

John 4.1-30, 39-42
Conversion at the Well
WRCOB 1.30.22

Megan Hill a blogger found at Her.meneutics
Shares, what she calls, her boring testimony.

I have no memory of becoming a Christian. I didn't pray a prayer or walk an aisle or have a eureka moment.

In fact, I don't remember a time when I didn't love the Lord Jesus.

My Christian testimony—the story of how I came to faith—is downright boring.

I, for one, never believed there was only one formula
In coming to faith in Jesus.

I shared last week my own “come to Jesus” moment.

But I think I know more Christians
That have NOT had a “born again” experience
Than those that have.

Those who grew up in a Christian household
And as far back as they can remember
Jesus had always been a part of their life.

But I believe, there is a correlation
Between a person's spiritual and emotional health
And God's spiritual impact on them.

The deeper the pain or brokenness
The more profound the touch of grace.

There is no recipe for receiving Christ's abundant life.

We all come from different places.

God's grace is available at any junction on life's journey.

As Puritan preacher Thomas Watson once wrote:

The Lord does not tie himself to a particular way, or use the same order with all. He comes sometimes in a still small voice. Such as have had godly parents, and have sat under the warm sunshine of religious education, often do not know how or when they were called. The Lord did secretly and gradually instil [sic] grace into their hearts, as dew falls unnoticed in drops.

Now having said this

The story of the woman at the well shows
How impactful and immediate
Jesus impacts a broken spirit.

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The imagery here takes me to Nigeria.

I have visited many places that remind me of this scene.

A small village, houses close together
Mud-walled and thatched roofed

A beaten path extending out from the village
To an open hand-dug well
The only source of water
In this hot and dry environment.

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Our story takes place around noon
The hottest time of the day in this arid region.

The time of day everyone would have been gone
Either to the farm, tending their flock
Or if possible, home taking a mid-day rest.

Everyone, that is, except this Samaritan woman and Jesus.

You need to know, in many places of the world
Drawing water is a social occasion.

It is the women or female children
Who go together to fetch water
And catch up with the goings-on.

Ask Judith
She had to do this as child growing up
Rising as early as 3:30 am to start the day.

Fetching water was usually done early in the morning
Or late in the day.

It was hardly ever done during the midday sun.

But this particular woman
On this particular day
Came to fetch her water in the very middle of the day.

Why do you suppose that is?

There is a reason why Jesus finds her alone
Drawing water during the heat of the day.

There's a reason why she goes when no one else is around.

She's been there before when others were drawing water.

She won't to do that again!

She's seen the looks
She's overheard their comments
She's felt their contempt.

So, she avoids them.

We find her fetching water in the middle of the day
To escape from the ridicule and scorn.

She just wants to be left alone.

Instead, she is confronted by a man, a stranger, a Jew.

She didn't see him there when she approached
Resting in the shadow of the well.

He asks her for a drink.

They have this disjointed conversation.

He speaks to her of spiritual things
She speaks to him of practical things.

She speaks of water that satisfies physical thirst.
He speaks of water that quenches the soul.

Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter.

“Go get your husband.”

Well, dang! How did he know that?

Ok, she lives with a guy and they're not married.

Yea, she's had five husbands.

And this stranger knows this?

But hey, to be fair
Before we judge her too harshly
We don't know why she's had five husbands.

It might be no fault of her own.

We don't know whether the previous husbands died
Or whether the marriages ended in divorce.

She may have been passed from one man to another
Until there was no one left who wanted her.

She'd reached an age where she was no longer desirable.

Maybe she'd been misused and abused.

Maybe that's why she's gruff with Jesus
When he asked her for a drink of water.

She had enough of men mistreating her.

But when she least expects it
This stranger exposes her deepest guilt.

John 4:10 NLT

¹⁰ Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

Could it be so easy?

The words were sweet music to her ears.

Like a person standing before a judge
Ready to be convicted of all her sins
And anticipating a harsh punishment
Hears instead

John 4:14 NIV

¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Is this even possible?

She was so struck by the encounter with Jesus.

That she forgets her water jug at the well
And runs all the way back to town
And with no sense of shame exclaims

John 4:29 NLT

²⁹ “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?”

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Granted, she did not fully understand what had happened.

She could hardly believe Christ had just spoken to her.

All she knew was living water was rushing in
Flooding her soul
And she drank deeply of it.

There in that once bleak and meager existence
Joy came flooding in she never expected!

In just that moment, her life drastically changed.

She would never, ever be the same.

She drank from the well containing living water.

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But her story is not over!

What is really endearing about this story
Is what the woman does next.

She goes back to the very people who shunned her
Who ridiculed and scorned her
Who despised and hated her

She goes back to these people
And shares her experience.

John 4:39 CEV

³⁹ A lot of Samaritans in that town put their faith in Jesus because the woman had said, “This man told me everything I have ever done.”

The scorn of the village became an evangelist
Leading many to Christ.

Now think about this.

The scribes and Pharisees said Jesus
Hung out with the wrong crowd
Sinners and tax collectors.

But Jesus specifically placed himself among people like this
Because they were most receptive to his grace.

And people like this
Were the most excited to share the love of Christ?

The scribes and Pharisees were not open to Jesus' ministry.

Did we hear Nicodemus wildly running back to the Temple
Excitedly sharing the good news of Jesus?

Or are the broken and downhearted
Most receptive to God's grace?

Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as living water.

The South Africa Christian writer Andrew Murray
Explains it this way.

Just as water always seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds [someone] abased and empty, His glory and power flow in to exalt and to bless.

Her spiritual conversion and blessing
Was so profound
She could not keep it to herself

Even to share her moment of love and grace
To the very people
Who refused to give her the same.

She'd come to the well
And instead of drinking from the well
That held the bitter, acrid taste of life gone sour

She drank deeply of the living water
From the well of eternal life
Offered by Christ Jesus.

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This is her story.

But it becomes our story too.

For we all are part of this unfolding drama of God.

For Jesus sits in the shadow of the well in your life
In the heat of your noon-day sun.

And watches as you draw your brackish, tepid, water
From the cesspools of your wretched lives

All the while Jesus offers living water

Isaiah 49:10 NLT

¹⁰ They will neither hunger nor thirst.

The searing sun will not reach them anymore.

For the Lord in his mercy will lead them;

he will lead them beside cool waters.

Revelation 22:17b NLT Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.

John 7:37b-38 NRSV “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸ and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”

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Could it be so easy?

You will never know

Until you take that first step of faith.

Drink deeply, then, from the wells of eternal life

As did the woman from Sychar.

For the waters Jesus offers is the only water

That the thirst in your soul.