

In the Light of Day  
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### Exodus 17:1-7

<sup>1</sup>From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup>The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" <sup>3</sup>But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" <sup>4</sup>So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." <sup>5</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup>I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. <sup>7</sup>He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

### Psalm 95

<sup>1</sup> O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
<sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!  
<sup>3</sup> For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.  
<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.  
<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.  
<sup>6</sup> O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!  
<sup>7</sup> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.  
 O that today you would listen to his voice!  
<sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup> when your ancestors tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.  
<sup>10</sup> For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they do not regard my ways."  
<sup>11</sup> Therefore in my anger I swore, "They shall not enter my rest."

### John 4:5-42

<sup>5</sup>So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.<sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."<sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."<sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"<sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"<sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,<sup>14</sup>but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."<sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” <sup>17</sup>The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’ <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” <sup>19</sup>The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” <sup>26</sup>Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

<sup>27</sup>Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” <sup>28</sup>Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup>“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” <sup>30</sup>They left the city and were on their way to him.

<sup>31</sup>Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” <sup>33</sup>So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup>Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup>The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup>For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

<sup>39</sup>Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” <sup>40</sup>So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

Nicodemus (the Pharisee whose story we heard last week) went to see Jesus at night, under the cover of darkness. He didn't want to be seen as disloyal to his faith. He was worried the damage it might do to his reputation to be seen with Jesus, and so he went at night.

The woman at the well<sup>1</sup>, she doesn't want to be seen, either, but she does that by going out in the middle of the day. In the middle of the day, at the well, nobody would have been there. Nobody with any sense, that is. It was hot at the sixth hour, so water gathering was done in the morning or the evening. It was often a group activity, a time for conversation and community.

This woman, we find out later, has had five husbands. She doesn't go to the well in the morning or in the evening, she goes in the middle of the day, when an already difficult task would have been even more difficult. So was her dread, her fear about encountering other women of the village. Or maybe it wasn't fear. Maybe they had told her she wasn't welcome when they were there.

The irony is that there is nothing- **nothing**- in the text to suggest that any of this was of her doing. That she had anything but high moral fiber. Jesus did not forgive her any sins, or tell her to sin no more. The truth of it was that in a culture in which women were not allowed to own property or work for wages, a culture in which a man could divorce his wife for something as small as burning dinner- these things could have happened to her through no fault of her own. She could be left with no financial resources. And she would be told who she must marry next- the next brother or family member who would accept her.

That she had done nothing wrong did not change the way she would have been treated.

In a culture that equated success with favor and misfortune with disfavor, the woman would have been blamed. And it's likely that, no matter how strong, she believed some of what had been said about her.

To sum up:

Jesus should not have been there. People in his position typically avoided Samaria. He chose to travel through. To stop at the well.

The woman should not have been there. She should have been doing this chore at a more pleasant hour.

It was not appropriate for Jesus to talk with her. Men could not talk with women without others present. And even if you set that to the side, a Jewish man wouldn't have spoken with a Samaritan woman.

And yet talk they did, and this woman became the first evangelist for Jesus. The first in John who goes and tells.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/john4x5.htm>  
[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1984](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1984)  
[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=44](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=44)

Oswaldo Vena, New Testament Professor writes, “Jesus left us with a crucial lesson to be learned: community can only be built when we are not afraid of overcoming old prejudices and are willing to break the social conventions that dehumanize us. The living water that Jesus promised the woman, symbolized in the water that Moses made come out of the rock in Exodus 17, is God’s purifying water, the Holy Spirit (7:37-39), which can purify our hearts of old hatreds and hostilities and form us into a diverse people of God on earth.<sup>2</sup>

Once they are there, talking, the story is only beginning, of course. Jesus talks with the woman about the water. She wants that living water. “*Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.*” Does she understand the spiritual nature of this water or does she just want to avoid meeting others who will shame her?

Jesus does not shame her. He treats her as a child of God. A beloved. An equal.

