because many men were discarding women because they simply didn't please them and he believed this was wrong. This woman has been rejected five times and probably is living with a person because it's the first time she's gotten to choose a loving relationship.

We learn in this story that she comes alone in the middle of the day when it is hot because the other women won't be seen with her. They gossip about her and make her feel worthless. This story is about a woman who is rejected multiple times and it reminds us of the fact that

part of being human is that we get rejected. Sometimes we get rejected by a parent and we carry that with us our whole life. Sometimes we are rejected by a spouse or a boyfriend or girlfriend. Sometimes we are rejected by a peer group, and it happens online with name calling and bullying that happens from a distance but cuts to our heart. Maybe there is someone at work who has made us feel worthless. We have all known rejection at various times in our lives and experienced people making fun of us when they're calling us names. My guess is that every one of us has been made to feel small and insignificant. If you haven't, I have bad news for you. It's probably coming.

GRAPHIC Metro Care Ring 1990

This woman represents all of us when we have felt rejected. We are meant to see ourselves in her story. When I was working on my master's degree in seminary, I also took classes in social work at Denver university. My field placement in my first year was downtown at a place called Central Denver Community Services. It's now called Metro Care Ring. One of the main groups of people who had come in looking for assistance were women who worked on the streets. They sometimes needed food or medical care or both. Sometimes they needed to get away from their handler, and we would help them get into the women's shelter and be part of our recovery center that we helped organize. Since I was a man, so I didn't meet with any of the women, but I watched several of our female staff do amazing things with women who were coming off the streets. Some of them were victims of human trafficking and others felt like they had no other option but to sell their bodies.

Many of them talked openly about their experiences sucking the life out of them. They were often devastated and felt like objects without any sense of humanity. I will never forget our director Elizabeth who would get out her Bible and read the story of the woman at the well or the story of Mary Magdala that we talked about the first week of this series to these women. I saw miracles happen as women escaped the cycles of violence and poverty that had created a prison for them and

made them feel rejected by the world. One of the women whose name was Clarice that was a staff person did some amazing work and seemed to have a special connection. I mentioned this to Elizabeth, and she told me it was because Clarice used to be one of those women on the streets whose life had been changed by the gospel and by the story of Jesus interacting with this woman at the well and offering her living water.

SLIDE Jesus offers living water

When Clarice told this story she would have a glass picture of water on her desk and she would pour out a glass for the woman she was spending time with and talked to her about the woman at the well and how this water could change her life like it changed hers. She would remind each woman that Jesus didn't see what she had been, but what she could be and how this transformation was possible for them because they were made by God to be loved by God. Jesus saw beauty when the world saw something to be discarded. I believe that's what Jesus sees when he looks at each one of us. He sees our past and all our broken places and he offers us living water.

When we have been through the Holy Land and it's possible, we go through what was called Samaria and is now the West Bank and we stop at the town of Nablus, which was the town of Sychar in the day of Jesus. We go to the church that is built over the top of a well that tradition says is the well where this story takes place. If you ever get to go to the Holy Land with us, we do hear this a lot, "Tradition says that this story took place at this location." If it wasn't at this exact location, it was somewhere close. We do have a trip planned for February of 2027 but it's on hold right now until there is a lasting peace in the region and we'll know more this fall. Since many of us will not be able to go there I thought I would take you there with some of the photos from one of our trips.

GRAPHIC Nablus Church Exterior

GRAPHIC Nablus Church Interior

GRAPHIC Jacob's Well

GRAPHIC Jacob's Well Close Up

GRAPHIC Jeff at Jacob's Well

This is now an Orthodox Church, and the exterior is about 25 feet above the well. The interior is beautiful and on either side of the altar there are stairways that lead you down into the area where the well sits. Going down the stairs, you find yourself at Jacob's well and it is still an active well with water inside. You see the bucket that we would lower into the well and I wanted to share with you a few pictures from our last time there where we could drink from the well or have water placed on our heads to remember the experience. I was much younger and had more hair when this picture was taken but it's some of the best photos that I have from our trips, and I especially wanted you to see the icon which is just beyond me where I'm holding the Bible reading this story. It depicts Jesus meeting the woman here at this well.

