

4 PENTECOST  
JUNE 11/12, 2016

FIRST, MARSHALL  
PASTOR SCOTT FULLER

WOMAN AT THE WELL  
*Psalm 139:1-18; John 4:5-30, 39-42*

*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.*

***Step 1:*** *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol –  
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

***Step 2:*** *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

***Step 3:*** *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God  
as we understood God.*



I want you to think about that woman from our Gospel story for today. As you heard or read, she has a significant number of struggles in her life. And in many ways, she appears to be the least likely candidate to ever consider *turning her life over to the care of God*.

Yet in other ways, she's the perfect example of someone that Jesus would pursue...in his quest to bring hope to those who are powerless, sanity to those whose lives are out of control, and serenity to those whose spirits are seeking a refuge in the promises of a loving God.

Unfortunately, in **those** days, the *first strike* against the woman is the simple fact that she's...a woman. Yet, maybe it's not so odd when you consider that women in our own democratically advanced country were still not able to vote less than a hundred years ago (1919).

The only other thing we know about her when she first arrives at the well is that she's a woman of **Samaria**, the country in which the well is located. But Samaria is not just any other country, and the Samaritans, the folks who live in that land, are not just any other people. In fact, Jews and Samaritans had been **one** people for 1,000 years or so – from the time of Abraham and Sarah through the reign of King Solomon.

In the political strife that followed the king's death, the Northern Kingdom was conquered, and the Jews living there were forced to accept the worship of other gods, in addition to the One True God.

The Jews in the Southern Kingdom remained *free* for a time politically, and *pure* theologically (or so they claimed!). That's why they **despised** these shirt-tail relatives who, they believed, had compromised their faith, had **sold out**, had *abandoned* the 1st Commandment of God's Holy Law: ***I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods.***

It kinda reminds me of that old t.v. commercial for *Tareyton* cigarettes (*I know* – that's how old I am!!!). A handsome man or beautiful woman would be looking sideways toward the camera, talking about – I can't remember – how some people give in too easily, or something.

When they turned to **face** the camera, we'd see that their hidden eye would be blackened. Then the actors would smile confidently and declare, *I'd rather fight than switch*. The Jews liked to believe that they had *fought*, while those dirty Samaritans, had too easily *switched*.

The woman was a Samaritan, *strike #2*.

The fact that she comes to draw water from the well in the heat of the mid-day sun...tells us that something else is terribly wrong in her life. The best time to draw water is early in the morning, while the dew is still cool on the ground, well before the sun turns the sand and the wind into a natural convection oven.

So a pecking order stands at the well as well: those draw the water first who are connected to the righteous and the rich. Next in line are the hard-working and the pious. Then come the honest poor. And last to be allowed access to the water are those who are the *undesirables* – people who have *failed*...at life (according to the standards of the village!).

Such is the lot of the woman we meet. She has no one to call friend...because no one in the village would ever dream of calling **her** friend, as we quickly discover through her conversation with Jesus.

