

Embracing Our Limitations

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[0 : 0 0] be back again here at Cheyenne Mountain. As Matthew mentioned, my name is Andrew Goisweta. I'm one of the many RUF campus ministers, one of the many pastors that serve our college students, trying to bring the gospel to American and international colleges and universities, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. And yes, I will be up the road in Denver next week for training. And one of the things I look forward to the most about RUF training is getting to see such dear friends from all seasons of life, including one of my dearest friends, Brother Matthew.

And one of the things that I've learned from my friendship with Matthew is it is vitally important to have a friend who will ask you how they can be praying for you and will actually follow up on that and pray for you. I've also learned that it's important to have a friend who remembers your kids' names. And maybe not as important, but still very cool nonetheless. It's important to have a friend who will send you a postcard while he's on vacation. Always love getting those beautiful postcards. So here's the lesson. Make sure you have a friend like Matthew Capone. Let's close in prayer. I'm just kidding. That's not the sermon. This morning's passage does indeed come from John's gospel. So if you have a copy of God's Word, I invite you to turn with me to John chapter 4. We're going to be looking at the very famous story of Jesus meeting the woman at the well. And we're going to be looking at verses 1 through 30 of chapter 4. But really, we're going to be honing in on verses 5 through 7, as well as verses 28 through 30. But it's good to have the whole story in front of us for context. Before I read, I do want to mention that recently one of my students, a sophomore at Davidson, he asked me, Andrew, he said, Andrew, I grew up going to church. But I'll be honest, I've never read the Bible. But I want to start. Where should I begin? I love questions like that. And I don't know how you would answer my student. To be honest, there's lots of good answers to that question.

It's hard to go wrong, right? I mean, I suppose maybe don't point him to Ecclesiastes right away or Song of Solomon or something like that. But there's lots of good answers. And in that moment, I said to him, why don't you start with the gospel of John? And the reason that I did that is because John is crystal clear about his reason for writing this book. And that reason is, well, it's very much like that banner that Ted Lasso puts over the door of his office in the locker room to AFC Richmond. You might recall, it's that yellow sign with those blue letters, one word, believe. And that, that is John's message to us and to anyone who would read his gospel account. In particular, John wants us to know that these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you might have life in his name. And so as we come to John chapter four, and I'd invite you to imagine you've been reading along in John's gospel, you've been reading the first three chapters. And if that's your, if that's the case, as you're reading chapters one, two, and three, and you come to chapter four, you're going to notice that John is beating the drum of Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is God in the flesh. He is the object of our faith. He is the entryway into the kingdom of God, into heaven. He is the Savior of the world. Believe in him. That's the drum that John has been beating. And so as we come to John four, we hear that message again, but we also hear a slightly different note too. It's a bit surprising to us. What note is that? I'd invite you to listen for it as I read John chapter four out loud for us. So this is God's word for us this morning, beginning in verse one. Now, when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples, he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria.

[4 : 3 9] So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son, Joseph. Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, give me a drink. For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan

woman said to him, how is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered her, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. The woman said to him, sir, you've got nothing to draw water with and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?

Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself as did his sons and his livestock. Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. The woman said to him, sir, give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.

Jesus said to her, go call your husband and come here. The woman answered him, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, you are right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true. The woman said to him, sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. Jesus said to her, woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews, but the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming. He who is called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he. Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, what do you seek or why are you talking with her? So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? They went out of the town and were coming to him. Grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

[8 : 02] Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we ask that your word would not return to you empty this morning. We ask that it would accomplish the purpose for which you send it. And so would you be true to your promise? Would you accomplish your purposes in us and among us this morning? Would you do so through your word and by your Holy Spirit? We ask these things in Jesus's name.

Amen. Well, if you are like me and you like taking notes during sermons, keeping up with an outline, I've got a very straightforward outline for you this morning. I've got three points. First, I want us to see that Jesus embraced our limitations. Second, I want us to ask why. Why did Jesus embrace our limitations?

And then third and finally, I want us to ask what difference does any of this make to our lives here and now? So let's just jump in together. First, I want us to see that Jesus embraced our limitations. Would you go and look back with me at the first seven verses of our passage? You know, this story begins with Jesus trying to get from the land of Judea in the south up to Galilee in the north.

And in order to do so, verse 4 says that he had to pass through the region of Samaria. Now, today, if you were going to make that journey by car or by bus, that whole trip from Judea to Galilee would probably only take you roughly two hours. But for Jesus and his disciples, who didn't have a car, didn't have a bus, who were traveling by foot over roads and paths that were not nicely paved, right, no asphalt, in this hot and arid Mediterranean climate, it would have taken them two, but more likely three days to make that entire journey. You know, it would have been like walking from the northern city limits of the springs to the southern city limits of Fort Collins, if you can imagine that.

