

Today's scripture relates a radical story of affirmation, empowerment and spiritual transformation. It might be more salient than ever for us, in our time populated with public talk around male privilege and racial tribalism.

Samaria: The "Jews" or Israelites lived in two principal areas: Galilee (to the north) and Judah (to the south, including Jerusalem). In between the two areas was Samaria. It was populated with a people who worshipped Yahweh, but who had been left behind during the 722 BCE Assyrian Invasion and had thus mixed with imported Assyrian peoples. So there were not longer "pure" Israelites, but distant, "half-breed", cousins. They also recognized Mount Gerizim as the holy place, not Mount Sinai as the Jews did. Eventually, the religion of the Samaritans evolved to the point that they held only the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) as being the law of God, rejecting all the books of poetry and prophecy. By Jesus' day, Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. With whom do you not deal?

JACOB'S WELL: Throughout the First Testament wells are sites of romantic encounter, much like in a romantic comedy the eventual lovers often bump into each other spilling papers and packages. Could it be that the disciples are upset (in verse 27) when they return to find Jesus talking with a woman at a well because they are thinking of such stories, as happens in Genesis 24 Abraham's servant finds a bride for Isaac, in Genesis 29 Jacob finds his future wife Rachel and Moses, in Exodus 2, meets his future wife Zipporah.

noon: This point hints at something hidden, for one would usually come to get water in the fresh coolness of the early morning hours, not at the hottest part of the day without the possibility of shade. Is she coming now because she has to, poorly planned for the day, or because she wants to come when the other women of the village aren't around to see or encounter her?

water: obviously water is important in the story about a well, and Jesus' comments...but this also calls to mind the other times water is brought up in the gospel of John, think of last week: in John 3:5 where Jesus says "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of *water* and Spirit." Or John 2, where Jesus turns *water* into wine as the first miraculous sign recounted by John, or when John the baptizer first talks of Jesus in 1:32-34 << ³² And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with *water* said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.">>

you have had five husbands: She has either been divorced or widowed five times. We tend to think of her as a sexually or morally loose woman, yet it's much more likely that she has been divorced five times because she is barren, unable to have children – the worst thing possible for a woman at the time. ...

SCRIPTURES FOR

SUNDAY 2.4.2018

John 4:1-42

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" ² —although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— ³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through **Samaria**. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ **JACOB'S WELL** was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about *noon*.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw *water*, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people

She most likely is living with the brother of her 5th husband, who was obligated to take her in should his brother die, or leave his wife. She is rejected by all, not because of what she's done, but because of something she cannot control or change. Meeting Jesus rocks her world.

I am: In his gospel John selects seven miracles or "signs" to include. They seem chosen specifically for their ability to help us believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be, and that by believing we might have eternal life.

In addition, John's gospel also contains seven "I am" statements. Their focus is on what happens after we become believers. This is the first "I am" statement in the gospel. It's important to remember that the most important name of God, Yahweh, means literally "I am".

Come and see: this is the verbatim invitation that Jesus gives to his first disciples in John 1:38-39 << ³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw the two disciples of John following [him], he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, **"Come and see."** >> Like Jesus, she doesn't tell people what to believe, rather she asks a question, inviting them to a conversational relationship.

the woman's testimony: besides John the baptizer in John 1:6-8 << ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. >>, the woman is the only other person to testify to the life-changing experience of being in relationship with Jesus.

Savior of the world.": This is the only use of the word Savior in John's gospel, the only time Jesus is called this. What does savior mean for John? Think of the immediate connection in the text to John 3:16 (just a few verses before) in which it says, "" use of Savior in John – connected to John 3:16-17 <<¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.>> Jesus is not the savior of the Jews, of one tribe of people, but of all people, of all the cosmos. Jesus' saving power (save in Greek means simultaneously "to heal" "to deliver" "to make whole") breaks down and transforms conflictual and oppositional relationships of us versus them, tribalism that excludes and dehumanizes.

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- **What shimmers for you in this story?**
- **With whom do you identify in the story? Why?**
- **Does Jesus need the woman, or vice-versa in the story? What does that imply about faith?**
- **In Greek the word "to save" or "salvation" (sozo) means: to save, to deliver or protect to heal, preserve, to make whole. This is the only time John uses the title "Savior of the World" in his gospel, to talk of Jesus. What does that mean for him? For you?**

must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, **"I am** he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ **"Come and see** a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."