

Lent 3a: 3/19/17
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[Wearing shawl . . . fanning self]

High noon, miserable heat –
the worse possible time to go to the well.
But it was the best time for me, the Samaritan woman.
No one else would be there to judge me,
or make me feel small.
No catcalls from the men; no stares from the women.

But when I got there that day I found that my worst fear
had been realized.
Someone was there. A tired, thirsty, Jewish man.
And he had the audacity to ask me to get him a drink.

So he was thirsty – but a Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman
for water?
Everyone knew his people had considered mine unclean for centuries.
But then he did something really strange.
He, a man, offered me, a woman, a drink of living water.

He didn't even have a bucket,
and yet he said that he could give me water
from which I would never be thirsty.
Oh, I liked that idea – never having to trudge to that well again!

But was it too good to be true?
He asked for my husband.
Even before I could explain, he knew the truth --
that I'd been married five times and the man I was with now . . .

Unlike other people who were so quick to judge,
unlike even some of you,
this thirsty Jewish man doesn't jump to conclusions.
He just *knows*.
I almost felt like he knew me better than I know myself.

Look, I don't need to go into my business here in front of all of you.

Maybe those husbands dumped me because I was barren,
that's pretty common where I come from.
Or maybe I was widowed, or been abused.
Or maybe I had made some really bad choices in my life.
Haven't you?

Jesus was first person I ever met who didn't underestimate me.
He knows life is complicated.

And he took the time to stand there in the hot sun to talk with me,
to answer my questions,
to take me seriously –
a no-name, scorned, Samaritan, woman.

When those disciples of his came and found us speaking,
I knew they were shocked.
But I'll tell you a secret:
At that point I think I "got" Jesus better than they did.

With my background I'm hardly one to brag
but, you know, he did tell me that he was the Messiah.
I couldn't help but leave my water jar there
and rush off to get others to "come and see" the man Jesus
"who told me everything I've ever done."

Think of the transformation, the healing –
all my life I'd felt shunned,
going out of my way to go to that well alone,
now here I was rushing off to tell everyone about Jesus!
I guess that's why they call me the first evangelist.

So why stop now?
I guess I should tell you too about Jesus,
who knows everything you've ever done
and loves you still.
Loves you so much that he wants to give you a healing drink
from that "spring of water gushing up to eternal life".

And when you're tempted to forget that

(we all get confused and discouraged sometimes),
remember that you have your own Samaritan woman at the well
right here to remind you,
to show you,
that Jesus never gives up on me or you.

You flatter me, but I saw that stained glass likeness of myself
out there in the hallway.

I like the words you chose to sum up my story:
“We have a friend in Jesus.”

We have a friend in Jesus,
the Savior of the world who’s been just as tired and thirsty and
hungry as we’ve ever been.

A friend who knows everything we’ve ever done,
and loves us too much to let us drown where we are.

A friend who refreshes us with living water and sends us out to tell others --
especially those who are vulnerable, different,
or just plain difficult --
what it’s like to be known so well
and loved even more.

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