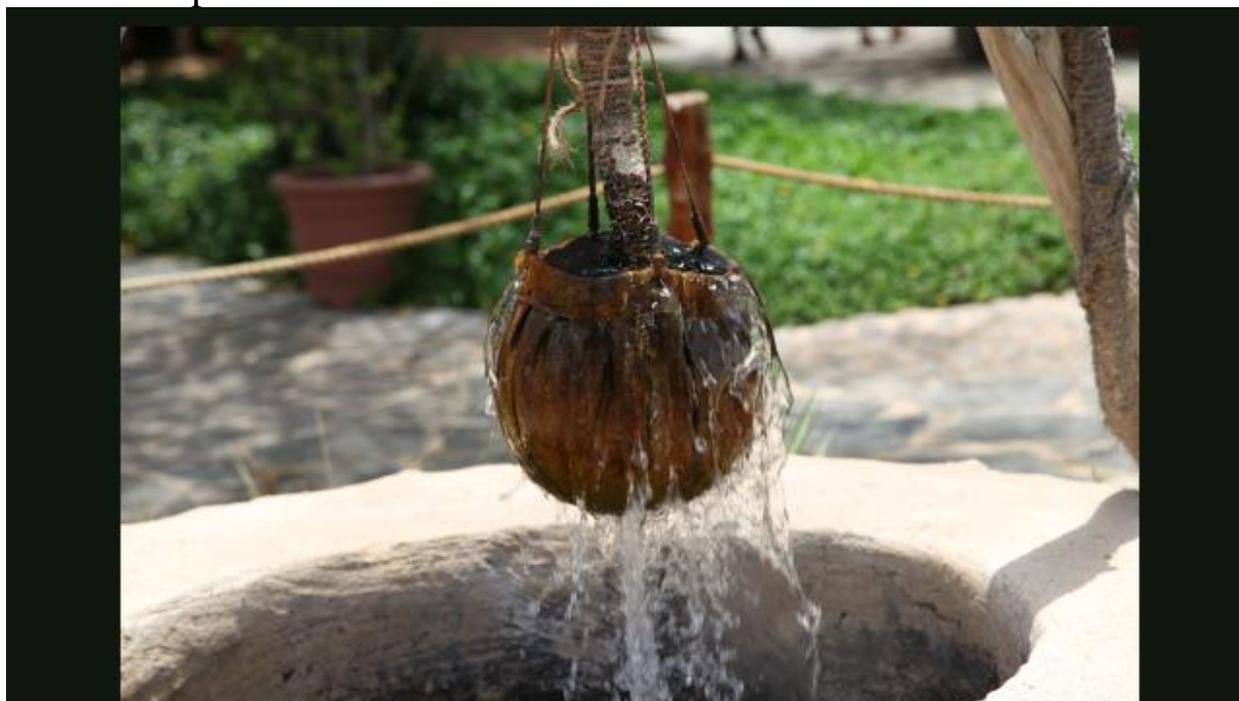


As she arrives at the well of Jacob, she is preparing to fill her large jar of water that will help preserve her life. Little does she know that she's about to drink deeply from the water that gushes up to eternal life!

Jesus, sitting alone at the well, asks her for a drink. Yet that simple question, seemingly so straightforward and sincere, surprises her, stuns her, shocks her! Strikes one and two (she's a **woman** and a **Samaritan**) should have prevented Jesus from even acknowledging her presence, let alone asking her for help...and being willing to drink from a vessel touched by her "unclean" hands.

Yet he breaks down both barriers, and then goes even further when he offers her a drink of the water that he will give, water that will prevent her from ever being thirsty again. It's an offer that captures her attention, for it touches her right in the barren part of her soul.

*Sir, give me this water, she says, so that I may never be **thirsty** or have to keep coming **here** to draw water.* She seems to get it that Jesus is offering her something much more than a drink – something that will mend her wounded heart, heal her bleeding soul, and strengthen her saddened spirit.



