



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we enter the third week of Lent, we hear about the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-42). Here we find Jesus, exhausted, thirsty, and at a well without a bucket. It is noontime, and this woman approaches the well.

A few things of interest to note, first, about the woman. In that time and culture, Jewish men did not publicly associate with women, and certainly not with "the enemy" – Samaritans. The woman alludes to this (John 4:9). She comes to the well at the heat of the day. This would be unusual, as most would come first thing in the morning or in the evening. Commentators note that she must be trying to avoid the townspeople – their gazes. She is in an irregular state of life – she has been married five times and is now in a non-marital relationship. The townspeople would have looked down on her.

Second, this takes place at a well. In the Old Testament, wells were significant for being the place to find a bride. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, and he encountered Rebekah at a well. Jacob and Moses met their future wives at wells. Important things happen at wells in the Bible – especially nuptials.

With this in mind, we see how Jesus encounters this woman. He breaks the cultural mores to talk with her and ask her for a drink. Why? Certainly, his body was thirsty – he was parched from the journey and the heat of the day. It is clear, though, that there is more than natural thirst, from Jesus' later comment, "**I have food to eat of which you do not know.... My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work**" (John 4:32, 34). As the God of the universe, Jesus is thirsting for the love of this woman.

I've said it before, but I'll say it again, the summary of the Bible is "**God wants to marry us.**" Jesus goes to this well to encounter His bride – the "woman" (like Eve was called "woman"). This woman didn't realize that He was the One for whom she was thirsting. Who knows the reasons for the multiple broken marriages, but there would be pain and anguish in all of them – whether through death, or, more likely, the pain of divorce, rejection and abandonment (remember that in that culture, it was only the man who could divorce his wife, not the other way around). **Five times!** Now she is not even able to be married, probably being used by someone who makes her feel loved, but refuses to commit. And she puts up with it because she *needs* to feel loved.

Jesus appears and challenges her about her relationships (John 4:16-18). While she changes the subject at first, eventually she finally got what she was looking for. She ran back to the village (no longer ashamed to see them face to face), leaving her water jar behind; she found the "Living Water," she found someone who loves her for herself, not for what she can give or do for Him.

In this, Jesus, too, finds the water for which He is thirsting – the love of this woman (John 4:32, 34). From the Cross, He cries out His thirst for love, as well (John 19:28). His thirst is for your love and mine. Sometimes we are afraid to come to Jesus because of our past, or because we are ashamed of our own thirst for love, our desires, and how we have tried to fulfill them. But Jesus is not interested in our shame (except to heal it). He is interested in letting us love Him *now, in this moment!* We have been wounded seeking so many things that will not fulfill, yet He says, "I am the Living Water, I am the One for whom you are thirsting. Come to Me! Let me fill you. Let me quench your thirst for love. Let me be the one who will heal you. Come and love me, as I have loved you!"

Will we accept this offer, this invitation? Will we go to the "well" of nuptials with God? Will we show God our love for Him and quench His deep thirst for our love? The love you can give Jesus will not, cannot be quenched by anyone or anything else. You are unique, and Jesus thirsts for your unique love.

In this time of Lent, let us spend time at the foot of the Cross, showering our love on the thirsty Heart of Jesus!

