

JESUS AND WATER: SURVIVING THE SUMMER HEAT

Woman at the Well

John 4:1-30, 39-42

Jesus is sitting by a well; tired from his journey. A woman, a Samaritan woman, not of his race, culture or religion comes to draw water from the well. Going against all custom Jesus not only speaks to the woman but he makes a request of her—“*Give me a drink.*”

The woman is shocked. She expects him to ignore her or even physically move away from her because she is not ‘his kind of people!’ She says to him, “*How is that you, a Jew, ask something of me, a Samaritan woman?*”

It is at this point that Jesus begins to talk in strange ways about water. He wants to give to her “*living water.*” He says that this “*living water*” will forever quench her thirst! That it will be as a “*spring of gushing water!*” And that it will provide her with “*eternal life.*” Aha! Jesus is not referring to the quenching of her physical thirst but rather to her spiritual thirst. However, not yet understanding that Jesus is speaking spiritually, she asks him for this thirst quenching water; because in her mind it will keep her from having to make a daily trip out to the well.

Now, Jesus throws her a curve. When she requests the living water—that she still understands to be literal water—Jesus tells her to go get her husband and then to come back for the water. She says, “*I have no husband.*” It is with Jesus’ response that awareness begins to come to the woman. Jesus says to her, “*You are right, you do not have a husband, you have had five husbands and the man you are with now is not your husband—you are shacking up!*” To this she replies, “*I see that you are a prophet!*”

It is at this point that she begins to try to engage Jesus in a theological argument about worship. What I actually believe she is doing is attempting to move the conversation away from her personal life to a theological philosophical discussion. Let’s not get personal Jesus—let’s talk about religion! As if religion is not personal! She says to Jesus, “*Your people say worship should be in this place and my people say it should be in another place—what do you say prophet?*” I love Jesus’ response, “*Worship should be in spirit and in truth. Wherever worship occurs it should be in spirit and in truth.*”

Worship in truth? Truth? Worship in truth! Be vulnerable enough to embrace truth in worship! What a novel concept! Worship without pretense and masks. Worship as we really are—in truth. Make worship personal—in truth?

Truth! Why does Jesus bring up this woman’s past—you have had five husbands? Why does he mention the current state of her life—you are shacking up? Now remember, Jesus knows her past and present and still offers her the living water. He still offers her spiritual life—something beyond the physical, something that can touch her very spirit, that can provide depth and meaning to her life regardless of her past or present. Living water!

I believe that Jesus wants her to fully experience the living water that he is offering to her. He does not want her to think, “*If he really knew me, where I have been and what I have*

done, and even what I am doing now, if he really knew me he would not offer to me this great gift.” My friends, Jesus wants her to know that the truth is on the table, everything is out in the open and he is still there with her. Just as her race, gender, religion and culture have not scared him off or caused him to move away from her, neither has the truth about her life. *“I know your secrets. I know what causes you shame and struggle and regret. I know your past. I know your present. And I still offer you living water!”* My friends, if there is ever a time to shout hallelujah it is right now!

Friends, if you have had partner after partner after partner Jesus still offers you the living water—spiritual life with depth and meaning. If you have sobered up and drunk up time after time Jesus still offers you the living water—spiritual life with depth and meaning. If you have been in jail and out of jail over and over Jesus still offers you the living water—spiritual life with depth and meaning.

When it comes to our relationship with God through Jesus the Christ we need to know that everything is on the table; all that we have been and done, and all that we are and think. There is nothing hidden—there is only the truth! There is no pretense! There are no masks! And the amazing thing is that this truth frees us to live more authentically and boldly, it frees us to drink the living water that Jesus offers, it frees us to live with more depth and meaning.

The woman that met Jesus that day by the well had to continue her daily trips to get water from the well. Her physical thirst for water was still very much present. But her life was very different. She no longer lived with guilt and shame. She was no longer burdened by regret and failure. She was freed by the truth—by the living water that soaked into her and provided constant nourishment for her spiritual life giving her new meaning and hope. All that it took for her life to take on spiritual depth and meaning was for Jesus, the living Christ, saying to her, *“I know your secrets. I know what causes you shame and struggle, regret and guilt. I know your past. I know your present. And I still offer you living water!”* Hallelujah!