



14 PENTECOST  
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1ST, MARSHALL  
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Psalm 42:1-8, 11; John 4:1-30, 39-42

*The Woman at the Well*

*Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John” <sup>2</sup>—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—<sup>3</sup> he left Judea and started back to Galilee. <sup>4</sup> But he had to go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup> A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> 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.) <sup>10</sup> 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.” <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” <sup>15</sup> 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.”

I love this story about Jesus’ encounter with the *woman in Samaria*. At heart, it’s a beautiful human interest story where Jesus and this nameless woman establish an incredible connection. But along with that, and specifically because of her, this is the first community of people to embrace Jesus as the Messiah, God’s Chosen, the Christ.

The Lord is tired from travelling, and takes a seat next to a well during the hottest part of the day. A local woman comes to draw water and he asks her for a drink. Hospitality in the desert – no big deal – everything’s cool...or is it? In fact, we learn very quickly that in this simple-seeming scene, Jesus has just jumped with both feet on some tightly scripted taboos...and here’s the first clue:

In verse 4, the author tells us that *Jesus had to go through Samaria*. That’s an interesting choice of words, isn’t? The Lord *had to go through Samaria...?*

In fact, a good Jewish person in those days had to NOT go through Samaria, would walk miles out of the way to AVOID going through Samaria, would not be caught dead setting one foot in that forsaken frontier flatland called SAMARIA.

So right out of the gate, we wonder: **Why** did Jesus *have to go through Samaria???*

Well, let’s start with who these Samaritans are...and why they’re so hated by the Jews...

Centuries before, there had been a split in the kingdom, much like our country in the Civil war – except their breakup was permanent. Eventually the northern kingdom was defeated in battle. The conquering nation kept peace in these areas by bringing in people from other countries, making them intermarry and mixing-up their religions. The **internal** effect was to ruin any power base the locals might have hoped to hold on to.

The **external** effect was to create a huge barrier between the area of Samaria in the north, and the Jewish people in the south. The Jews felt that they were far and away superior – religiously, morally and racially – to these former cousins in the north, these loathsome Samaritans...

So Jesus breaks a few significant social barriers when he rests his weary bones and asks this woman for a drink. Two are named by the woman in verse 9:

<sup>9</sup> *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.)*

1. Gender: Male vs. Female
2. Nationality: Jew vs. Samaritan

Yet in spite of the fact that they should have had nothing to do with each other, they end up engaged in a beautiful discussion about water and thirst, both physical and spiritual. You wonder if she gets what he means when in v. 14 he says, *The water that I will give will become...a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.*

Her plea at the end of this section, *Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water...* seems almost more a cry from her soul than from her parched lips.

So let's look for the other two barriers that Jesus breaks apart as we read the next section of the story: [***Kitsi reads John 4:16-26***]

<sup>16</sup> *Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.”* <sup>17</sup> *The woman answered him, “I have no husband.”* *Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”* <sup>19</sup> *The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet.”* <sup>20</sup> *Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”* <sup>21</sup> *Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”* <sup>22</sup> *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* <sup>23</sup> *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.* <sup>24</sup> *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.* <sup>25</sup> *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.”* <sup>26</sup> *Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”*

What are the other two barriers that Jesus breaks apart?

3. Respectability: Man of God vs. Woman’s painful past
4. Spirituality Jew (pure) vs. Samaritan (corrupted)

So not only is Jesus’ conversation partner a **woman** and a **Samaritan** whose **religion** is **corrupted**, but she’s a woman with a very **painful past** as well. There’s no explanation for her string of 5+ husbands, nor is there any condemnation from the Lord for her life choices.

In fact – his intimate knowledge of her life seems to open up that spiritual thirst he’d tapped into earlier. They share a little verbal sparring about who has the better vision of the truth about God – the Jews or the Samaritans.

And then the woman makes her startling confession that she is waiting for the Messiah – this **Samaritan woman**, whose **religion** is **corrupted**, and whose **life** has been a **train wreck** – **she** is living with the hope that one day, the Messiah will come – and make life better for all people.

Then Jesus makes his **own** startling confession: *I am he, the one who is speaking to you.* The **Son of God** reveals **himself** – his **true identity**, for the very first time, to a woman, who is a Samaritan, with a corrupted religion and a troubled past...**WHY?? WHY HER? WHY HERE?**

Listen to this final section of the story now and take a guess at the answer to those questions: ***Why her? and Why here?***

*<sup>27</sup> 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?” <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” <sup>30</sup> They left the city and were on their way to him.*

*<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> 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.”*

**So what’s your answer: what is so important about this woman that Jesus would risk the condemnation of EVERYONE to speak with her?**

I think Jesus was there for two reasons. The first is **pastoral**: I’m convinced that he spoke with this woman to help her find a sense of *peace that passes all understanding*, to give her a sip from that spring of water gushing up to eternal life –

- a sense of **hope** where she had known such hopelessness,
- a sense of **security** where her life had seen such **chaos**,
- and the gift of **faith** in the Living God to fulfill her ancestral **stories**.

**But what else was Jesus after?** Her whole community!

Whose word would be better received,  
whose testimony would be greater weighed,

whose witness would have a better effect on those townspeople than this woman with a painful past? No one else.

Not the city administrator, not the chief of police, not the sheriff of the county, and certainly not the local clergyperson, right? It was this woman – **she** was the right person for the job of bringing many people of the town to faith in Jesus Christ. The very first apostle, the very first one sent to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

The **right** person...

I love the hockey movie called Miracle about the 1980 US Olympic team that won it all. Herb Brooks, former coach of the Minnesota Gophers, was offered the job and came into it with a crystal clear vision of how he wanted to proceed.

Thousands and thousands of dollars had been spent flying the country's best amateur skaters to Colorado Springs for a week of tryouts. The Olympic Committee's plan was to evaluate each hockey player and come up a list of the best skaters that would form the Olympic team...

But Herb had a different plan...

At the end of the **first** day of tryouts, Coach Brooks presents his list of the kids who would form the team to his assistant coach. He looks at the names and says, ***But Herb, you've left off some of the best players in the country!***

And to that Herb replies: *I don't want the **best** players – I want the **right** players.* And right they were.

It looks like Coach Brooks might have stolen that idea from Jesus. Look at the people the Lord called to be his disciples: one would betray him,

another would deny him, and all of them would abandon him...at the cross. Were they the best people in the world? Certainly not. Yet they proved to be the right ones, for eventually they would cast aside their fears, and let go of their guilt, and take the good news of Jesus Christ to all the world.

Perhaps they were inspired by this Samaritan woman who had done the same after only one conversation with the Lord, when she proved to be the right person for the job. In the same way, the disciples proved to be the right people for their jobs. Now the question is, how are YOU proving to be the right person for the job God has given you?

Let me know how you answer that question. Thanks be to God. Amen.