

The Woman at the Well

Gospel Reading John 4:1-26

Speaker - Mary Erva

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this beautiful, new day. May we never fail to recognize your loving kindness and mercy. Help us to count our blessings with a grateful heart and to give thanks in all circumstances. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Can you think of a time when you've been really thirsty? For me, it was after having surgery. When I woke up my mouth was so dry, and I had to wait quite a while before I could have something to drink. Finally, I was able to suck on a few ice cubes and then have small sips of water. That water tasted so good!

We are fortunate to live in a place where we can have a drink of water any time we want. There are places in the world, such as parts of Africa, where clean water is not available. The women have the job of collecting water, and they may have to walk several miles to get water from polluted rivers or ponds.

In ancient Israel, the young women also had the daily chore of getting water from a well that was often outside of the city walls. Water was usually gathered early in the morning or in the evening when temperatures were much cooler.

In the Bible story about the woman at the well, it is around noon when she goes to draw her water, the hottest

time of day and the worst time to be outside. She goes there at that time because she knows no one will be there. She was a Samaritan woman, considered unclean and hated by the Jews, and because of her marital status, she was an outcast in her own society. This woman went to the well when she knew no one would be there to accuse her or laugh at her. She wanted to avoid the scorn of others.

I wonder about this woman and what her life had been like. It was likely that her five marriages had ended in either the death of her husband, or in divorce, and divorce was normally only granted to the husband. A woman in ancient Israel who was a widow or divorced usually had no way of providing for herself or any children she may have had until she married again. So the woman at the well may have lived a very difficult life.

Even though the Bible tells us not to judge, how often do we judge others?

We may judge other people by how they look or talk, what they wear, who they know, their occupation, or how much money they have. How quick are we to form an opinion about others without getting to know them? Has a store clerk been crabby or rude to you and you've walked away thinking that person is very unfriendly? I'm guilty of that. But we don't know what kind of day that clerk was having or what he or she had been through. Are you familiar with the saying, "Don't judge a person until you've walked in their shoes"? This clerk could be a single parent working two or three jobs to pay the bills. She may be dealing with sick children or elderly parents or could be in an abusive relationship.

We don't know what problems this person had to deal with. It's been said that hurting people hurt others, and I believe that is often true.

So when someone is crabby or rude, instead of judging them we should pray for them. We should pray that God would help them with whatever it is they are going through.

So we don't know if the Samaritan woman at the well was an immoral woman or the victim of circumstances, but Jesus knew. Jesus knew everything about her. Not only did He know about her past, but more importantly He knew that she needed salvation.

Jesus asks the woman for a drink of water, and she is surprised because Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Jesus tells the woman that if she knew who she was talking to, she would have asked Him for a drink.

At first she took Him literally, asking how He could get this water if He had no bucket. Jesus explained to her that the water He offered was not physical.

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst. The water I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman responds, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

The Samaritan woman didn't understand what Jesus was telling her. The living water that Jesus talks about is the Holy Spirit who lives inside of those who believe. No matter how hard we try, earthly things will never satisfy our longing for God. We seek things because we're trying to quench our spiritual thirst, but only a relationship with God will quench that thirst. When we put our faith and trust in

Him, we know that the well will never run dry. Abundant life can only be found in Him.

Jesus then says to the woman, “Go call your husband and come back.” The woman answered, “I do not have a husband.” Jesus responds to her, “You are right in saying you do not have a husband. For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband.”

The woman realized that Jesus was some kind of prophet. She mentioned that her ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but the Jews claimed the place they must worship is in Jerusalem. Jesus responded that it doesn't matter where you worship. What matters is if you worship the true God.

I like the wording in the Message Bible for John chapter 4 verses 23 and 24. This is how it reads.

Jesus said, “It's who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth.”

That's the kind of people the Father is looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before Him in their worship. Those who worship Him must do so out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.”

Then the woman says to Jesus, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the One called the Anointed. When He comes, He will tell us everything.” Jesus says to her, “I am He, the One who is speaking with you.”

As we read this passage, we see how the Samaritan woman's perception of Jesus changes. First she sees Jesus as a Jew, then a prophet, and then the Messiah. She is stunned that He is willing to associate with her and that

He knows about her past relationships. Eventually she realizes that Jesus is no ordinary Man.

The Samaritan woman is deeply impacted by her conversation with Jesus and is eager to share what she has learned. The testimony of this woman is powerful among her people. The Bible tells us that many believed in Jesus as the Messiah because of the story the woman had to tell.

This story shows us that Jesus comes to the least of these, the outcasts of society. It doesn't matter who we are or what we've done, God offers salvation to everyone. He sees the sin within our hearts yet He still pursues us and loves us.

Agape is the Greek word in the New Testament that describes the fatherly love God has for humans. Agape love is the highest form of love. Agape is the sacrificial, unconditional love of God.

God wants us to be in a loving relationship with Him. He has a purpose for each one of us, and His purpose is bigger than anything we could imagine.

God uses unlikely people to accomplish His purpose, or His will, and there are many examples of this in the Bible. Moses had a speech defect and did not want to serve as a leader. Esther, a young Jewish girl, became queen and saved her people from death. Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul, was a religious leader who persecuted Christians until He accepted Christ and then went on to write much of the New Testament. Rahab, a prostitute, helped Israel inherit the promised land. The men Jesus chose as His disciples were uneducated, ordinary men.

The Samaritan woman was an outcast and considered unclean, but her life was changed by her encounter with Jesus. God used her to share the good news, and many came to believe in Jesus because of her.

When I was in High School, I was extremely shy, and my biggest fear was speaking in front of people, even a small group. And I still get nervous when I have to speak.

Each one of us can be used by God. As long as we are alive, God has a purpose for us. He is never done calling us or using us for His Kingdom.

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God that empowers us and equips us with the tools we need, enabling us to be used by God, all for the glory of God!

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much. We pray that we would have the power to grasp just how wide and long and high and deep your love is. We pray that we would know this love, which surpasses knowledge. We pray that you would open our hearts and minds to ways in which we can be used by you. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.