

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 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."

... ¹⁵ The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

... ³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I've ever done.' ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

God's Presence in The Land...

He didn't have to, but he did anyway! Jewish practice was to go around Samaria and not through it, even though the journey would take much longer. The layout of the land meant the direct and obvious route was through Samaria, but the geo-political situation was that the Jews had had nothing to do with Samaria (v.9) and vice-versa, because the Samaritans had abandoned the Lord God and married outside the tribes of Israel.

The open rift between these peoples remained to that day because the focus was on who was at fault. The Jews were blind to their own flaws and failings; the root cause for the loss of sovereignty over the promised land as they too had abandoned God. However, they could not forgive the ex-Jews of Samaria.

The history of that land is shown in the opening statement, for Jesus came to the town of Sychar, close to the 'plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph' where Jacob's well still existed. (v.5-6). Later, that area was included as part of the promised land where the tribes settled after their exodus from Egypt. Notice that the woman cites, 'our Father Jacob' (v.12) in her reply.

Jesus walked that land. It was his. He had created it; remember the beginning of this gospel account?

"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3 NIV)

Here is our first lesson from the story! The whole world is the Lord's; there is nowhere off-limits to Him and everywhere we go is His. This is both comfort and challenge: comfort we are always in the Lord's presence and challenge that we are always in the Lord's presence! How might this affect our mindset toward God and others, both in places we consider 'ours' and in shared spaces?

The Invite...

Jesus, weary from his travels all morning, came to the well about noon and waited for this Samaritan woman to arrive. Why does he wait and not draw the water himself? He was surely thirsty, but Jesus does not want to deny the Samaritan woman the honour of serving him. No-one here would refuse such a request from Jesus! Though of course, she does not know who he is, and the honour is the simple and humble practice of serving the stranger, the traveller.

That practice was honoured in Jesus' teachings,

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." (Matt.10:42 NIV)

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' (Matt.25:34-36 NIV)

No-one here would deny Jesus' request, would we?

The Samaritan woman arrives, not knowing who it is that sits at the well.

There had been a similar event at a well like this back in the days of Abraham who sent a servant to find a wife for Isaac – who later became the father of Jacob, whose well Jesus was now at. Back then the lady who arrived was Rebekah and, on being asked to give the man there a drink, she did just that and then drew more water for his camels too.

Unlike Rebekah, the Samaritan woman did not respond in kind. The ingrained mindset of animosity between Jew and Samaritan was her standard response, causing Jesus to press his case and raise the stakes,

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10 NIV)

The situation is reversed! Jesus' invitation is not only to quench his thirst but forms his invite to quench her thirst. Her life is a dry imitation of the spiritually and eternally abundant life Jesus' offers.

Her reaction?

“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” (John 4:12 NIV)

So often we think, or at least pretend, we have things sorted. We are self-reliant and don’t need Jesus. Even when the woman heard Jesus’ offer she is stuck in a material mindset – ‘great, give me that water so I don’t have to keep trudging to this well.’

But the invitation of Jesus is not simply a spiritual one and nor is it only a future one, about being in heaven.

Yes, the Samaritan woman would need to return to that well; but from that day on her life was no longer a dry existence but enriched with the living water of life; a picture often used by the Lord.

This Samaritan woman becomes the first evangelist to Samaria; a woman and a Samaritan – this really was a situation reversal! They believed her and they went to look for Jesus themselves, inviting him in,

³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I’ve ever done.’ ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers. (John 4:39-41 NIV)

Your reaction?

Will you receive Jesus’ invite today – either for the first time or afresh, as living water to revive and refresh the soul? Everyone is invited; the choice of response is yours.

Amen