

2026 03 08 WORSHIP AT HOME

Dear friends,

This week we visit again another well-known story – that of the Woman at the Well. Last week we learned of Jesus' encounter with an insider who visited him in secret – this week he meets with an outsider, a woman and a Samaritan who arrives boldly at the well in the middle of the day. This is a surprising encounter and leads to an unlikely conversation. We too must be open to the unpredictable and surprising, for we travel through the cross to the most unpredictable and surprising event of all – the Resurrection. I keep you all in my thoughts and prayers and wish you every blessing, *Margaret*.

Call to worship:

Though we are coming to God now in our separate homes, let us realise that we all come together to him, for we are each known and loved as a child of God. And so we come to worship him – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that, as we come to you, you are always waiting to welcome us and draw us closer to you and deeper into your love. Amen.

Almighty God, whose arms are open to all, we come to meet you and to hear your word for us today – for you know us, all we have done and all that we are.

You offer us 'living water', all that we need for our lives today. Amen.

The words to 'As the deer pants for the water' by Martin J. Nystrom [b.1956] Singing the Faith 544

1 As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.

You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.

Refrain; you alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield.

You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.

2 I want you more than gold or silver, only you can satisfy.

You alone are the real joy-giver and the apple of my eye.

Refrain.....

3 You're my friend and you are my brother, even though you are a king.

I love you more than any other, so much more than anything.

Refrain.....

Prayer We come to you, O Lord, recognising that only you can quench our thirst – only you can satisfy our hunger. As we approach your throne, may we recognise that your life-giving Spirit dwells within us. Draw us closer to you today. Amen.

We give you thanks and praise today, Lord, for the woman at the well. Thank you for her willingness and eagerness to seek you. Thank you for the life-giving water which you gave to her – and now give to us. Thank you that she – and we – may thirst no more.

Thank you that you welcome the outcast and the stranger – and thank you for welcoming us.

We give you thanks for your life-giving Spirit which transforms individuals & communities. Amen.

Lord, forgive us when we have tried to draw water from elsewhere, and failed to draw water from you.
Forgive us when we have ostracised those who, like the woman at the well, are not like us.
Forgive our prejudices towards those on the edge of our society today.
Forgive us when we struggle to be holy.
Help us, Lord, to love as you love, and to open our hearts and minds and eyes to all. Amen.

O Lord, you forgive us on so many levels and we thank you for your forgiveness when we open ourselves to your presence. Help us to live better lives as we strive to follow you. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Woman at the Well – translation made by H. J. Richards from John 4: 5-29 and found in A Common Worship Year A Miscellany compiled by Nick Fawcett – copyright 2004 Kevin Mayhew Limited.

On a journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, Jesus and his disciples had to cross the hostile territory of Samaria. About mid-day they reached Jacob's Well, just outside the town of Shechem-Nablus.

While the disciples went on into the town to get something for lunch, Jesus, exhausted by the long walk slumped down by the side of the well.

It was the hottest part of the day.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water.

'Could you give me a drink?' Jesus asked her.

She laughed. 'You're a fine Jew,' she said, 'asking me, a hated Samaritan, for a drink!

You know we're not supposed even to talk to each other, let alone drink from the same cup!'

'What *you* don't know,' said Jesus teasingly, 'is who I am!

Perhaps you should be asking *me* for a drink!

I'd have given you fresh, running water, not the still water from the bottom of a well.'

'A fine lot of water you'll get,' she retorted. 'You haven't even got a bucket!

Old Father Jacob dug down 150 feet to make this well,

and for 1700 years his descendants and their flocks have had to make do with it.

But you, of course, can do without it!'

'This water won't really quench your thirst,' Jesus replied.

'Before long you'll be back here, thirsty all over again.

The water I'm talking about isn't like that. When you drink it, you'll never be thirsty.

It will be as if you had a spring of living water inside you, providing you with life after life after life.'

'Ooh!' said the woman. 'That's useful.

I'll have some of that. Save me a lot of bother slogging down here and back each day!'

Seeing he was getting nowhere, Jesus said, 'Go fetch your husband, and bring him here.'

'I haven't got a husband,' the woman replied.

'Exactly!' said Jesus. 'You've been married five times, but you never married the man you're living with now. You're being very honest!'

'You must be a man of God,' the woman gasped.

