

The following is a phonetic reading of the [YouTube Video](#)
NEXT/Week 1/New Public Spaces/Albert Tate
Willow Creek Community Church, February 14, 2021
By Mary Fairchild mairlady.com . All emphasis mine.

Hey Willow family it is so good to be back here with you and to be able to open up God's Word. One of my greatest joys is for us to gather together and center our hearts and minds on God's Word and allow Him to speak to us. Um, John 4 is where you can find me today. As we dive and see how the Lord wants to prepare our hearts to walk in this next season. See what I did there, NEXT—ha, ha, ha.

John 4:4-15, hear these words of our Father, “Now he had to go through Samaria.(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 noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into town to buy food) The Samaritan said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.' 'Sir,' the woman said, 'You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank from it himself as did also his sons and his livestock?' Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'”

(3:00) My mom had the gift of hospitality. She had the gift of hospitality. Not only she could she cook but she could host. He was the hostess with the mostess. I , I mean we had a whole room that we couldn't even go in because it was reserved for guests. I used to go and stand on the edge and think and look around me like one day I'm gonna be able to go in there and sit down and I could hear her screaming not today get out of that room. Uh, in in that room you you had uh our dining table that was reserved just for uh dinner parties and specials and we had a whole china cabinet that was filled with stuff that never got used other than once or maybe twice a year. Uh, my mom's fine silverware I remember the plates with a little gold trim around it and and the crystal glasses the glasses that were reserved for special special occasions and in there she had the salt shaker and and the pepper and and they were they were in these these beautiful crystal encasing were trimmed in sterling silver and it was just amazing just beautiful pieces.

One day when I had a lot, too much time on my hands and a little boredom and a vivid imagination, my eye caught the salt shaker—the light shinning off of it. How beautiful it was and then highly enough I thought about the salt inside. And I thought with this only coming out once or maybe twice a year. The salt that was in this shaker would never fulfill its purpose because it would spend most of its days in the salt shaker—in this very beautiful salt shaker just being on display but not fulfilling its ultimate purpose which is to add seasoning and flavoring to food. Laugh. Well, if you get early I won't have to preach as long, Willow.(4:55)

When I think about our churches in the season that we find ourselves in I'm telling you I'm the first one in line I miss being in church I miss being in the building I miss seeing all of you stretched across in the mezzanine and the white. I miss I miss being in that space . I miss it so much, but sometimes I wonder, “do I miss it too much?” and and and have we run the risk of being so enamored with this beautiful salt shaker that we call the church building **That we've become so consumed with the building that we've missed opportunities for we as the salt of the earth to actually go and fulfill our purpose.**

(5:50) And that is to bring flavor and seasoning and engagement to the world. It's a dangerous thing about a beautiful salt shaker and y'all we've got one of the We've got some of the most beautiful salt shakers in the country. I'd argue in the world—the best of the best. But even as I think about my mentality, honestly if I just have the confessing confession I've been thinking more about getting back inside of the salt shaker then I've been thinking about using my life to fulfill the purpose of the salt that the shaker holds. (6:25)

2020 forced us out of it , but I fear that instead of being out of it and thinking about I can actually go fulfill my ministry and purpose, I've spent more time thinking about when and how can I get back in it. Now I love a good gathering boy, than anybody else y'all know me I love church I love being in church. I grew up in church. The more I think sometimes I wonder if that's actually in fact the problem. That we've grown so comfortable being in the salt shaker that we struggle with getting out because it's more comfortable in the salt shaker. We know more people we get along we agree with them—hey lets, lets, lets be about this well this text flies in the face of that. Jesus breaks, when I tell you he breaks all the rules. He breaks all the rules and the disciples try to help him, but Jesus just wouldn't listen to them he the disciples tried to encourage they he the disciples like “you we don't do this” and Jesus is like “I'm doing this”.

Lets look at a couple of the rules that Jesus makes in our passage today. Number one he says we must go through Samaria. You need to know culturally this did not happen. This is a big deal. This is not some line in the passage, no this is a declaration that he's making. A declaration of change and a declaration of walls being torn down. Normally(7:57), historically, culturally Jews had no dealings with Samaritans and Samaritans had no dealings with Jews. They didn't like each other, they didn't get along. You think you you think this election was rough and they didn't get along in this election had pales in comparison to Jes and in in in Samaritans. Let me tell you something they Jews oh my goodness they looked at Samaritans they they called the mutts—uh, mixed mongrels because they had intermarried and entertained inner other breeds(8:24) and they called up they called them mongrels they they they had no love for Samaritans at all so much so they don't want to be around Samaritans so much so when they had to travel and walk through they would add to their journey by walking around Samaria just to avoid being in the company of Samaritans so when I tell you the hate was huge it was huge. So when Jesus is walking with his disciples and the disciples get ready to do their normal Jewish cultural rhythm and that is to go around Samaria because we ain't fooling with them—that's the whole thing you know when you got an attitude you you you snap your hand like you know it's just it add a little sauce on it—anyway, he the disciples get ready to go around Samaria and Jesus says “no we must go through Samaria.” Insert record scratch now. Go through Samaria? He's making a statement, he's saying “yeah , because when following Jesus you don't get to go around(9:25) people. You don't get to go around racial divides. You don't get to go around the cultural bias—you go through Samaria.

