

Season 4, Episode 8: Glorious Mercy (4:1-42)

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Felicity: This podcast is sponsored by 10ofthose.com. 10ofthose.com handpick the best Christian books that point to Jesus and sell them at discounted prices. There are various books out there that helpfully give an overview of the whole book bible. But this book, Open The Bible In 30 Days by Colin Smith is the only one I've come across that walks through the story of the Bible with an unbeliever in mind. The Gospel thread runs clearly through the pages and Colin has brilliantly split the ovary into three sections. You've got. Knowing God the Father, trusting Christ's Son and living by the Spirit. Each section is then navigated through peaks and valleys and it's brilliant calling offers depth and clarity while also making it so accessible to someone who is new to the Bible. I really am just waiting for an opportunity to give it to an unbelievable friend. Go pick up your copy at 10ofthose.com.

Sarah: Welcome to Two Sisters & a cup of tea. My name is Sarah and I live in the UK and this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US. Hi.

Felicity: Hi, Sarah. Good to see you.

Sarah: You too. What are you drinking today?

Felicity: Well, I'm quite proud of the name of my tea today. It's called Golden Monkey. Isn't that the best name for a tea? It's not golden, it's actually black tea.

Sarah: With a what would you call that? Why would you call your tea that?

Felicity: I know it's an interesting one and I have realized that choosing your tea by the name doesn't mean it's necessarily going to taste that good.

Sarah: Is that the case?

Felicity: Well, it's growing on me. I got a whole pot of it, like loose leaf tea, because I got a bit over enthusiastic about the name, so don't know what to do with that, but I'll just keep on drinking. I hope that it gets nicer.

Sarah: Do you feel confident enough to share it?

Felicity: I did share it the other day and my friend's Face, she tried to be charitable towards it, but she basically asked for a Yorkshire tea.

Sarah: I think I did as well. Yeah. What about you?

Felicity: How's the biscuit choice today?

Sarah: I had that tin of oreos ore's election, so I'm still playing my way through that and I'm onto one of the white Oreos, which you said was like a custard cream months ago. It's not. I think if you have a custard.

Felicity: Cream next to it, you're probably not going to think that, but if you're kind of yearning after a custard cream, it might just fill the spots.

Sarah: Yeah, similar, but it's just not the custard cream. Second best.

Felicity: Okay, well, here's a question for you before we jump into the passage. What do you do? Have you ever had this experience when you feel like your sin is just getting in the way of you reading God's word or praying or just kind of it can just feel like, oh, I just don't want to come to God because I'm feeling my sin quite heavy. What do you do with that?

Sarah: I think we all feel it all the time, don't we? It feels like it's such a regular occurrence. I think there's a difference between the everydayness of sin and when I mess up. And I think what you do in those moments you have to preach the truth to yourself in the moment, don't you? And you have to start by saying to yourself, christ reaches out to you in mercy right now in the midst of your sin. So start praying and come to Him. Even though it feels really hard. I think that's got to be the starting point, isn't it? I think it's really hard. I think the challenge is we get into a bit of a rut and think, I just can't approach God right now. And I then create more and more distance and it's harder and harder to draw near when actually we're able to draw near with confidence because this throne is one of grace and mercy in our time of need and we just need to remember that.

Felicity: Yeah, and I think you're right about when you almost create a habit of not going to God then it just does get a whole lot harder. And in that moment we're just forgetting, aren't we, that we are always sinful. It's not that anything has changed just because I'm more aware of my sin and that God knows that already.

Sarah: And I think this is where today's passage just really speaks. It actually into that because we get this extraordinary picture of God's heart, of Jesus heart for the sinner today and let's read it, Shirley, and get stuck in. And I think hopefully maybe actually this part of John's gospel might really help us on that question as well. Right, so I'm going to start reading. We're going to split it. It's a long passage today so we're doing most of chapter four. So we're going to start with this one. We're going to split the reading and then we'll just kind of walk our way through it, shall we?

Felicity: Let's do that.

Sarah: Okay, let's do it. Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria, so he came to a town in Samaria called Sikhar, 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 the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. 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, and did also his sons and his livestock? Jesus answered, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I will give them will never thirst. Indeed, 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 I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water. He told her, Go, call your husband and come back. I have no husband, she replied. Jesus said to her, you are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true. So the woman said, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claimed that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. Women, Jesus replied, believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. Samaritans worship what you do not know, we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming, and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. The woman said, I know that Messiah called Christ is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us. Then Jesus declared, I the one speaking to you. I am he.