Then, after a bit, 'Ah, then perhaps you can tell me whether we Samaritans were right in building God's Temple here on Mount Gerazim 500 years ago, or you Jews in building one on Mount Zion in Jerusalem?'

'Believe me,' said Jesus, 'the time is near when that miserable dispute between Samaritans and Jews will be over. Everyone who believes in God will worship him everywhere. God is not someone you meet on a mountain. He is Spirit, and what he wants is people who worship him in the Spirit of love he pours out on them.'

The woman was by now utterly lost.

'Oh well,' she said finally, 'I suppose the Messiah will make it all clear when he comes.'

'You're speaking to him,' Jesus replied.

The woman dropped her bucket and chased back into town to bring everyone out to meet Jesus.

'He read my whole life like a book,' she gasped.

'Do you think maybe this is the Messiah we've been waiting for?'

Comment:

John, the master storyteller, weaves a narrative for us full of humour, missed communication and the profoundly metaphorical use of water as a symbol of the life that God gives us.

It starts simply enough. It's the middle of the day and Jesus is thirsty. A woman comes to the well and a conversation starts up. The scene is odd for two reasons. First, drawing water in the middle of the day is unusual and second, a Jewish man asks for water from a Samaritan woman.

That the woman comes to the well when no-one else does suggests she has something to hide.

The fact that Jesus asks for water from someone he shouldn't even be speaking to suggests he had something to give. She misunderstands Jesus' metaphor about living water and deflects him from following up his insight into her domestic life with an attempt to have a conversation about correct forms of worship. Her comment about him not even having a bucket is humorous – but her leaving her bucket [water jar] to go and get her neighbours is a deeply moving image of leaving everything to follow Jesus. The gentle humour of the story highlights the enormity of her decision.

A woman who draws water at noon to avoid her neighbours now goes to seek those neighbours out, to tell them what Jesus has done for her. And her action seems to be a contrast with that of the disciples when they returned [v 31] who are more concerned that he eats something.

What the woman does is to share her astonishment with her neighbours. She has had a conversation with a man who has deep insight into who she is, which makes her wonder whether he is the Messiah. Some of her neighbours believe her story and believe in Jesus, but far more come to hear him for themselves, and so to believe in him.

At the heart of the story is that the woman is exposed for who she really is by Jesus and yet is not shamed by it. Rather, she is set free to become what grace will make her. She embraces a new identity based on facing the truth about herself, but much more on facing the truth of who Jesus really is. Jesus shows himself to be not just Israel's Messiah but the Saviour of the world.

Prayer

Lord, as we consider the powerful image of water, we remember those around the world for whom clean water is scarce.

We pray for women and children who walk miles each day to collect water, which is often dirty and full of disease – we pray for their safety, especially in areas of civil unrest.

We pray for children who miss school because of the scarcity of clean water, and for girls who struggle to attend due to lack of good sanitation, and for communities where children are dying from water-related diseases.

We pray for families, communities and entire economies affected by the lack of clean water and adequate facilities, where illness prevents work, and livelihoods are threatened – where money cannot be earned to buy food and each day is a struggle.

We pray for those on the margins of society because of their status, age, disability, background or race – all those who seem to have no voice.

Help us to hear their cries, to listen to their plea – help us to open our eyes and ears.

The Samaritan woman took a risk speaking to Jesus. We pray for all who take risks on a daily basis – in their jobs, for mere survival – to get food and water for their families. And we pray for children in risky situations all over the world, trying to survive.

We pray for those in our communities who need your water of life – those who are lonely, bereaved, sad, or have lost all hope. Bring them your comfort, joy and peace.

Lord, may our world wake up to water and our need for it.

Help those of us who have water on tap to make a noise on behalf of those who do not.

Water of life, quench us with your life-giving Spirit and bring hope.

Help us to make a difference.

Hear us, O God, and have mercy. Amen.

Close:

Lord – open my eyes, my ears and my mouth to your life-changing Spirit, that all around me might see you in me. Amen.

What God has given us is glorious.

May we go out, in the power of the Holy Spirit,
to share this gift – to become givers,
in God's name. Amen

Gentle God,

As water gently flows, so may your love flow-
through the lives of those who need refreshment,
through the minds of those who need peace,
through the hearts of those who need comfort.

May they know your presence today and be blessed with strength to face tomorrow.

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