

Well Witness
 Sermon on John 4; March 23, 2014
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(This sermon is broken into chucks. A portion of the Gospel was read, then a portion of the sermon was preached. This pattern was repeated twice.

Please pray with me: Speak, O Lord, in words that we can hear. Open our hearts to your word, and plant the light of your grace deep in our hearts. Amen.

Read John 4:1-9

I am a woman of no importance, of no distinction.

I come to this well at noon,
 when the heat is oppressive
 because no one wants to see me, and I don't want to be seen.

I remember:

- looking forward to finding friendship at that well
- planning dinner parties and gossiping about husbands there.
- And a cup that overflowed.
 →But now each journey to the well is a knife twisted in my heart, and a constant reminder of how little I am loved.

And so, when I see someone sitting at the well, I think my eyes are playing tricks on me. When I realize that he is no mirage, my heart skips a beat.

He is probably here to ridicule me, like everyone else. But I have little choice—I am thirsty, so I keep walking.

As I get to the well, this worn out man asks *me* for a drink. He asks *me*. And my mind races. To him, my Samaritan hands are defiled... and any water that I draw would be defiled, too.

I can't even begin to tell you:

- all the reasons why I can't, why I won't, why I shouldn't give him a drink.
- Or all the reasons why he shouldn't even be sitting here...

But I'll try to explain:

Our village well is Jacob's well—the same well where he met Rachel, who would become his wife. And we haven't forgotten. Men only come to the well to find wives. And since I'm not looking for a husband, he knows as well as I do that sitting here together as male and female is not allowed.

But the bigger reason that this man absolutely should not be sitting before me is that he is a Jew and I am a Samaritan. We are a cross between sibling rivals and mortal enemies. Samaritans and Jews hate one another so much that we don't talk to each other, and it's unheard of to be nice to one another.

“How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?:
I ask, boldly reminding him of all the barriers that stand between of us.

Perhaps you have some barriers, too, that you think should keep Jesus from you sitting down with you at a well, from knowing you, and from loving you. They come in all shapes and sizes—some are lines drawn in the sand and others are stone walls constructed over many years and meant to last a century.

- They are all the darkness, the fears and the doubts that we think are too big for Jesus.

But I have a feeling that if he wants to sit down with me, he probably wants to sit down with you, too.

Read John 4:10-26

I'm sure he's noticed what time it is when I come to draw water, and he knows what that means, but he doesn't shame me, hate me, or mock me.

He doesn't get up and leave at the sight or sound of me. That in and of itself is enough to hook me.

For you see, my well has been running empty for a while now, and somehow he must have known it.

He offers me water that won't run out
that both quenches thirst and
Becomes a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

And I would later understand that sometimes being parched is precisely what opens us to receive that living water.

So I don't even take a second to think about it, to ponder the absurdity of his offer.

I am thirsty, and if he can quench that, maybe he really is the
Messiah. Maybe he really is worth following.

But then he has to bring it up...

A wave of pain hits me as he tells me of
My many husbands... the reason I am ostracized and come to the well at noon.
Left unspoken, it is the elephant in every room.

Five husbands is too many for anyone, for any reason...it's too much rejection, too much pain, too much death.

But when Jesus brings it up... he does it gently, and he still doesn't shame me.

He just brings it out into the light of day. Yes, I have had 5 husbands, and the one I live with is not my husband, but would you want a sixth? It's true. And now I've said it out loud and it's real.

And though I feel the need to quickly change the subject, I can (breathe) breathe easier now.

Now he *really* sees me. But this is the moment of truth.

Now that he knows me, I expect him to get up and leave, like everyone else has. But this man is not like everyone else.

I can see now that he is a man of great importance, of great distinction.

I wonder, if perhaps I am a woman of some importance, too?

Read John 4:27-30, 39-42

Give me this water! I said to Jesus

And Jesus already had, as it turned out. I couldn't contain it-- I jumped up and ran back to the city to tell everyone what had just happened.

- It didn't matter that I shouldn't have been talking to this man in the first place...
- It didn't matter that the people I was going to testify to are the same ones who mocked me.
- And it didn't matter that I had no idea what to say, and that when I finally got there, huffing and puffing, all that came out were two sentences.

As it turns out, I am a woman of great importance, of great distinction, because I have a story to tell, a role to play, a call to live out.

I have a story to tell, and so do you.

It's a story about our Messiah who calls us out of the darkness of our fear, and into the freedom of broad daylight.

It's a story about our Savior whose love knows no bounds and who will step over both lines drawn in the sand and break walls in order to get to us.

And, it's a story about Jesus who sees us—really sees us, and still wants to sit down at a well with us.

Amen.