I think as we seek to leave the salt shaker and have a healthy rhythm and a healthy life outside of the salt shaker we gonna come back in but **our vision and our purpose is gonna drive** us not the crystal cat cathedral that we gather in we are, we're not gonna , **were gonna be driven by our purpose.** In order for us to do that we've gotta be willing to go to places that are culturally uncomfortable. We gotta be willing to go to places where the people don't look like us don't live like us don't vote like us. We got to go to places where people are that that aren't the same as us. People that may not live in lifestyles like us. People that that that may not that may not vote like us that don't think like us. We've got to be willing to go there. One of the biggest problems and one of the biggest challenges (10:24) is we just end up with people that just look like us, look like us, and just vote like us and we make that then the standard and the norm and we're most comfortable there and we accept a call to comfort and ignore the call to kingdom. God is saying we are the salt of the earth. He's calling us out of the salt shaker . **And He's calling us not just to be outside of the salt shaker with people like us.** He's saying get out of the salt shaker and go to Samaria. Go to Samaria. See He puts himself in a very interesting predicament. They He didn't stand outside arguing whether Samaritan lives actually matter He went to Samaria so that He put on display that Samaritan lives actually matters. There's a there's a life we will discover that there's a woman at the well and he will meet this woman and he's making a big point in our passage—her life matters. **You disregard her experience. You disregard her her her theological positions.** You disregard her lifestyle. You disregard you don't agree with none of that, but I'm sick even with all those disagreements (11:34) All those all those dynamics her life still mattered enough for me to show up for her.

If there's some people you need to show up for that won't come inside the building—that's why God put you out for a reason. Every week he sits us out of the building. Every week we get commissioned out, um, so that we can show up and be salt for somebody show desperately needs it. Salt, a quick refernce to Cheers from the 1990s will show you that at this bar , the food eatery, they do something very interesting financially from a business strategy, they would put free snacks on the counter. They would put free snacks on the counter. Uh, so you'll be able to go in and immediately you begin to eat the free snacks. The thing would happen after eating the free snacks, what would inevitably happen is you'll begin to get thirsty. Why? Because the free snacks where high in salt content and things with high salt content creates thirst. Jesus said, “my saltiness has got to go and meet the thirstiness of the world so that we might have an opportunity to invite people to the living water of God. Wooo, that was good. Let me say that again. My saltiness needs to go to the thirstiness of the world so that we might have an opportunity to invite them to the living water of God.

Church, we got to get out of the building. We got to see our mission and our purpose is to go out and take our saltiness the the thirstiness of the world. He meets this woman and I love the way he went he wasn't timid he went and approached this woman with confidence. We need to go out with confidence. Watch this he goes up to the woman and listen look listen to how he talks to the woman he says, “give me something to drink.” He literally goes up to say give me something to drink and the woman she was like um, “first of all Samaritans don't like Jews and Jews don't like Samaritan so why are you even talking to me?” Jesus not not not turned away at all not. Jesus wasn't tripping at all, I'm sorry tripping um discouraged or dismayed in any way in his ability to respond back to her. Um, he went tripping he said , “If you knew who I was you would have asked me for something to drink.” She was like, “You don't even have a cup. How you how how are you going to give me me something to drink and you don't even have anything to draw with?” “And what is is are you you got your :own water. You got your you got your water. You got something better than what this is like like Jacob drank from this well, Jacob's children drank from this well. Jacob's dog drank from this well. You got water better than Jacob?” He says to her, “If you would have asked me I would have given you living water. Water that dwells inside of you and

springs up new life the water that you seek you will thirst again but the water that I give you will never have to thirst again because it will satisfy the deepest longings of your soul.” Can I have some of that water please? Laugh. Because she was thirsty. She knew what it was like to be thirsty. And Jesus brought his salty self to her thirsty self so that he can invite her to something greater. You know why you gotta have confidence? You know why you gotta go out and you gotta meet people and talk to people and see people who don't look like you who don't live like you who don't vote like you because you might discover there a thristiness for one who is greater than you. For one that is greater than you.

