

So He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by His journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink" (His disciples had gone to buy food.). 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.) 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." The woman said to Him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 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." 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."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered Him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to Him, "Sir, I see that You are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but You say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is

coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship in spirit and in truth.” 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.” Jesus said to her, “I am He, the one who is speaking to you.”

Many Samaritans from that city believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His word. 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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection Questions

The Context: The text tells us that it is noon, a very unusual hour to be out collecting water to carry home in the overbearing heat. Most people drew their water early in the morning while it was still relatively cool outside. The fact that this woman chooses this strange hour to draw water tells us something about her (which we will discover more of later in the text). She is marginalized in her community because of her past marital record and current marriage status. Jesus speaks to her and asks her for a drink.

Very aware of her marginal status, her status as a woman, and as a Samaritan, the woman is shocked that Jesus dares to speak with her. She knows that Jesus, a Jew, is taking a cultural risk by speaking with her (men don't speak with women in public, Jews do not interact with Samaritans and certainly do not share jugs or drinking cups with them which would make the Jewish person ritually unclean, and most people avoid her because of her history). Jesus takes a cultural, social and religious risk here in order to establish a connection with this woman and welcome her back into God's fold. When has Christ called you to do something outside of the cultural norms in order to reach out to someone He is calling you to connect with? What were the results? How can we dispose ourselves to doing this more often? How is reaching out to people on the margins of society a core part of Christ's ministry and ours?

Jesus and the Samaritan woman have been drawn to the well by a mutual thirst. (a physical thirst & a spiritual thirst). Jesus soon turns the conversation around to the spiritual thirst and the powerful living water that He has to offer her. She immediately challenges Him about where He gets such water and whether or not He is greater than her ancestor Jacob who gave them the 100 ft. deep well. He promises her water that will quench her thirst forever. She begs for this water, not really quite knowing what she is asking for. Jesus uses the common connection of physical thirst

to draw attention to a spiritual Truth and spiritual thirst causes her to ask for the ‘water’ that He offers. How has Jesus done this in your life? How has Jesus used a desire for a physical/ material thing to help you identify some of your deepest spiritual thirsts, causing you to ask Him to quench that thirst?

Next, Jesus turns the conversation around to the reality of her life; “Go call your husband and come back.” Even though Jesus knows the reality of her life, He does not spell it out for her and risk shaming her. Instead, He gives her a chance to speak the Truth about her life herself. “I have no husband”, she says truthfully. Jesus in His profound compassion chooses first to *affirm* her for speaking the Truth. What a gracious God we serve! *Even though the Truth is a less than pleasant one, He affirms her for speaking it.* Then Jesus prophetically speaks about the full reality of the life that she is living. Since Jesus, in His compassion and Mercy, has already honored her dignity, the Samaritan woman is able to hear the Truth spoken about her life as a prophetic word. She can see that He is a prophet. How has God’s compassion and respect for your dignity made you more able to see Truth in your life? How has that Truth set you free to act, see and be what Jesus needs you to do, see and be? How does this connection draw us closer to God and make us want to serve Him more? Do you know anyone who has the charism of prophecy? How have you seen this charism used within your Catholic Christian community?

At this point, the woman is able to see that Jesus is a prophet but she still is not quite sure where He fits into her Jewish history. Jesus takes the opportunity to tell her that the hour has now come where geography does not factor into worship so much as the WAY in which people worship. He is letting her know that His Father is looking for people who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. At this point, the woman, once completely marginal is now at the center of Jesus’ vision and expectations. She has interacted

with Christ in a manner of Spirit and Truth. Since she has already demonstrated that she is not afraid of the Truth, Jesus tells her overtly about the Truth of His identity. “I am He, the One Who is speaking to you.” This is the first time that Jesus reveals Himself so obviously in the Gospel of John. Why would He choose to do this to a marginal person and a person who is no longer considered Jewish? How has Christ revealed His identity to you? When has He chosen to reveal new sides of Himself to you? (most likely not when you were at your strongest).

Now the marginalized woman from the community runs back to the center of the community bursting with the Good News! “Come meet the man who told me everything I have ever done. Is this not the Messiah?!” She is so excited about what has just happened to her (e.g. upon meeting the Messiah a true healing has taken place as Jesus did not treat her as one who is marginal, accepting her where she was at in her life as He called her to a new place). She is so excited that she has to share it with everyone (even people who have shunned her). When have you experienced such excitement about Jesus that you felt compelled to share it regardless of what other people thought of you?

In this passage we get a chance to witness the deeply compassionate heart of our loving God. God’s Mercy towards us is greater than we could ever imagine. The word “mercy” comes from the Latin “misericordia”. Misericordia is made up of two words “miseri” which means “pity” and “cordial” which means “heart”. Mercy is a ‘heart full of compassion’ for the suffering of another. We know that God pours out His mercy to everyone who is sincerely open to it. We also know that God’s Mercy is not a synonym for “cheap grace” (as Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us that we were bought with a price). The open request for God’s mercy presumes a contrite heart. We see this in several passages; David says in Psalm 51:1-5, 17 “Have mercy on me God, ... wash me from my iniquity... *a broken and contrite heart, O God You will*

not despise” and again in Mary’s Magnificat “His Mercy is on *those who fear Him* from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50). A contrite heart and a holy fear of the Lord are imbedded in the request for mercy. How has God used a time of brokenness like the woman of Samaria (e.g. contrite spirit) to show you His mercy? How has a “broken spirit” caused you to experience special graces that you have never before experienced?