

It was noon... Jesus was hot and tired...

They had walked some distance that morning and he ached all over...

The disciples went on into town to find food but Jesus just wanted to sit and rest...

As he waited, a woman came alone to draw water from the well of Jacob

A familiar task for the woman, but not at noon

Women usually came together in the cool hours of early morning

Jesus was thirsty and he asked for a drink of water

The only thing more unusual than a woman alone at the well in the middle of the day
was a Jewish rabbi speaking to a Samaritan woman and asking to drink from her water jar

Jews and Samaritans had been feuding for centuries

The Samaritans lived in the northern kingdom—between Judah/Jerusalem and Galilee

The northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria

Assyria conquered by assimilating the people into Assyrian culture

They intermarried and brought in their own culture and religion

They built a temple at Mt Gerizim and only had first 5 books of the Jewish Scripture
Judah—the southern kingdom was captured by Babylon, but allowed to live separately

They returned from exile in Babylon and rebuilt the wall and the temple

They found the Samaritans and hated these “squatters” or “half-breeds”
who no longer followed the Israelite faith

The Jews had learned in exile that the only way to survive was to stay separate

Hatred keeps us separate

Hatred was so strong that travelers went out of their way to go around Samaria

Jews considered Samaritans unclean so to drink from her water jar was unthinkable

It was bad enough that she was a Samaritan... but to speak to a woman in public?

That was not done, especially by the rabbis

None of this was lost on the woman that day... she knew her place...

“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”

Jesus speaks of living water... Living water is running water like in a river—not stagnant water

But Jesus is talking about water that is alive... water that comes from an eternal source...

She misunderstands and reacts impatiently... “You don’t even have a bucket...”

“Drink this water, you’ll be thirsty again, but if you drink the water I give you’ll never be thirsty again”

Not knowing what she’s asking for she says “give me this water”

“Then go get your husband and come back” Jesus says

Unwritten here is her wondering what he knows...

If he knows why she comes alone to the well in the heat of the day

She offers the benign response “I have no husband”

“You’re right” Jesus says—the woman had 5 husbands—you aren’t married to the 6th

Women in those days had almost no choice when things go wrong

We know nothing of this woman’s plight or why she had 6 men

Women couldn’t own land or a business—a man could divorce her

Resorting to the only options left to them brought condemnation

But there is no condemnation in Jesus’ voice... no name-calling...

Nor retraction of his offer of living water—He simply tells the truth—He sees her

She is discovered—uncovered—

The only thing to do is to throw sand in Jesus' eyes and hope to get away

She resorts to religious banter... to a religious argument...

Knowing that she has been disqualified by her lifestyle

she throws the blame onto something less personal

She resorts to the religious argument about where to worship

"You Jews demand that we worship in Jerusalem"

But Jesus isn't thrown off... nor does he accept her disqualification...

"It is not your mountain or Jerusalem that's the point... It is a matter of Spirit and Truth

That's what pleases God... not my Jewishness, nor your mountain...

God loves people who are true, the ones who worship God in spirit and truth

Those who drink this living water..."

Her life has been laid bare... yet she has not been condemned...

She tried to escape through religious banter... but he refused to be derailed

She had never known anyone like this

Could it be? Dare she ask? Samaritans had a different name for the Messiah... Tahav, the Revealer...

She whispers, "I know when the Messiah comes He will reveal everything to us"

Jesus says, "I am the Messiah, I am the revealer of all truth, I am Living Water"

It seems that all Jesus' witnesses are questionable

The shepherds who came to worship him in the stable after his birth

They are unclean and were not even allowed to give testimony in a court

Yet they received the announcement of Jesus' birth

Women also were not allowed to give testimony in a court or to own property

Now the first evangelist to the Samaritans is a woman...

And a woman of ill repute, not even worthy of drawing water with other women

Jesus chooses unlikely men and women to tell his story... and people believed them...

Because there is something honest and transforming about their encounter

Many of the Samaritans from that village to see Jesus because of the woman's story

They asked him to stay and teach them—so he stayed with them for 2 days

Many believed that he was the Savior of the world

Even this early in his ministry, we see that Jesus took the message to the Gentiles in Samaria

Because his message is for everyone

Like with Nicodemus, Jesus calls us to worship in spirit and in truth

This motif of John that uses misunderstandings to take people deeper into the truth

He calls them to think less rationally and literally—moving to listening under with spirit

To become aware of the Living Water within that flows freely

To drink deeply and simply be aware of God's Spirit that communes with our spirit

This is a new way of knowing God—something that is important to Quakers in 1600s and today

Forms, liturgies, even sermons are not necessary! A church building is not necessary!

We gather with others to Listen to the Spirit and drink deeply of this Living Water

It isn't the building or the hour—it is simply that we have an appointment to gather

This same Spirit and Living Water that is with us 24/7—not only speaking but teaching us to Listen

Don't worry about not knowing how—simply trust God to show you

The disciples returned with food—but Jesus was no longer hungry

Like the Living Water quenching thirst—his deep hunger had been fed by his encounter with her
Jesus tells the disciples that people are thirsty and hungry for something more...

He calls them to see beyond the literal and move into Spirit—to see the truth of people

To see the deep hunger and thirst of their Spirits

To not worry that it doesn't all come together at the same time

One plants the seed, another reaps—but it is God who is in it all

It is a challenge to go forth as God's people, Listening and following wherever you are Led

Risking both misunderstanding and confusion

Trusting God who is at work transforming the world, reconciling people

It is a journey to be done now—even while we are still in the transformation process ourselves

It is all of the same piece—Listening and trusting both in the beginning and throughout the journey

Learning to let go and trust that God is within—speaking Spirit to Spirit

Whether it be in a first encounter or in a life time of ministry