**Thesis:** Sin is like an infection. If it’s not dealt with, it will only continue to grow and consume. Once we let sin in, its natural tendency is to spread. What starts as a small compromise leads to another larger one.

But the apostle John gives us this hope in 1 John 1:8 “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

The first step to eradicating sin in our lives is confessing it to the One who can heal us of it.

**Introduction:** This is The Jesus Podcast, gospel stories told with cinematic quality and careful reflection. I’m Zak, your host from Pray.com. I’m excited to be back with another story of how Jesus meets, cares for, and loves the outcast.

**Context:** What we will find in today’s story is probably relatable to most of us: The pains of loneliness and the struggle to feel connected to others. We’ll be introduced to Zemira, better known as “the woman at the well”.

In the heat of the day, Zemira goes to the city well to draw water for her daily needs. But unlike the other women who would go to the well to draw water together, she decides to go alone. It’s clear that while Zemira may have chosen to go alone, she never wanted a life of loneliness.

Because of her life trapped in sin, she would rather separate herself from others than endure their mockery and judgment. Rather than fight it, she simply endures the words of hate, knowing she has no arguments against them. But Zermira will find herself quite surprised when Jesus stumbles upon her and strikes up a conversation with a simple request. As it often is with Jesus, there was much more He wanted to accomplish than just getting a drink from the well.

**Message:** The Woman at the Well is one of the most well-known encounters Jesus has with an outcast. What starts as a seemingly nonchalant moment of Jesus looking for respite from the day's heat and traveling quickly turns into one of the most pivotal moments in His ministry.

When Jesus hears that He’s gaining unfavorable notice from the Pharisees in Judea, He and His disciples begin the journey back to Galilee. To the disciples' surprise, Jesus chooses to go the most direct route through Samaria. For centuries the Jews had grown to despise the Samaritans, viewing them as “half-breeds” who had integrated and expanded as a people with non-Jews. Their disdain went so far that when the need to travel through the area arose, they would take a longer route, crossing the Jordan River, rather than stoop so low as to be seen in Samaria and associate with the people there. Imagine you’re from California going to Texas, and you hate people from Arizona so much that you’re willing to go up and through the Rocky Mountains to avoid them.

Suffice it to say, it was expected that Jews would avoid any interaction with Samaritans.

Yet, as the disciples go into town to find food, here is Jesus, intentionally addressing the woman at the well. While it may not seem like much at first, even Jesus’ opening request would cause alarm for the people of His day. Not only was He talking with a woman and a Samaritan, He was asking her for a favor - a drink of water. Because He had nothing to draw from the well and no vessel to drink from, the implication is that He was willing to drink from one of hers. But it was understood by any good Jew that you wouldn’t even share a dish with a Samaritan.

But Jesus didn’t play by the same rules. Jesus knew the heart of the Father and understood that man-made religiosity rarely accomplished anything good. Almost always, it imposed on the work the Father desired to do. One of the main things it hindered was His determination to reach people - especially the lost and the lonely of the world. So it’s not surprising that Jesus would not only be willing to talk with Zemira, but purposefully put Himself in a situation that allowed Him to do so.

Zermira had found herself deep in her sin, pulling her away from any sense of meaningful or helpful community. This is the natural inclination of many people when faced with their sin. We even see this with the original sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3. After they sin against God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their immediate instinct is to hide from God. To pull away from the community they once shared with Him.

While they couldn’t escape Him, they removed themselves from His presence. And this is the pattern we often find ourselves in.

We sin, and we draw back. We sin again, and we draw back some more. And this continues until we find ourselves isolated and alone. Being stuck in our feelings of worthlessness can be one of the loneliest places we can find ourselves in. We can be surrounded by the largest of crowds and still feel completely alone. And oftentimes, when we fall into a deep or long enough pattern of sin, we trick ourselves into thinking we don’t deserve to break free from that life. We convince ourselves that our consequence should be to be stuck in that place forever, creating an endless cycle.

Loneliness birthed from this place can be a nasty struggle. Once we feel separated from others, it can be both hard to try to build relationships as well as hard to feel as though the efforts of others to connect with us are genuine.

We see this with Zemira. For years, she’s put up walls around herself to protect herself from the words of others, and as soon as someone comes along to have a pleasant conversation with her, she puts up her guard when the gentle words of Jesus hit her ears for the first time.

In a technical sense, it’s easier for us to be lonely than to find ways to change it. Relationships in any form can be difficult to find, grow, and maintain, so we often learn to settle for life on our own. While life alone may be easier in many senses, it certainly isn’t better for us.

Christ comes to break our cycles of sin and loneliness and sets us on a new path down the road of redemption, just as He did for the woman at the well. We were created to be in a community. Community with God and community with others. But it requires that we take leaps of faith. It requires some level of openness. It calls us to trust in Him and confess that we need to be saved from our sins. It demands that we learn to be vulnerable with others and invest in building strong relationships.

It sounds complicated at first, but over time, we’ll find that living in submission to Christ and building community with others is less daunting than we may have thought initially. The more we invest in these relationships, the easier they tend to become, and the more joy we’ll find in them.

My wife and I were new to a city, without many friends and deep relationships. On top of that, we were new parents. For a while, it was easier to fold into ourselves and isolate. But eventually, we felt a deep need for community. This need sparked action in us. We chose to be vulnerable and reach out to people. We chose to be uncomfortable and hosted others in our home. We decided that the strenuous and awkward effort of building community was worth it. The pain of isolation was worse than the pain of reaching out.

It’s refreshing to feel known.

Something extraordinary about our relationship with Jesus is that He can relate to us on every human level because He chose to become like us. He entered into humanity to experience life in the same ways we do. This means that He understands our loneliness beyond an intellectual level. He has experienced it just as we have and wants to take those feelings from us. So much so that He calls us His friends. People He cares for. People He wants to be around. People He loves with the most profound sense of love.

The story of the Woman at the Well is a key point in Jesus’ ministry as this was the time Jesus directly acknowledges that He was the Messiah. He publicly declares that He is the Savior who has come to take away the sins of the world and bring us back to God. If you’re feeling trapped in sin or loneliness, know that Jesus sees you, loves you, and wants you. If you put your faith in Him today, you will belong to Him forever.