

Taking First Steps

'A Community Awakened'

John 4:4-8; 27-30; 39-42

Last week I talked about a Nation under God. It's obviously important to be able to be a part of a nation that honors God. But that is not the level at which most of us live. To think in broad terms, like that evokes national pride and great feelings of security or insecurity depending on which nation we live in, but we live at a way more personal level. We live at a community level.

Story: The idea of living in the wild west was filled with dreams of the future and the great beyond, but as people got out into the frontier, they became isolated and pictures would be produced from traveling photographers of wild eyed children and totally unkempt men and women. Primarily we were meant to live in community, to be with each other.

I know sometimes we just need to get away from everyone and everything, but eventually it is community that we come looking for. Many towns would be formed by four landowners coming together where the corners of their property met, simply to be together. Towns grew up around these places, around finding good water, or protection from the weather, where people would gather together. Tipp City was a town founded in 1840 by John Clark that had many of the ear marks of being a town founded on such conditions. Good water. Good stopping off point on the Miami/Erie canal. An people took to it. It became a community where people gathered together and still is today.

Jesus stated several times in the gospels that he had come for the lost house of Israel, meaning he came to transform the **nation** of Israel. But he lived that calling out by traveling into and awakening communities. He went where people lived and he affected them right there.

The story today gives us a clue as to how he awakened those communities.

Jesus is found by the uninsulated.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. John 4:4-8

The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:25-26

Our upbringing teaches us to insulate ourselves in case life takes a bad turn for us. This insulating ourselves takes on many forms.

- locks on our doors

- Chains on our bikes
- 401K's & IRA's in our portfolio's
- Health Insurance
- Car Insurance
- Homeowners Insurance
- Spare tires
- Spare reading glasses
- Spare bedrooms
- Family size diapers
- Jumbo packs of toilet paper and on and on

And we know, all of this is “Just in Case”. I live in the same world. I understand. We are taught, I was taught, grow up, get a good job, so you can have a good life. (So when I told my dad I was going to go into the ministry. He looked at me...and said...”Son, have you lost your mind?”) This is all for the purpose of giving us a cushion- insulation – one definition of insulate is; “to make into an island.” Isn't that interesting.

But time and again in the gospels Jesus does his close up and personal work in and through not insulated people but the uninsulated people. Watch how it works. First for the sake of this sermon let me give you 2 Definitions of Uninsulated that I believe stay true to the gospels.

1. Uninsulated – those who do not have.

We may call them the poor, the bible often does. But it's more than just the poor. Those who do not have money, options, health, relationships, time, family, peace, security, spirit. Those who do not have. Time after time Jesus approaches and works through them, as in the case with this woman. Her life has left her uninsulated. She has had 5 husbands and the man she is with now is not her husband.

She is a woman of influence in her community as we will see, but Jesus doesn't deal with her at her level of public influence, he deals with her at a way more personal level. When a woman has opened her heart to a man, only to have it end, a little piece of her dies, and each time that happens, a little more of her closes off to the thought of ever having true intimacy. This woman had had 5 husbands. At a personal level she was in shutdown mode, and therefore that was where her life was uninsulated. Jesus met her right there.

So first definition – Those who do not have

2. Uninsulated – those who have but use what they have to joyfully serve those who do not have.

This is the definition that opens his presence for everyone of us to experience. When those of us who have, place at God's disposal everything we have and then with joy, are ready to give it away at his command, then we are immediately found by God.

<p>Story: I was standing with a group of adults and high school students at the entrance to the Guatemala City Dump where over 13,000 men women and children lived, scratching out there</p>
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daily ration of food from what they could pick through that came off the trash trucks. Many times 8-9 year old children would be fighting for the same bag of trash as a vulture their same size or bigger.

We stood there on that Saturday handing out 1000 sandwiches to the people that came. They came so fast that the mountain of sandwiches were gone in 11 minutes. I watched as well fed American teenagers and adults with no sandwiches left, began to empty their back packs of all their secret goodies they had stashed away for themselves later. Crying and laughing at the same time, I watched as Keebler cookies, and peanut butter and cheese crackers, and M & M's, and candy bars, and boxes of Ritz crackers and Twizzlers all emerged and then disappeared into the outstretched hands of the hungry. Oh yeah, God showed up and filled our team, not with stuff but with his presence.

Definition #2 those who have but use what they have to joyfully serve those who do not have.

This woman in the story experienced both of these definitions, on her way to awakening a community. First she met Christ as one who did not have. What she lacked was the intimate trusting relationship of a man and she let Christ connect with her, and fill her, right there.

Where are you uninsulated? I have come to a community that appears to have it all together. Where has the wire become exposed and the insulation has worn away in your life? That is where Christ wants to meet you, that is the well he wants to sit down beside you at.

Then this is what happened to the woman.

Abandonment to the Truth Takes Place

She gave herself over to what Christ was and to what he said. This is what it says happened *"Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"*

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him." John 4:27-30

She left her water jar. What does this mean? This water jar represented the life she knew. Water was everything that sustained the avg. life in the middle east. The avg. life.

Not fashionable today to give ourselves to a truth. Culture and experience has taught us well to hedge our bets. That somehow if we give into the truth, that someone else provides that we will appear vulnerable. And in this culture vulnerable is equal to weakness.

This woman was done with all that, she heard something, she felt something at the core of who she was and it rattled her. Christ is still rattling people's core's today. What I have come to realize is that those who awaken communities are not the politicians, nor the power influencers. It is the ones who have let Christ touch them at the most uninsulated places in their lives and then

abandoned themselves, and abandoned their water jars and they have given themselves over to what this woman did next.

Truth is transferred to the Community

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." John 4:39-42

With nothing but the truth of Christ in tow, this woman engaged her community. She told what Christ had done for her. By doing that she touched people in some of the most uninsulated areas of their lives and they responded. Then the transfer of truth began and people started believing on their own and a revival of sorts broke out in this little Samarian town.

We may be able to muster national pride, but we live in communities, where our real lives are played out, insulated and uninsulated a like.

It may have been a long time since you met Christ beside a "well" and abandoned yourself to the truth he exposed in your life. Your life, now with Christ in it, may have moved back to some pretty good insulation. If that is the case, it is time to, remember that truth, and let it move you to leave your water jar and engage the community.

You may simply need to move to that second definition of Uninsulated – and take what you have and joyfully give it to those who do not have.

I was in a conversation this week and we were talking about this food program we have going on during the summer for kids 18 and younger. Kids can get a free meal M-F all summer. You know why, because over 1/3 of the kids in the Tipp City School system are eligible for subsidized lunches.

So what if 40 families in this church, fired up their grills, just one night this summer and invited 5-6 of their neighbors to a driveway grillout and those 40 families provided the food.

The only way we awaken a community is by engaging it and people are more hungry than just for food. We are all, waiting for authentic conversation with people who genuinely care about the condition of our life. We are desperate for it. 40 families, one grill out, invite 5-6 families. You have been wanting to get to know them anyway. I will buy 40 packages of hot dogs, one for each family that does it.

However, there are some here today who have never really stopped long enough for Christ to sit down next to you anywhere. Your life maybe is still fairly well insulated, but you have felt it wearing thin, and you know something has to change. The moments at the well come when we least expect it. Join me at the altar. This is your time to just listen and hear God's words to you. Let's pray