

Jubilee Sermon: John 4:1-42

Picture this scene with me. It's mid-day and you realize you need to replenish your household's water. You don't live in 2020 where you can use the fridge dispenser for water AND ice or can run to Target and get a case of 24 bottles for \$2.99. Instead, you live almost 2000 years ago in a town in Samaria.

It's hot, it's dry, it's dusty, it's noon, and getting water is not a quick or easy task. You head out to the well about a mile from your home. Even though the sun is beating down on your head, it's worth the walk because the well is fed by an underground stream, so it's cleaner and fresher water. It's also Jacob's well, the common ancestor you and your people share with the Jewish people. It's too bad that your ancestors split into two kingdoms, making you enemies ever since. The well has a lot of history that you think is pretty interesting. It's called Jacob's well because it's the place Jacob met his wife, Rachel. A well is also where Jacob's parents, Isaac and Rebecca met, and even where Zipporah met her husband, Moses. A lot of relationships start at a well!

As you approach the well, you realize there is a man sitting there all alone. He's clearly a Jew and there's no way you can be alone with a man or talk to him. Drawing your water from the well and engaging this weary looking man would put you in a pretty vulnerable position. It's just the two of you out here, and not only was it unacceptable for men and women to talk to each other alone, Jews and Samaritans certainly didn't engage in any good way!

But then you hear him say to you, "Give me a drink." You might feel sorry for him, or you might just decide there's no way you're walking that mile home without water, but for whatever reason, you decide to ask him what in the world he's thinking by asking you for a

drink. And before you know it, you are engaged in an encounter that leads to a deep relationship that will change your life.

Pretty quickly it strikes you that this relationship is a mutual one. You both need each other. This man has asked you for water and is completely dependent on you to help him with his thirst. He doesn't even have a water jar! But he makes it very clear that he has water you need, too, and he can provide it. It's a living water, springing up to eternal life. That sounds pretty good. You keep talking with this man.

Your conversation becomes more personal, as he asks you to go get your husband. For a second you consider backing off from the conversation, filling your water jar, and taking off for home, because that question could leave you vulnerable, too. You don't have a husband, and if you tell this man that, then it could be really dangerous to be alone at this remote well with him. But he's been kind so far and you are intrigued and want to get to know him better. So you are honest. You decide to reveal a deep part of who you are, and tell him you have no husband.

This man's response shares a lot about who he is, too, and it's pretty astonishing! Turns out he's a prophet! He knows all about you, your situation, and tells you that you've been married five times and the man you are living with now isn't your husband. He sees and knows this deep pain in your life. You are not, as many people have assumed, a woman of loose morals. In your time and place you would have been in all these relationships because each of those husbands would have either died or divorced you. You were likely living with a husband's brother in a levirate marriage so that you were protected and had a home. You are genuinely astonished that you and this man have shared so much of yourselves that you would reveal these things to each other.

You were definitely not expecting this when you left your home with an empty water jar, but you are so glad you decided to step into this encounter with him. You decide to go even deeper with some of your burning theological questions. This prophet answers, although you still aren't too sure you understand everything he is talking about.

But then the moment comes that changes your life. You and this man at the well have reached a deep and genuine mutuality in your relationship, and this man lets you see the fully divine in him. Just as you have shown him the deepest parts of who you are, he shows you the deepest part of who he is. He reveals to you in a heart stopping moment that he is the Messiah. He is God. This moment stops you in your tracks. Utter silence permeates the heavy air around the man, this Jesus, as he declares for the first time--"I AM." Sit in that silence for a minute. Can you hear the sound that revelation makes in your heart and in your spirit? Can you hear the invitation that Jesus is offering you? This man, this Jesus, that you have been sharing yourself with, deepening your relationship with, is the Messiah—or at least you think he could be.

The disciples feel this silence, too, since they arrive at this very moment and, despite their own astonishment at seeing Jesus talking alone with you, say nothing. They cannot speak into this holy moment of knowing and being known in genuine relationship with the Messiah. This relationship has brought you to a point of belief, not of full understanding, but of belief.

In the thick silence, you leave your water jar at the well, along with Jesus and the dumbfounded disciples, and go invite the people in your town to come and encounter Jesus, too. You invite them to be in relationship with the Messiah, and you will never be the same again.

Jesus has revealed himself to you. And you. And you. And you. Jesus invites each and every one of us, he invites the whole world, into this kind of a mutual relationship with him. "Give me a drink," Jesus invites us. "Give me a drink." Amen.