

## **Sunday 3/15/2020: Woman at the well**

She was alone and Jesus spoke to her. We are entering a time when I want to say to each of you “you are not alone.” For some of us, it is a scary thing to not see our friends in the flesh, though we may skype or facetime or phone them. We are worried about cabin fever. At the same time we want to help prevent the spread of disease. That should be our biggest worry, not just for ourselves, but for others. Yet, as group gatherings are cancelled, social isolation can become a real threat that may loom very large for many of us. It is particularly scary for people with depression or anxiety or whose home situations are stressful. Let’s not idealize and assume that everyone is comfortable spending more time at home with family without the buffer of times apart in group activities.

The woman at the well was not there with other women. Her situation may not have been a comfortable one. Perhaps she was an outcast. We don’t know why she had more than one husband and the man with her now was not her husband. Perhaps she was just trying to survive. She may have simply been living with a man for protection but a servant, not his lover, as Bo Chancey suggests in his book *Decentralized*, having talked with pastors in other parts of the world about the text...or she may have been living with someone who had not married her and who expected her to be in a relationship as well. She may have been widowed, and more than once, or her husbands may have divorced her, justly or unjustly. Any of those scenarios would have left her broken and vulnerable. Then there is the scenario that is so often assumed by modern readers in America, Chancey notes, that she was somehow a loose woman by her society’s morals and that’s why she had so many husbands and a man not her husband at the time Jesus talking to her.

But when Jesus spoke to her, and knew her so well, she responded with joy in affirming that he saw into her very soul. We don't know her full situation, but Jesus did! She responded to being "seen" by Jesus, truly seen and known. When he told her that he was the Messiah, she believed him. With excitement she spread the word to others that she had met the Messiah.

Jesus helped her to feel important, valued, and less alone. He gave her a sense of purpose along with a sense of worth. In this time of greater "social distancing," we need to remember that physical distancing is not spiritual, emotional distancing. We need to be proactive in reaching out to others, as Jesus always did and still does! Pick up the phone and call a friend. Send an email. Set a time to do skype or facetime. Take a walk outdoors if you are in a position to. Maybe this is a time that we can actually grow closer to our family members and friends by intentionality in different ways. As Rav Joseph has said: "Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise."

The Samaritan woman at the well became a witness that helped others believe in God at work in Jesus. She connected with people in a new and different way...possibly after being isolated! She initiated contact! For a purpose! She helped others believe. By sharing her own experience with Jesus.

We are still going to initiate contact...with a purpose! Just a different form of contact. This is both a challenge and a difficult one...and an opportunity. You can be a witness. A witness for love over

fear, while still practicing best health practices. A witness for the amazing power of prayer, while also trusting in the best that science and medicine has to offer.

I will be interested in hearing how you experience God's Presence in your life in these times. Keep a journal of your "God moments," those times when God meets you unexpectedly and meets your need and the needs of others.

Jesus has life-giving water of the Holy Spirit to fill our cups in this time when we may feel anxiety or concern. Remember that our lives are in God's Hands, and God will never let us go.

But we also have a part to play in keeping our neighbors safe.

I find it interesting to note in Jesus' day, as in ours, the witness of a woman was not valued as much as a man's. Yet Jesus knew he was intentionally creating a female witness!!! He empowered the powerless. He shared who He was with a solitary woman and one outside of his own group, the Jews.

Jews and Samaritans did not interact, but Jesus, a Jew, interacted with a Samaritan woman. Who can you reach out to by phone or internet during this time that you don't regularly interact with now? Perhaps NEW connections will actually form during this time, like new synapses and pathways in the brain when we break out of old thought patterns and ways of being!

Also, we can either let this coronavirus time divide us or unite us. I see it as having the potential to lift us above our political debate. Sure we can comment on the perspective of our party or even candidate's perspective, but overall, we need to take an even higher view and simply focus on our common humanity at this time and how we can get through this together. None of us have been through this identical time

before. It is unique, but with lessons we can learn from the past. We must affirm our common humanity, and both our vulnerability and our strength.

I am committed to being here for you. You can call or text me any time on my cell phone, available by email or at the church office. I am here for you.

Unlike Jesus, I don't have the ability to look into your mind and heart and see all, but I can listen and if I don't hear you the first time, say it again. Help me understand. And know that it is normal to feel a variety of emotions during times when our regular routine and way of doing things is disrupted.

The Samaritan woman did not go to the well that day looking for her life to change and to have a new message to share. She thought it was just a routine day. But she met Jesus. And nothing was the same.

We didn't expect that when I said Lent can be a time to slow down that we would indeed be cast into a new time in American life and in the world. When calendars slowed down and group activities. But here we are.

Please pray for medical professionals. Pray for all who are on the frontlines. And this is an "all in" struggle to keep the virus from spreading. All in now means all take a time out!!!! Connect differently...but stay connected.

The sacrifice you make is to help save someone else's life, maybe someone you have met, maybe someone you haven't met, but whom God knows...better than even they know themselves. Amen!