Felicity: 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 back to the town and said to the people, come see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah? They came out of the town and made their way towards him. Meanwhile, his disciples urged him, rabbi, eat something. But he said to them, I have food to eat that you know nothing about. Then his disciples said to each other, could someone have brought him food? My food, said Jesus, to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying? It's still four months until harvest. I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. Even now, the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying, one sows and another reaps is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work and you have reap the benefits of their labor. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. He told me everything I've ever done. 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've heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the savior of the world. Long passage, isn't it? There is no way we're going to get to the bottom of all of this.

Sarah: I think it's worth just saying that again, isn't it? That what we're doing here in this podcast is literally just starting a conversation. Like, John Piper takes four sermons to go through what we've just read. We're not going to COVID it in 1015 minutes. So I think, you know, just bear with us as we just start the conversation. As we do that. Felicity, why don't you just share what has struck you from this passage this week?

Felicity: Well, so one thing that I've been sort of thinking about is, as we've been building up to this passage, we've had this John 3:16, whoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have a ton of and that kind of whoever seems to be a word that then it applied to Nicodemus. Like, whoever if Nicodemus had got it, no problem here. The most unlikely person seems to be part of the whoever. I feel like this story really evidences the fact that whoever believes in Jesus really can have eternal life. And the thing is, this Samaritan woman is the most unlikely person because she's a Samaritan. She's not of God's people. There's a whole kind of Old Testament history there, isn't it? But essentially, Jews and Samaritans, as John tells us, do not associate because they're just not that they're not friends. Like, they're not of God's people.

Sarah: But it's not even just that, is it? It's the fact that she's a woman and the fact that she's an adulterous woman as well. Like, she's had five or six husband, five husbands. She's not married to the person she's living with at the moment. Like, it is the most extraordinary encounter that he would say, can I share your cup?

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: Can I have a drink from what you're drinking out of, like, in terms of all those kind of Old Testament ceremony laws and whatever. And that, I think, for me, that's what really struck me this week in terms of just like, he's going to the heart of for me as a reddit. Three, the theme of thirst has been the thing that's kind of been driving the passage. Three, as I've read it, she's got this thirst that she's having to quench at noon, which is kind of striking in itself, like it's going to heat of midday but no one else is around. Is that because she's living in shame? All those kind of things. He then says, Well, I can give you living water. And she's like, well, where's your bucket?

Felicity: It's a bit like Nicodemus and his chat about birth definitely gets it earthly perspective rather than heavenly.

Sarah: But as he says that, as we were talking the last episode or last two episodes about the Old Testament, seeping out there that phrase living water? For me, that took me straight back to that famous but in Jeremiah chapter two, you know, where it talks about God being a fountain of living water and yet the people had forsaken him and were kind of drinking out of cracked pots, essentially, they could not quench their thirst. And it's kind of he's just setting up that tension of, yes, she's got this kind of real thirst for actual water. But as we start to see him expose her sin and help her see her need for him, he's exposing the kind of depth of thirst in her heart. And actually, men in this instance are not quenching that deeper thirst. That's where I got tea. I don't know where did you get tea?

Felicity: As you can I think that is so helpful to think about that and to really see that drilling down. I think I had actually been struck from the I feel like we're kind of two prongs of the same thing. So you were caught by the living water aspect and I was really struck by how unlikely she is as a recipient of that. But both of those things are kind of the two sides of the same thing, aren't they? Because this unlikely person who is the adulterous or the exposure of her sin is so I just find it so reassuring that Jesus knows her and yet has chosen to sit down next to her and have this conversation with her. Because when I'm feeling sinheavy, you know, that kind of soulsick feeling and you're thinking, I just don't know whether God knew that I was going to get to this depth. No, actually, I think he did, because I read this story and I think, yes, Jesus is right there holding out this living water to someone who I love the way that she sort of talks underneath. You get this very profound, like, I have no husband. You're right. She's like the next thing she said, it's almost like a sort of a theological red herring in verse 19.

Sarah: Yeah.

Felicity: Worship suffered. Yeah. Yeah. What? Worship Jack. Where's that come from?

Sarah: I think she's kind of she's trying to deflect what he's just done, isn't she? In terms of he's just been right into the depths of her heart and told it as it is, and she's like, let's just change course. But he doesn't stop pursuing her. I think that's what's so beautiful, isn't it? That there's such intentionality here. His heart of mercy towards her is such that he keeps drawing her and keeps kind of wanting to see from different angles that he's at the center of worship and that person is at the center of her worship. Or will be because he's kind of worrying her and pursuing her is the one who treats her with such mercy and such gentleness and humility.