He he was willing to cross the line. Not only that he was willing to go and invite her and invite her to something beautiful. I want you to go and cross the cultural line. I want you to break the rules. I want you to break the cultural rules and then, secondly, I want you to go and I want you to break the rule of so many times our relationships (16:30) we think they need to cater they need to cater to our comforts so some of we wouldn't have made it past the second statement with the woman because we would have been offended. Well I'm a Jew we would have been up in there defending ourselves. I don't I want you to break the second rule and that's don't bring offense, bring hope. Did y'all hear what I said? I said don't bring offense. Don't be don't come don't come and be so quickly offended or defending who you are why you are what. No, no, no. Don't bring offense, bring hope. He said, “hey, I want to give you living water. I want to offer you something because clearly I know you're struggling.” The next the next will uh we'll say he says go get your husband. Well she didn't have one. **As a matter of fact she had been in one broken abusive relationship after another. It wasn't her fault the way the culture was set up against women during that time. If her first husband would have done anything inappropriate or anything he could have asked for a divorce and once she's left alone and not married she's held victimized to his sibling or another man. The men had all the power so the reason why she was in one relationship after another is because she was passed on by one man after another. Six times it had happened and Jesus was the seventh man and he had come to make her whole. (17:57) He brought hope.** He didn't bring offense he brought hope.

The other thing that I think is fascinating—he goes to a place that he ain't got no business being. He brings her hope instead of bringing her offense. In order for him to go there you know what he had to risk, and I think what's so beautiful, he risked his witness so that he might be a witness, Can I give that to you again? He risked his witness so that he might be a witness. So many are like well I don't want my good feelings and if I'm seeing with those people they may witness it. The father he says yeah no no I'm willing to risk being seen with a Samaritan so that I might reach a Samaritan. I'm willing to risk being seen by a Samaritan so that I might go and (18:53) love a Samaritan. What do you where do you need to think about being a witness more than you think about risking your witness? Is God inviting you to places, people, to friends that they don't do the stuff that you do. They ain't got a lot of good Christian Jesusy answers, words, or habits. Wher do you what do you need to allow your saltiness to rub against their thristiness? He goes there. He brings hope. And he also he also speaks boldly about what they disagree with. He speaks boldly about what they disagree with after he has shown her love and shown her saltiness. After he has been generous and offered her hope then he brings his conviction. He brings his conviction. She comes back to him after he invites her to this rough place and he says go get your husband. She says I don't have one he's like I know you have one, you have five. She's like you must be a prophet or something and then she says, well here comes the religious part—see we disagree theologically. And so he crosses a theological boundary. He breaks the rule of theology they he she says we believe y'all believe that we should worship in this mountain and y'all say we should worship in Jerusalem. He says he says listen y'all do believe the wrong thing you worship what you do not know for salvation is of the Jews. Notice the strategy. He's he's not compromising himself theologically. He's willing to call out the difference in theology. But that's the last thing he does not the first thing he does. He could have said that the first time he went there knowing y'all believe something you know do not y'all worship a God you do not know. That wasn't the first line out of his mouth. The first line out of his mouth was “give me something to drink.” “Let's talk about this water I have.” And before he even expressed the first line his first action from his from his life was I'm coming to a place that most people that look like me ignore. But I'm ere and after being there after engaging her, when the conversation happens he says yeah we disagree theologically(21:19) but I'm here to offer you something much more than a fight. **I want to offer you a faith that's not predicated on where you worship, but it's predicated on who you worship and how you worship and that's in the spirit of truth I'm inviting you to a spirit in truth worship where you can tell the truth about where you are and still experience the power of the spirit of the living God who has always longed for you and always desired you. WOW.**

(21:52) She says yeah I know that kind of Messiah I've heard of him and one day he'll come and he'll make everything right. How amazing for her then to hear him say the one you're looking for I am He.

Friends I guess I want to encourage you. Something beautiful happens when salt leaves the salt shaker and we take our saltiness to the thristiness of the world and we say, “hey there's something bigger than our differences. There's something bigger than our fights. There's something different even with our religious perspectives in worship there's a space called spirit and truth honesty and wholeness love and grace that God is calling both of us to. And that love that we've all been

longing for Jesus has come he's provided it and I'm here to share it. Remember these words. They'll know that we're the real deal. Not by our doctrine articulation, not by our ability to defend what we believe. But they'll know we are the real deal by our love—present salty love. We go there, we're present and we love. Friends, I want to get back to church but I want to stay out of the salt shaker mentality and I want us to fulfill our mission. That's what's next for His glory. Amen.