The reason this place, this experience, and this story is so important is it because it's the longest conversation Jesus has in the gospels and it makes it clear who Jesus is and what he came to do. We see God in the flesh seeking after the rejected and the outcast. People that were made to feel insignificant by the world felt loved and blessed by Jesus and if we are going to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, we must be willing to do the same. Jesus would seek them out and this story is a foundational story that shows us what it means to love God, love others, and share the good news. Jesus cared about the rejected and we are meant to be a church that cares also and lives out this mission as best we can. We won't be perfect, but we need to try, which is why that is our vision and mission that we put above the doors as you leave the church.

GRAPHIC Church Header

We are meant to be a church for the rejected because we are all in that place at some point in our lives, even if we don't realize it. If you are with us in person or online, I want to remind us that this is who we are

as a church here at Summit. We are meant to be a church that welcomes the rejected or the outcast or the spiritually wounded. We want to welcome those of you with spiritual questions like the woman at the well because this is what Jesus did. Jesus welcomes us by looking at us and seeing the beauty and goodness. Jesus sees what we can be and not what we have been. If we are the body of Christ and if we are going to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world today, we must be that kind of church. We have to be concerned for those that others looked down upon.

We must be concerned about those who feel outcast or rejected in our society, our nation, and our world. We will soon celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation and as I was thinking about that I found myself thinking about the poem that is etched at the bottom of the Statue of Liberty. I was able to visit that statue on my first trip to the Holy Land because we also stopped in New York. It was the first time I ever visited that sacred place, and I found myself thinking about the woman at the well I read the full poem by Emma Lazarus which is found at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

GRAPHIC Statue of Liberty New York

GRAPHIC Statue of Liberty

A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name: Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome; "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

One of the things I learned at the museum on Ellis island Was that many of the first immigrants who came over on boats were dehydrated from the long trip and so they built watering stations where people could rehydrate. I found that fascinating to think about because one of the first

things we offer when you arrive to the country is water and this story about the woman at the well is about Jesus offering water that is meant to satisfy and change our lives and hearts.

When we feel overwhelmed with rejection or pain, or when we feel far away from God, Jesus longs to offer us living water which can fill our hearts. We find this image in many places in our scriptures like Isaiah 55.

SLIDE “Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink...”

The water that satisfies is God and the Spirit of God. God's love is meant to be the water that fills us to overflow. The scriptures are sometimes talked about as living water. Here in Durango, we have lots of deer and they risk their life to run across the roads and get to drinking water and I think about Psalm 42.

BIBLE

- ¹ As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.**
- ² I thirst for God, the living God.**

When we believe in God and we trust that Jesus is the source of all life, we experience that living water. Jesus offers life and living water and all we need to do is say, “yes.” Even in our doubts, Jesus offered living water, just like he did to the woman at the well.

VIDEO The Chosen – Samaritan Woman (04:55 to 07:53)

Would you say this memory verse with me?

BIBLE

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.” – John 4:10

Let's pray...

SLIDE **Prayer**

Jesus,

May 30-31 Order

1. Countdown
2. David welcomes people and invites them to stand in body or spirit.
3. Song – “Graves into Gardens”
4. Song – “Worthy of It All”
5. Jeff welcomes and shares:
 - A. QR Code
 - B. Invites people to greet each other
6. Announcement Video
7. Sermon Video Intro
8. Sermon
9. Prayer
10. Med Moments
11. Offering (Senior Gifts)
12. VIDEO – Seniors
13. Song – “Lord, I Need You”
14. Prayer and Lord's Prayer
15. Care Ministers
16. The Bridge
17. Closing Prayer