She feels known. Truly known. “*Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!*”

What does it feel like to be known. To be truly loved?

Jon Acuff, in his online journal entitled *Stuff Christians Like*, wrote this entry in April of 2009:<sup>3</sup>

I don’t want to brag, but I’m pretty awesome at applying band-aids. And make no mistake, there is an art. Because if you go too quickly and unpeel them the wrong way, they stick to themselves and you end up with a wadded up useless mess instead of the Little Mermaid festooned bandage your daughter so desperately wants to apply to a boo boo that may in fact be 100% fictional.

But sometimes the cuts are real, like the day my 5-year old got a scrape on her face playing in the front yard. I rushed in the house and returned with a princess bandage. As I bent down to apply it to her forehead, her eyes filled up with tears and she shrunk back from me.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“I don’t want to wear that band-aid.” She replied.

“Why? You have a cut, you need a band-aid.” I said.

“I’ll look silly.” She answered.

Other than her sister and her mom, there was no one else in the yard. None of her friends were over, cars were not streaming passed our house and watching us play, the world was pretty empty at that moment. But for the first time I can remember, she felt shame. She had discovered shame. Somewhere, somehow, this little five-year-old had learned to be afraid of looking silly.

If I was smarter, if I had been better prepared for the transition from little toddler to little girl, I might have asked her this: “Who told you that you were silly?”

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3189](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3189)

<sup>3</sup> <http://stuffchristianslike.net/2009/04/512-thinking-youre-naked/> (accessed July 17, 2010).

I didn't, though. That question didn't bloom in my head until much later and I didn't understand it until I saw God ask a similar question in Genesis 3:11.

To me, this is one of the saddest and most profoundly beautiful verses in the entire Bible.... He [God] appears and asks them a simple question: "Who told you that you were naked?"

There is hurt in God's voice as He asks this question, but there is also a deep sadness, the sense of a father holding a daughter that has for the first time ever, wrapped herself in shame.

Who told you that you were not enough?

Who told you that I didn't love you?

Who told you that there was something outside of me you needed?

Who told you that you were ugly?

Who told you that your dream was foolish?

Who told you that you would never have a child?

Who told you that you would never be a father?

Who told you that you weren't a good mother?

Who told you that without a job you aren't worth anything?

Who told you that you'll never know love again?

Who told you that this was all there is?

Who told you that you were naked?

I don't know when you discovered shame.

I don't know when you discovered that there were people that might think you are silly or dumb or not a good writer or a husband or a friend. I don't know what lies you've been told by other people or maybe even by yourself.

But in response to what you are hearing from everyone else, God is still asking the question, "Who told you that you were naked?" And He's still asking us that question because we are not.

In Christ we are not worthless, hopeless, dumb, ugly, or forgotten.

In Christ we are not naked.

That's what Jesus does for this woman. He sees her and tells her she is not dumb or ugly or forgotten. She is beautiful and loved and worthy of a conversation at the well. It changes everything. And it is no less true for us that it was for the woman at the well.

It changes her, for sure.

And in response to what Jesus had done, she cannot, she does not, keep that news to herself. The woman who goes to the well in the height of the day now has the courage to go into town and not just talk to the people, but to tell them, share with them what has happened, and tell the people of the town.

*Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony,*

Friends, why are you here today?

You are here, I am here because of someone who told.  
Someone who met Jesus or saw Jesus and who told someone else.  
They told someone whose life was changed, and they told another.  
One by one the Body of Christ came to be.

You are here because someone told someone and someone told and taught you about Jesus.  
About the God who created us  
and the Jesus that saves us  
and the Holy Spirit that keeps us going, keeps us returning to the well for that living water.

And now, who will you tell? Who will you show through your actions, and who will you tell with your words, about the God who thinks we are all worthy of love. The God who sees within us possibility. Possibilities for dismantling prejudice and fear, and possibilities for peace, justice, and hope.

*“They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.’”*