

Worship Material
Sunday 12th March 2023
Come and see
Materials from Roots Bible Study

Begin with an opening prayer

Lord God,
we sometimes turn up here, so tired in a busy week.
Our minds, bodies and souls aching for refreshment.
Jesus came to the well tired from his journey.
He sought not only to receive refreshment
but to give spiritual succour.
Lord God, we too want to receive. And to give.
We offer ourselves to you so you can do your mighty work in us.
Amen.

Read John 4.5-42

Bible Notes

On his way back from Jerusalem to Galilee, Jesus rests by Jacob's well. Jacob first met his wife Rachel at a well 'in broad daylight' and gave water to her sheep (Genesis 29.1-12). This earlier incident is recalled as we read about Jesus establishing a relationship with a Samaritan woman who had been abandoned by her husbands (plural) and shamed into fetching water on her own and in the heat of the day. This spiritual relationship will transform her and those to whom she speaks about him. He begins by saying, 'Give me a drink', echoing our Old Testament reading and the striking of water from the rock, identified by Paul as Christ himself (1 Corinthians 10.4). Already recognising his request - to someone doubly distanced by gender and race - as astonishing, the Samaritan woman is led to ask for what he offers her. 'Sir, give me this water.' Living water is often used in the Jewish Scriptures as an image of salvation - for example, in Ezekiel's vision of the river flowing from the future Temple (47.1-12). Here the water is not only God's gift to the thirsty but also God's gift within the thirsty, 'gushing up to eternal life' (see also 7.38). Perhaps the young bride whose groom describes her as 'a garden fountain, a well of living water' is in mind (Song of Solomon 4.15). This Samaritan woman, abused by men, becomes herself 'a well of living water' as she invites others to meet Jesus - 'Come and see' - leading many of them to believe in him.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

We know this is a significant story because of its length and the careful dialogue. What does it mean? Not everything is explained, so people have interpreted it different ways. For some the Samaritan woman is portrayed as a promiscuous outcast - but it doesn't say that. Maybe the 'five husbands' symbolise the five false Gods the Samaritan's worshipped (2 Kings 17.29-31). Or was Jesus shaming her by mentioning her marital status? We do know that, historically, the Samaritans were Jews intermarried with Gentiles, brought into Palestine by the king of Assyria; like the Dalits in India, they were 'unclean'. We also know that Jewish men wouldn't speak with an unmarried woman, let alone a Samaritan. So, one thing is clear: Jesus was practising radical inclusion and acceptance. Everyone's welcome!

A prayer of thanksgiving

Sometimes we think we know our place.

Exactly just so.

And everybody else should know theirs.

Exactly just so.

As we go into a new week,

help us to realise that life isn't actually 'exactly just so'.

It can be expanded beyond our wildest dreams.

Lord, this week we want to be astonished,

to accept everyone in your love.

We want people to believe because of our testimony.

For people to hear it for themselves, through our lives.

Thank you for giving us our best life in you.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Thank you that we are accepted.

Thank you that we belong.

Thank you that you give us the water of life to drink.

Help us to be accepting of others,

and invite them to drink your water too.

Amen.