Felicity: The essence of the worship thing is actually it doesn't really matter where you are. Does it matter who is at the center of it? Is that straightforward? It is all about spirit and truth and that's me. That's Jesus. I am he. It's just so straightforward, isn't it? And then you get the disciples coming along and you have this whole conversation about the harvest and the readiness of people to receive Jesus, which I thought was really striking because all the way through John's gospel, we've had repeated, I think, maybe three times, people are not going to receive Jesus. They're going to reject him. They're going to reject his words. And here he's saying, do you know what? The harvest is ready, as in people are ready to receive the Messiah. And then the next thing we see I love this. Many of the Samaritans believed in him.

Sarah: Because it's from the unexpected camp, isn't it? It's the ones that you definitely think should not be worthy to receive are the ones who are absolutely in line with John the Baptist we saw last time. And seeing Christ as he is and kind of aligning, as I say, he's the Savior of the world that carts back to the Lamb of God. What is it? The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They're in John the Baptist space in the way that they're receiving Christ at this point, and the woman is at the heart of that. And it's just such a beautiful, tender moment of contrast, really, isn't it, between who we've had with Nicodemus and the people of the temple and then this?

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely. It's so humbling, isn't it? Because I don't know about you, but I don't know where I put myself in the picture, but just the very fact that the woman's testimony is at the heart of like she's been telling everyone about Jesus, come and see, come and see. John has been saying that all the way through the Gospel. But actually a sinful woman who's so exposed, so ashamed that she's gathering water at noon, her testimony is powerful enough because she's speaking of Jesus, powerful enough for a whole town to then come and kind of gather around Jesus himself. Because sometimes I can think, well, is me talking about Jesus? Is that really going to do anything because I just muck up all the time. But actually, what we see here is testimony about Jesus. To those who are ready to receive Jesus, that is a glorious life bringing because Jesus is so eager to save, isn't he? Like, the compassion, the desire, the joy in that is so evident.

Sarah: Yeah, I think you're totally right on that. But it's also recognizing the journey that she went on to be able to receive Jesus and actually where we see our own heart and our own need in that. So she needed again, I forgot coming back to the prologue and like, this image of light, but she needed Christ's exposing light into her darkness to see the reality of her thirst and to see that it's only Christ who's going to quench that thirst. And I wonder whether we just need to put ourselves there and to really just challenge ourselves in our hearts, aware where we're likely to be veering off into cracked pots and looking for that living water and other places when we need to keep coming back to what John's been saying the whole time. Look at him. Gaze at him. Gaze at the one who needs to become greater and we become less. And I think just yeah, I think I've just needed to come back to her process and journey that she's gone through to be able to then say, wow, look at him. He's a fake of the world. It's so quick and we've run out of time already, and this is so rich. And we're very aware that we're just skating over the surface in the hastiest of ways in the show notes, and we've had much longer conversations about this.

Felicity: I feel like what we've done is start six conversations in the 20 minutes. You'd like me to run with whichever one you want. Why don't I pray that we would? Yeah, let me pray. Father God, we thank you so much for this picture of the woman, by the way, thank you for how we see Jesus, the one who gives living water, springing waters of eternal life. We pray that we see Him sitting next to her and holding that out to her. And we pray you that as we

see her sin exposed, as we see her realize her need, how she received Jesus. And Father, we pray that you would give us soft hearts to Jesus, just like hers was, and pray that we'd be those who receive Jesus who rejoice in that. And as we do, when we have our eyes fixed on Him, please stop us from going anywhere else. Help us to see that eternal life, eternal waters that he holds out, and to run as fast as we can in that direction. And we pray all this in your name. Amen.

Sarah: Amen. Just to follow up on our beginning conversation about him getting in the way just before we close, I just think it's really important to say that Jesus brings that light, doesn't he, on our sin, and we don't need to fear. And so actually, we can confess it freely. But actually, maybe you need to go and talk to a friend and you just need to call a friend and say, I'm struggling with this. Can you help me come to the Lord? I think it's being vulnerable enough to call a friend and say, can you read the word with me? Can you encourage me to come back to the Lord? And just being honest in that. Yeah, sorry. That kind of came to mind as we were closing there.

Felicity: Yeah, really good. So whistle stop, as ever. Tea drunk, biscuit eaten samaritan women. Sort of vaguely not done, but on next time. Next time.

Sarah: Bye.

Felicity: Bye, everyone. Bye. Thanks for listening to this episode. It's sponsored by Tenofaud.com. Check them out for great discounted resources that point to Jesus.