[10 : 20] And so, with that distance, we're not too, too surprised when we read in verses 5 and 6 that Jesus was so wearied and tired and worn out from that journey by foot that he had to stop at the halfway point in the town of Sychar to sit down and rest by this well.

If you look at verse 7, it shows us that Jesus was so thirsty, he was thirsty enough to ask for a drink of water from a Samaritan woman. Now, especially if you've heard this story before, and I'm guessing that many of you have, none of these details really surprise us. None of them really catch us off guard.

But they should. Because again, what John is revealing to us is that in Jesus, who is God, right, 100% God, in Jesus, God got wearied. God got tired. God got worn out. In Jesus, the preexistent

word, the logos, the one through whom and by whom all things were made, the great I am, the God of the entire universe, God of the entire universe, grew thirsty. In Jesus, Yahweh had to stop and rest a while.

Y'all, when you stop and think of it, that's crazy. That's mind-blowing. Jesus, though he was fully God, didn't flee his physical needs and limitations. He embraced them. That's a big deal.

So, I'd invite you to think about it this way. I'm sure many of you here have played a video game before, right? They're everywhere, right? We've played video games before, and I'm sure that some of you have probably played a video game or two that has these cheat codes built into them, right? [12:27] So, the developers coded in an opportunity for you as a gamer to hit a few buttons and turn on some cheat codes, right? And I'm guessing there's a smattering of you who maybe have played a video game with a certain very particular type of cheat code that makes you invincible while you're playing.

And those cheat codes are often referred to as God mode. So, imagine you're working through this video game. You get to this level that you just can't quite finish, or you come up against this, you know, this big, huge boss, and you can't defeat the boss. And so, you try as you may, you know, your health levels go down, your energy level goes down, you keep dying, you can't win. You might be tempted to hit those buttons and turn on God mode. Fully restore in an instant all your health, all your energy, you know, whoop. And not only that, make yourself invincible so that in a second, you can beat that boss, you can accomplish that level and move on to the next. It's so efficient, right? You can beat that game in record time if you turn on God mode. Why am I talking about video games? Why am I talking about cheat codes? Here's why. I want you to consider that Jesus, in a sense, had all the cheat codes to life, even and including God mode. And yet, where you or I might be tempted to cheat and turn on God mode, here we see that Jesus didn't. He didn't take the shortcuts. I mean, think about it. Jesus, again, being God, could have easily just teleported himself and the disciples from Judea and the South up to Galilee, right? That's not beyond his ability, the God of the universe. Or maybe you're thinking, okay, that's extreme. How about this? I mean, when he got tired and hungry and thirsty, Jesus could have easily called down bread, milk, honey, water, right from the heavens, and fed himself and the disciples.

That's not beyond reason. And yet, Jesus didn't do that. Instead, he set out on this 120-mile journey through desert, over and down through hills and valleys, right? He didn't use his divine power. He embraced his human limitations. Why did Jesus do that? Why did he resist the convenience, the efficiency of being fully God, and instead embrace the inconvenience and inefficiency of being fully human? Why did he do that? This brings us to our second question. Not only do I want us to see that Jesus embraced our limitations, I want us to ask why. Why did Jesus embrace our humanity, our limitations in this way? And the answer that the text gives us is that had Jesus not embraced our limitations, had he not embraced his own human limitations, many would have missed out on salvation. Many would not have been saved.

[15:53] I mean, let's revisit the story together. I mean, remember, it begins with Jesus meeting this woman at the well. Now, this woman didn't go to the well looking for God, necessarily. She went looking to draw water, right? That's what the text says. And she did so quietly by herself. You know, in those days, women would typically go together in the early morning before the heat of the day to draw water.

Not only did they not want to be out there in the scorching sun, but they wanted to go as a group to protect themselves against wild animals or men who wanted to harm them, right? So they would usually go in the very early morning before the sun rose. But here we see this woman who goes alone to the well at the sixth hour, which would have been noon. Why?

Most likely, it was because she was a social outcast due to her reputation. I mean, she went alone in order to avoid the judgment and the scorn and just those staring eyes from the other ladies in town, right? From the glances of other women.

And so she goes to the well alone by herself, but then she meets Jesus. And Jesus offers her living water, a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

And he goes on to tell her in her own words, all that she ever did, thus revealing himself to truly be the Messiah, the Christ. And so what does this woman do? Look again at verses 28 and 29.

