

- Here we have the famous “woman at the well” story of John 4.
- It helps to know some background.
- After King Solomon, around 900 B.C., the Jews split into two nations—10 tribes making up the new “little” Israel in the north, and Judah—composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—to the south...with Jerusalem being the capital of Judah.
- Well...Jerusalem had the temple—the only legitimate place of sacrifice and worship of God—so the Jews of the new little Israel began to sacrifice to God on a couple of mountains in their own territory—one of the being Mt. Gerizim in the region of Samaria, which was in southern little Israel.
- About 740 B.C., the Assyrians to the north conquered little Israel and either slaughtered or scattered the Jews there. This is why they’re sometimes called the “lost 10 tribes”. But the nation of Judah survived.
- But a little after 600 B.C., the Babylonians (from modern day Iraq) conquered all the land of Israel & Judah...and they took many of the Jews back to Babylon as slaves.
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- Now in that region of Samaria between little Israel & Judah, poorer Jews who were allowed to remain there as workers intermarried with the Babylonians, while those who went into exile in Babylon kept themselves pure from intermarriage.
- And so the Babylonian Jews, when they returned to Israel in a few generations, despised the Samaritans as religious traitors—having “polluted” themselves by marrying Gentiles.
- Even today when a member of a strict Jewish family intermarries with a non-Jew (a Gentile), they will hold his funeral, and Jewish family and friends will have nothing more to do with him.

- The Jews returning from the Babylonian exile rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, while Samaritans continued to worship God on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria...which the few hundred remaining Samaritans continue to do today at Passover.
- But around 200 BC, the Jews invaded Samaria and destroyed their temple on Mt. Gerizim.
- So there was much hatred between Samaritans and Jews, but in Jesus' time, the Roman occupiers enforced peace between the two.
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- Now back to our Gospel story...a rabbi of Jesus' time would rarely speak to a woman, and never in public...probably to prevent scandal and temptation, as well as the fact that women were viewed as inferior.
- And all this is why both the woman and the disciples are so surprised when Jesus asks her for a drink...not only a Samaritan, but a woman. Such a scandal! Even the early readers of the Gospel would have been taken aback by this.
- In fact, in the so-called “gospel of Thomas” discovered in 1945—probably written as late as the 200s or so--reads: *“Simon Peter said...: ‘Let Mary [Magdalene] go forth from among us, for women are not worthy of the life.’ Jesus replied: ‘Behold, I shall lead her, that I may make her [a man], in order that she also may become a living spirit like you [men].’”*
- But ladies...take heart; that is one of the main reasons the Church rejects that writing. Just because it calls itself a “Gospel”, doesn't mean that it really is.
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- But Jesus broke down barriers...and in this story of the Samaritan woman at the well He teaches us that the Christian cannot hold

onto prejudices or divisions of race or nationality or sex...for Paul tells us that God “*desires ALL to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” (1Ti 2:4 RSV)...and Peter tells us that men and women “*...are joint heirs of the grace of life*” (1Pe 3:7 RSV)

- And in the book of Revelation St. John saw: “*...a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...*” (Rev 7:9 RSV)
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- Jesus is telling the Samaritan woman: “*If you will only recognize me, I will give you not this passing water, but true and everlasting refreshment.*”
- She basically replies: “*Who do you think you are? Even our great common ancestor Jacob could not do that.*”
- He replies: “*I will show you who I am by revealing to you your immoral and sinful past...in your case giving yourself to many men. But even so I do not now reject you; in fact, I long for your faith, for even such great sins as those may be forgiven.*”
- The woman is thus compelled to face herself and see the immorality and looseness and inadequacy of her own life.
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- No one sees himself as he truly is until he sees himself in the presence of Christ.
- True Christianity begins with a sense of sin—a realization that the way we are living our lives will not do, but rather we must turn to God...turn to Christ. This is why the Gospels begin with “Repent!”
- Jesus tells us: “*...true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth...and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship*

him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth.” ...worship Him by word AND action...

- *...for “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord...’ and then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’ (Mat 7:21-23 RSV)*
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- *In her joy at finding Jesus the woman rushes to town to share it her joy...for no longer does her sin, her loneliness, her uncertainty burden her; she has found her Savior.*
- *For God IS love, and as Paul said to us today: “God proves His love for us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”*
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- *Today, and every day, Jesus is at the well of our hearts...asking for a drink...just as he said upon the cross: “I thirst!”...not for water, but for our souls. Will we give love for love?*
- *He, in turn, gives us the living water WE thirst for—God’s grace, His strength...His forgiveness...if only we turn to Him.*
- *And for those who persevere in His love...despite hardship, despite trouble, despite even prosperity: “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb...will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Rev 7:16-17 RSV)*

Reading 1

[Ex 17:3-7](#)

In those days, in their thirst for water,
the people grumbled against Moses,
saying, “Why did you ever make us leave Egypt?
Was it just to have us die here of thirst
with our children and our livestock?”
So Moses cried out to the LORD,
“What shall I do with this people?
a little more and they will stone me!”
The LORD answered Moses,
“Go over there in front of the people,
along with some of the elders of Israel,
holding in your hand, as you go,
the staff with which you struck the river.
I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb.
Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it
for the people to drink.”
This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel.
The place was called Massah and Meribah,
because the Israelites quarreled there
and tested the LORD, saying,
“Is the LORD in our midst or not?”

[Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Year A—Lent, 3rd Sunday
(2014)

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works.”
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

[Rom 5:1-2, 5-8](#)

Reading 2

Brothers and sisters:
Since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith
to this grace in which we stand,
and we boast in hope of the glory of God.

And hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
For Christ, while we were still helpless,
died at the appointed time for the ungodly.
Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person,
though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die.
But God proves his love for us
in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

[Jn 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42](#)

Gospel

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar,
near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.
Jacob’s well was there.
Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well.
It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her,

“Give me a drink.”

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him,

“How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?”

—For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.—

Jesus answered and said to her,

“If you knew the gift of God
and who 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 do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep;
where then can you get this living water?

Are you greater than our father Jacob,
who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself
with his children and his flocks?”

Jesus answered and said to her,

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;
but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst;
the water I shall give will become in him
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him,

“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not 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 and said to him,

“I do not have a husband.”

Jesus answered her,

“You are right in saying, ‘I do not have a 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 can see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;
but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”

Jesus said to her,

“Believe me, woman, the hour is coming
when you will worship the Father
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You people worship what you do not understand;
we worship what we understand,
because salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.
God is Spirit, and those who worship him
must worship in Spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him,
“I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ;
when he comes, he will tell us everything.”
Jesus said to her,
“I am he, the one speaking with you.”

At that moment his disciples returned,
and were amazed that he was talking with a woman,
but still no one said, “What are you looking for?”
or “Why are you talking with her?”
The woman left her water jar
and went into the town and said to the people,
“Come see a man who told me everything I have done.
Could he possibly be the Christ?”
They went out of the town and came to him.
Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat.”
But he said to them,

“I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

So the disciples said to one another,
“Could someone have brought him something to eat?”

Jesus said to them,

“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me
and to finish his work.

Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be here’?
I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.
The reaper is already receiving payment
and gathering crops for eternal life,
so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together.
For here the saying is verified that ‘One sows and another reaps.’
I sent you to reap what you have not worked for;

others have done the work,
and you are sharing the fruits of their work.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him
because of the word of the woman who testified,

“He told me everything I have done.”

When the Samaritans came to him,
they invited him to stay with them;
and he stayed there two days.

Many more began to believe in him because of his word,
and they said to the woman,

“We no longer believe because of your word;
for we have heard for ourselves,

and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.”

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