12=18 March 2023 Come and see

John 4:5-42

New International Version

5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.[a])

10 Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

17 “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

The Disciples Rejoin Jesus

27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. 35 Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. 37 Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. 38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

Many Samaritans Believe

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. 41 And because of his words many more became believers.

42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

**Bible notes**

On his way back from Jerusalem to Galilee, Jesus rests by Jacob’s well. Jacob first met his wife Rachel at a well ‘in broad daylight’ and gave water to her sheep (Genesis 29.1-12). This earlier incident is recalled as we read about Jesus establishing a relationship with a Samaritan woman who had been abandoned by her husbands (plural) and shamed into fetching water on her own and in the heat of the day. This spiritual relationship will transform her and those to whom she speaks about him. He begins by saying, ‘Give me a drink’, echoing our Old Testament reading and the striking of water from the rock, identified by Paul as Christ himself (1 Corinthians 10.4). Already recognising his request – to someone doubly distanced by gender and race – as astonishing, the Samaritan woman is led to ask for what he offers her. ‘Sir, give me this water.’ Living water is often used in the Jewish Scriptures as an image of salvation – for example, in Ezekiel’s vision of the river flowing from the future Temple (47.1-12). Here the water is not only God’s gift to the thirsty but also God’s gift within the thirsty, ‘gushing up to eternal life’ (see also 7.38). Perhaps the young bride whose groom describes her as ‘a garden fountain, a well of living water’ is in mind (Song of Solomon 4.15). This Samaritan woman, abused by men, becomes herself ‘a well of living water’ as she invites others to meet Jesus – ‘Come and see’ – leading many of them to believe in him.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

We know this is a significant story because of its length and the careful dialogue. What does it mean? Not everything is explained, so people have interpreted it different ways. For some the Samaritan woman is portrayed as a promiscuous outcast – but it doesn’t say that. Maybe the ‘five husbands’ symbolise the five false Gods the Samaritan’s worshipped (2 Kings 17.29-31). Or was Jesus shaming her by mentioning her marital status? We do know that, historically, the Samaritans were Jews intermarried with Gentiles, brought into Palestine by the king of Assyria; like the Dalits in India, they were ‘unclean’. We also know that Jewish men wouldn’t speak with an unmarried woman, let alone a Samaritan. So, one thing is clear: Jesus was practising radical inclusion and acceptance. Everyone’s welcome!

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* When or where have you seen acceptance like this?
* What do you need to accept about yourself?
* What can you do to make sure everyone feels included?

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## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

**A prayer of thanksgiving**
Sometimes we think we know our place.
Exactly just so.
And everybody else should know theirs.
Exactly just so.
As we go into a new week,
help us to realise that life isn’t actually ‘exactly just so’.
It can be expanded beyond our wildest dreams.
Lord, this week we want to be astonished,
to accept everyone in your love.
We want people to believe because of our testimony.
For people to hear it for themselves, through our lives.
Thank you for giving us our best life in you.
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Thank you that we are accepted.
Thank you that we belong.
Thank you that you give us the water of life to drink.
Help us to be accepting of others,
and invite them to drink your water too.
**Amen.**