[17:47] This woman, she actually leaves her water jar at the well. That's an interesting little detail that John includes for us, isn't it? I mean, the whole reason she went out there in the first place was

to draw water. And she leaves the water which she went for. She leaves it there at the well, maybe because she found something better, right? And she goes back into town and invites the town, the townspeople, the very people she was trying to avoid by going by herself to the well at noon. She invites the townspeople to come out and to meet Jesus. And they did. I mean, verse 30 says that they went out of the town and they were coming to him. Now, I didn't read later in verse 39, but if you have a Bible, you can look there with me. That says, many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony.

Here's the point. Had Jesus not been a human being with human limitations, or had Jesus decided to put aside his humanity out of convenience or expediency, these people of Samaria would not have been saved.

Instead, Jesus chose the inconvenience. He chose the discomfort. He chose the fatigue to save these Samaritans. But y'all, it goes beyond that. It's not just first century Samaritans that would have missed out on salvation had Jesus not embraced his humanity. You and I would have missed out on salvation as well. Jesus had to be a man in order to save humanity. And this is exactly what we celebrate during Advent and Christmas. And this is precisely what sets Christianity apart from every other religion, every other worldview, every other belief system. Because all other faiths, all other belief systems, they teach that we need to either deny or transcend our humanity in order to be saved.

Think about it. We're told you need to acquire that hidden secret knowledge and be on the inside. Or you need to exercise extreme self-denial and asceticism. Or you need to completely empty yourself of worldly desires and attachments. Or you need to perform this long list of religious rites and rituals.

Or you need to develop and maintain exemplary morals and virtues. Or you need to transcend your background and your biology and determine for yourself who you truly are.

[20 : 39] In all these examples, you escape, you transcend your humanity, your limitations, your finiteness in order to be saved.

But this is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches it's not your humanity that's the problem, but your sin.

Jesus did not come to save you from your humanity. He came to save you from the sin that mars your humanity. This is why the Bible says that Jesus had to be made like us in every way except for sin.

You see, he entered our humanity in order to restore our humanity. To affirm and restore the dignity that we were originally created with.

And to put away all of our sin that defaces that created dignity. Let me use this image. We are all, every one of us, like broken mirrors.

[21 : 40] Imperfectly reflecting the image of God, our creator. Jesus came to put those broken pieces back together again. That we might better reflect God in all his goodness and grace and mercy and truth.

That's exactly what Jesus did for the woman at the well. And that's what he does for everyone and anyone who acknowledges him as the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one of God.

And so before we move on to our last point, let me just take a second and summarize what we've been talking about so far. All other religions, even works-based Christianity, whether that takes on a progressive flavor or a conservative flavor, but all other religions put the emphasis on our great search for God.

Or maybe they don't call it God, our great search for truth or fulfillment or enlightenment or the good life. But it's all about our striving, our searching, right?

Only Christ-centered, biblical Christianity puts the emphasis on God's great search for us. It's right here in John chapter 4.

[22 : 58] Because in John chapter 4, we see that God, through Jesus, a first-century Jewish carpenter from Nazareth, in Jesus, God went looking for a notorious Samaritan woman and her idolatrous Samaritan neighbors.

And in Jesus, God is looking for notorious, idolatrous men and women, boys and girls, like you and like me.

So this naturally brings us to our last point. What difference does any of this make to our day-to-day lives? I just want to leave us with two key takeaways.

The first key takeaway is this. Matter matters. Matter matters. Maybe you've heard people say things along the lines of, the real you is not who you are on the outside, but who you are on the inside.

Or maybe you've heard someone say, you don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body. And these are kind of popular sentiments today.

[24 : 17] Maybe best reflected by the words of a diminutive green Jedi master spoken to, you know, his Pottawana apprentice, Luke Skywalker, in The Empire Strikes Back.

And I'm not going to do my Yoda voice. Sorry to disappoint. But in The Empire Strikes Back, while Yoda is training Luke, he says to Luke, luminous beings are we, not this crude matter.

Remember that? Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. Look, according to God's word, all of these expressions, all these sentiments, they only get it half right.

Yes, you are who you are on the inside. Yes, you are a soul. Yes, in a sense, you are a luminous being.

But you're also this crude matter. you are also a body. That's who you are. You are also who you are on the outside.

[25 : 22] One of Matthews and mine, one of our seminary professors, he would put it this way. He would say, as a human being, you are a psychosomatic unity. He's not calling you crazy.

He's not calling you psycho. But what he's saying is, you're a mind-body nexus. You're a psychosomatic unity. You're a soul-body unity.

People, or even little green Jedi masters, who put these sharp lines between the spiritual and the physical, they take their cues more so from platonic dualism than the Bible, than God's word.