Jesus said, ***The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life!!***

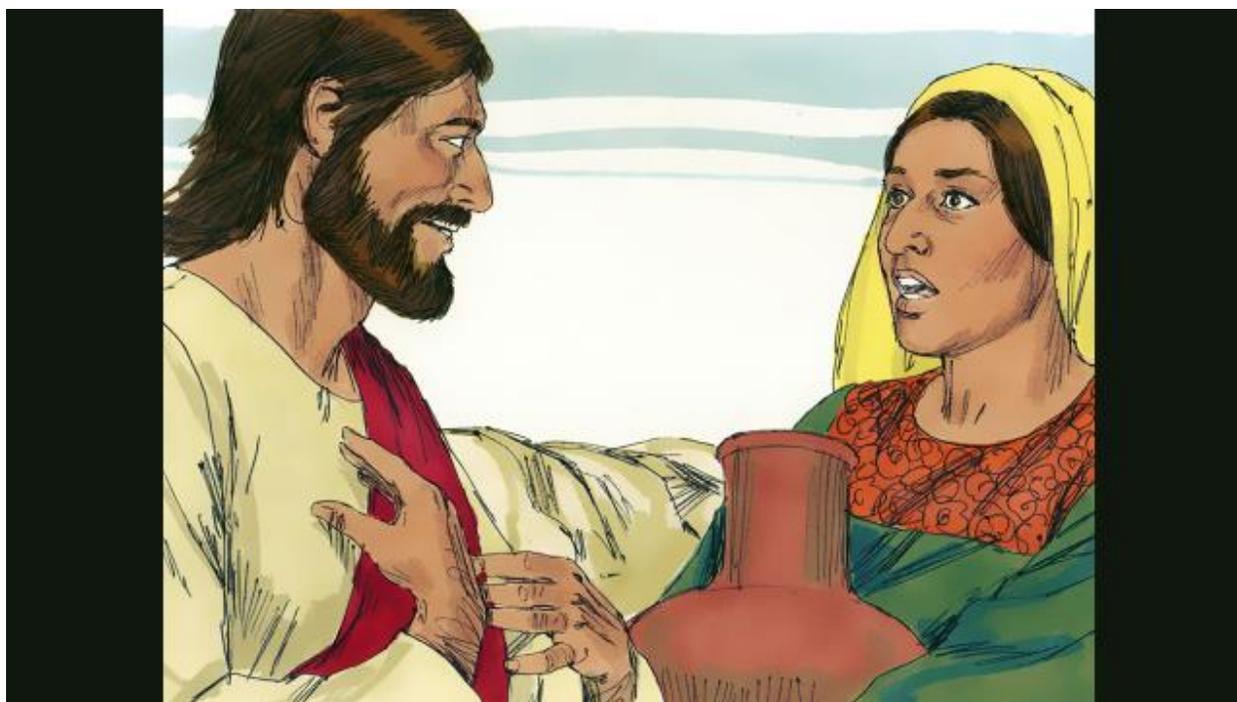
Yet...Jesus doesn't stop there... *Why?*

- He seems to have brought her to a place of admitting that she feels powerless, and that her life is unmanageable (Step #1).
- She appears to be ready to believe that this living water is a ***power-greater-than-she*** which could restore her to sanity (Step #2).
- And she seems to be right on the cusp of turning her life over to the care of God as she knows him...(Step #3).

**So why does he tell her, *Go, call your husband and come back...?***

I'll answer my question...with a question: **Can she trust Jesus with the care of her life without revealing her *whole* life to him?**

No...and when he shows her that he knows the struggles she's endured, the Lord breaks down that one final barrier standing between them. It happens, I believe, when he shares his vision that true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.



How does that work?

He speaks to her as if she matters!

He engages her as a person of value.

He assures the woman that she is worthy to be saved.

And in doing so, he re-awakens her child-like faith that had been hiding in the darkened parts of her heart for far too many years.

*I know that Messiah is coming*, she says for the first time in a long time with a note of **hope** her voice. *I know that Messiah is coming*, she says.

Jesus smiles at her and says, *You're talking to him...*

She drops her jar – the only jar she has to carry back home the water she needs to survive. She drops it – and forgets it! She turns her back on it! She’s just had a sip of the **living** water that Jesus so lovingly offered...



*How can we be sure that her awakening is real?*

She runs **back** to the town where she was made to feel **not** welcome, **back** to those neighbors who openly **shamed** her, **back** to the place where she had **no hope**...and **she**, of **all** people, is one of the very first **evangelists**: she brings those people to Christ, literally and spiritually!

This woman finds **true** serenity. She recognizes that there are things in her life she cannot change, BUT...she's also discovered the one thing she **can** change – and she does it with courage to spare.



She turns her life over to the care of God through this man called Jesus. And, we're told, *many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony.* Then, after convincing Jesus and the disciples to stay there for two days, we're told that many more came to believe.

What a testimony of faith!! Because of her courage, the people of the town are able to say, *We know that this is truly the Savior of the world!!*



I'm not exactly sure what Jesus meant when he talked about the water he gives that will prevent anyone from ever being thirsty again. But...  
-this brief encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well,  
-this moment that changes her life – and the lives of so many of her neighbors as well,  
seems to be the perfect picture of the words Jesus said:

***The water that I will give  
will become in them a spring of water  
gushing up to eternal life.***

Lord, give us this water always...Amen.

