

A WOMAN WHO MET GOD

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JOHN 4:5–26 (RSV)

So [Jesus] came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' For his disciples had gone away into the city 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?' For Jews have no dealings 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 nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?'

Jesus said to her, 'Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.' Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.'

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 he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly.'

The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks 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 Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.'

Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'

WATER TO DRINK

When Jesus met this woman, she longed for someone to take away the dryness of her life. She had tried many things, and they had all failed. She had not drunk the water from God's well, and had dug other wells to satisfy herself.

'Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water' (Jer. 12–13).

God is a fountain of living water. By him we can receive everything we need to live. The gift of God is God himself, and him doing things to deliver us from harm and to lead us into our future. This is what God's people Israel had discovered. But they, too, forgot that God was their Father.

'[Israel] did not say, 'Where is the LORD who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?' And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things (Jer. 2:6–7).

As a child grows up in a home and learns to be secure and generous, so, God provides for us. When Jesus came, he taught us what it means to trust God for everything.

'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!' (Matt. 7:11).

When the lady at the well was surprised that Jesus spoke to her, he surprised her more by offering her a gift from God. She did not expect anything from him but Jesus had come to give God's living water to all who would come and drink.

A FATHER GOD TO KNOW

Jesus was the Son of God. He knew that God was Father. Every need that Jesus had was met by his Father. Therefore, Jesus knew who he was and who loved him. He knew what he should do and where he was going. He knew his Father would honour him and bring him to his goal. He knew God was Father to the whole world and knew his Father was the fountain of life for all people. He had come to reveal this Father.

Jesus told the woman, 'If you knew the gift of God and who is speaking to you, you would ask and he would give you living water'! This water would become a well of water springing up within her. It would be eternal life.

Later, we are told that this water is the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39) by whom we know that God is our Father and that we are his children. We cannot discover God's Fatherhood for ourselves. God must reveal himself, and he sent his Son to do this by living among us. Everyone who comes to Jesus Christ will receive the Holy Spirit because God sends him to live within us so that we can know the Father.

'On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:37–39).

A GIFT FREELY GIVEN

The woman was interested and eager and asked for this water, but Jesus asked her to bring her husband. She discovered that Jesus knew all about her. He not only knew she was without a husband but knew the whole sorry story of her many husbands, and now, a defacto husband. He was offering her water that could pour out over many years of sadness and sin and bitterness.

She began talking about where and how such a life was possible. Jesus said it no longer depended on a 'where' or 'how' but on a seeking Father and the Son he had sent into the world. God has always sought people to worship him in spirit and truth. This woman could not meet God by doing outward things, even if she did them correctly and eagerly and regularly.

All this woman needed to do was to receive the water Jesus offered her, the Holy Spirit. Then she would know God as her Father. Then she would love him and worship him in Spirit and in truth.

The woman was amazed that this man could tell her about herself, but could also tell her such amazing things about God. Could this be Messiah, the world's Saviour? 'Yes' said Jesus.

CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

Jesus Christ can offer us the water of life because he came to take our dryness, our shame and our lostness. He bore it when he died on a cross. God has glorified his Son Jesus by giving him up to death for us, and by raising him up from the dead, and by seating him at his right hand. From there, Christ can give us the water of life.

The woman went back to the city, not to get her husband but the whole town. She wanted them to meet the man who told her that all that she had done. Already, her life was filling up with the water of life. She knew the Son of God. She knew the seeking Father. So she knew who she was, who loved her, and who would bring her life to its goal.

Jesus Christ has commanded that this message be proclaimed everywhere so that all may know the Son of God, all may receive his Spirit, and all may be found by the Father.

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