Now, someone might want to push back on me a little bit here, right? Because you're thinking, wait a second, Andrew, doesn't the Bible teach that we are, that human beings are two distinct, two separate parts?

Maybe you're thinking, wait a second, didn't Jesus say to the thief on the cross, the dying thief on the cross, today, you will be with me in paradise? How is that going to happen if his body stays on the cross, right?

[26 : 33] The thief, that is, right? Doesn't that suggest two separate parts? Or maybe you're thinking, didn't the Apostle Paul say that he would rather be absent from the body to be present with the Lord, that that was better, right?

Well done. You're remembering Scripture. I applaud that. But here, if that's where your mind is, let me just say this as a loving response. Be careful about basing your argument about the nature of being human on death.

Death is inherently unnatural and abnormal. Right? Death is an intruder into God's good world. Death is the enemy. The enemy that Christ came to destroy, right? And so death separates what was never meant to be separated. And so instead of taking your cue from death, I'd invite you to take your cue from creation and the new creation in Christ.

Because when you look at creation and when you look at the new creation in Jesus, what do you see? Let me ask it this way. How was Jesus raised? Was he raised just a spirit?

[27 : 50] No. I mean, Jesus was raised a whole man, a glorified body, right? As the first fruits of our resurrection.

I mean, his glorified body is the first fruits of our future glorified bodies. Right? And so what we do in, with, and to our bodies, it matters to God.

Because he loves us and we belong to him. And the Apostle Paul says, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.

So glorify God in your body. And so that's the first takeaway this morning is matter matters. Matter matters. And then second and finally, our second and last takeaway is that we need to embrace our need.

So matter matters and we need to embrace our need. Let's be honest, we hate to feel needy. Don't we? I mean, there's a former campus minister, I'll quote him as saying this.

[29 : 05] He says, the word needy, he says needy is like the sweatiest, clammiest word in the entire English language. Like, you're just so needy. If someone calls you needy, it's like one of the worst insults there is, right?

Like, he is so needy. Oof. Oh, we hate that. We hate to feel needy. We like to feel capable. Right? We like to feel independent, not dependent.

But Jesus, we see here in John 4, Jesus experienced need. And I say this with reverence for our Savior, but Jesus was needy. He needed rest.

He needed food and water. He needed times of solitude where he'd withdraw from the crowds, right? He needed to be in his father's house. He needed to be about his father's work.

I would argue that Jesus was the neediest human being there ever was. If you don't believe me, think about some of his own words.

[30 : 10] I mean, our Savior said, I can do nothing on my own. I can only do what I see my father doing. Imagine you went out to lunch after this, assuming that the restaurants were still open with the snow, and you overheard an adult male in his 30s say out loud publicly, I can do nothing on my own.

I can only see what, I can only do what I see my father doing. If you saw that at a restaurant today, you would think, man, this guy needs to grow up. Like, he needs to go and learn to be a fully functioning, you know, adult human being, independent, right?

And yet, this is precisely what Jesus said. So I just want to highlight for us that the difference between us and Jesus is that Jesus was never ashamed of his need.

He never repented of his complete and utter dependence upon his heavenly father. He never tried to hide or flee from his natural human limitations.

And so, brothers and sisters, I just want to remind us that we do not need to repent of our need, of our limitations, of our finiteness.

[31 : 31] We don't need to repent of our inability to be everywhere and do everything and know everything. Because Jesus did not come to make us more than human.

He came to make us more human. And to be a human is to be in need. So would you embrace your need?

Would you embrace your limitations? As one author puts it, and I'll end with this, it's actually a quote in the back of your bulletin. He says, the Christian life and ministry is an apprenticeship with Jesus in recovering our humanity.

Did you hear that? Christian life is an apprenticeship with Jesus in recovering our humanity and through his spirit helping our neighbors to do the same. And so I'd invite you this morning, apprentice with Jesus.

Embrace your limitations. Embrace your humanity. And go and help others do the same. Would you pray with me?

[32 : 52] Lord Jesus, we thank you for, in the fullness of time, for emptying yourself and taking the form of a servant, for entering your own creation as a child, a child who needed to be fed, a child who needed changing, a child who needed to learn to walk and talk.

That was not beneath you. Man, would help me to embrace my need. Help us, help my brothers and sisters in this room to embrace our need.

Help us to realize that you're on a mission to make us more, not less, dependent upon you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I pray that you would do that this morning. I pray that you would do that through this Advent season. As we look back, not just towards your first coming as a human, but we look forward to your second coming as a glorified human.

Lord, fill us with hope and longing as we wait for you. I pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.