

*John 4:5-42*

5 So (Jesus) came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. 7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) [29] 10 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." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet.

20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you [30] say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father

seeks such as these to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” 26 Jesus said to her, “I am he, [31] the one who is speaking to you.”

27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” 28 Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29 “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, [32] can he?” 30 They left the city and were on their way to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” 32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” 33 So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” 34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35 Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. 36 The reaper is already receiving [33] wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37 For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

*John 4:5-42, 2017*

One of the things I notice about this story is how easy it is to watch what goes on as if you were watching a movie

rather than put yourself in the place of the woman who meets Jesus at the well.

At noon the well is usually deserted. She goes there probably expecting to be alone and so avoid the neglect or the telling glances she would receive from the other women.

It would be easier to be invisible.

Have any of you ever felt invisible?

I remember when our son Sean came home from school upset one day and he didn't want to go back to school anymore, and he said to me, "Dad I feel invisible."

It broke my heart that he was experiencing that isolation and loneliness even while he was with so many other kids at school every day.

In that community this is what the woman would experience.

This woman lives in a town served by a well that carries so much heritage for not just the Jewish people, but also the Samaritans.

Their heritage is in the long line of descendents that come from Abraham.

This was Jacob's well. She knows that story. He had bought the land and then finally passed it on to Joseph.

Joseph's bones were buried not too far away.

Yet the woman feels so alienated from all of that it is as if she

doesn't have a place there, she doesn't belong,  
simply because of the life she has lived.

This woman has had 5 husbands and is living with and is dependent on another man now who wont marry her.

We don't know what happened to them.

Some or all may have died, or just abandoned her.

Regardless of the situation in that day having had more than one husband would have stigmatized her in the community,

so just imagine what she faced having had 5.

But as she approaches the well there is man sitting there. She doesn't recognize him, doesn't know him.

She hopes he will leave her alone.

But this random meeting and what happens here becomes something far different from what the woman expects.

This man is different.

He speaks to her. He initiates the conversation. Yes he makes a request of her, "Give me a drink."

But in those very words Jesus does two things.

First he opens up his vulnerability.

He has been walking for a long time and is tired and thirsty.

Any time a person shows their need they become vulnerable.

In response the woman neither simply grants his request nor ignores it,

but shares what might be her surprise and discomfort.

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”

This in part invites a deeper conversation.

Secondly Jesus violates all the social norms of the day, again opening himself to some level of vulnerability.

He is a man

She a woman

He is Jewish

She a Samaritan

He has some status as a  
respected leader

She has no status or standing  
in the community

He doesn't stop there.

Jesus doesn't just open a conversation with her, he sees her.

He sees her marital history and present living arrangement,

but in describing that there is no condemnation but a simple recognition that she has lived a tragic and difficult life.

There is no mention of forgiveness, nor a call to repentance.

Jesus meets her right where she is. He is present with her.

This allows their conversation to continue.

“Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem...I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”

26 Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

The woman has asked a question that goes beyond just where

the correct place to worship is.

She is asking about where it is that God dwells. Where is God present?

In that day one would envision the altar at the Temple in Jerusalem as being that place.

Jesus' response goes well beyond just dealing with that issue.

He is moving this woman toward understanding who he is, and toward belief, toward faith.

In these words spoken between the two this woman is transformed. Her shame is taken away. Her life is changed.

This woman leaves her bucket behind and goes off and tells the people in the city what has happened,

and raises the question, "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

She invites all to come and see. By the power of this conversation she is set free from all the things of her life that bind her,

that held her back from being the person God created her to be.

She now knows that she has been in the very presence of God come to the earth as Messiah.

The gospel is fulfilled for her!

Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

Where has God come to dwell with you? Where is God present for you?

Where are you able to carry on the conversation you need to have with God,

the conversation that takes away your shame and heals your soul?

Where can you ask the tough questions, hear the tough answers,

hear the words of truth and grace?

Where is God present with you?

Last week in our gospel lesson Jesus was with Nicodemus in the dark of night because he didn't want anyone to know he was meeting with him,

he was afraid.

This week the woman meets him at the well in broad daylight, but at noon when no one else would be there.

Both of these bible characters had good reason to not be with Jesus but he comes, he sees them, he knows what they need, he gives to them.

Is God with you in secret because you are ashamed or embarrassed about your relationship with him?

Is God with you when you don't think you are worthy of God's presence because to your life circumstance or past,

When you are ashamed?

Is God with you in your doubt, your wondering and fear?

I say, just as Jesus was with Nicodemus and the woman at the well, he is with you even when he sees your life, your history, your past, your sin, your heart ache.

In the gospel of John sin is not your bad behavior. Sin is unbelief.

Not believing in Jesus is sin.

Not believing that Jesus is with you, not believing Jesus loves you, not believing Jesus can heal you,

not believing that Jesus can transform your life is sin.

As a result of this woman's transformation many others were able to experience the powerful presence of Jesus.

41 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

In his presence John 3:16-17 is fulfilled.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that all who believed in him might not perish but have eternal life. In deed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

There is mercy and grace for you in the way Jesus looks at you and sees you.

Jesus comes. He is present even here with you in this place, in this moment;

believe.

