

I wonder what possesses her to do what she does on that hot sultry day. What is this haggard woman doing at the water well all by herself in the middle of the day? Everyone knows that you gather water from the well in the cool hours of the early morning dawn before the hot sun begins to scorch the earth. Genesis 24:11 tells us that. Surely, she knows this.

And why does she go there alone? Traveling anywhere by yourself is one of the most dangerous and fool hardy things a person can do. Her own scriptures instruct that women are to gather water at the well in groups. (*1 Samuel 9:11*.) And yet here she is all by herself in the heat of the noonday sun going about the back breaking and thankless task of gathering water.

I'm not sure why she has chosen to be there when everyone else is not. Maybe the world has beaten her down one too many times and she's too ashamed to be near anyone else. Maybe she doesn't think she's worthy to be in polite company. Something in her life story has told her that she's better off alone, away from people, away from relationships. For reasons unknown, this woman hopes to remain invisible as she carries the trauma of isolation around with her. Clearly, she knows her exilic place and is resigned to be there.

Thankfully Jesus doesn't share in her same fateful resignation. There he is thirsting in the desert heat at high noon and in an act that can only be called "vulnerable" he asks this woman for a drink. And in that act, he has violated every religious rule in the book. The rules are quite clear: Men are not allowed to speak to women who are not their wives, nor are they allowed to interact with Samaritans. In this instance, Jesus has done both! Apparently, Jesus doesn't play by the rules, especially when those rules serve to dehumanize and build walls of isolation. In a liberating act of love, Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah to a fellow human being. To the rest of the world, she is the Other, the heretic, the stranger, the alien. To Jesus she is a child of God in whom he sees genuine hunger.

The wilderness at noon is no joke. People die from thirst out there. Jesus himself is no exception. His thirst is real. I suppose this Messiah could figure out a way to access the well water himself, after all he is God's anointed one, but instead he chooses to wait. To wait at the well until this outcast arrives so that she can see a whole new side of God: A God who is vulnerable. A God who needs her. A God who knows everything about her and declares his love for her!

"I see you for who you are and I love you. Now see who I am, the Messiah. See who I am, the One who heals and transforms you! See who I am, the Living Water. Drink from me and YOU will never be thirsty again!"

In that moment, something happens to this invisible woman. She has been seen by God and behold she has been made new! And in what can only be described as an act of reckless abandon, she drops her water jar to the ground and runs back to the place of her pain to share her experience of Jesus. "Come and see!" she shouts. "Words can't describe him. You have to see him for yourselves. God is here!" And the miracle? They listen to her. This one, who at the start of the day was outcast and despised, has now become God's messenger of love! Who could have imagined that God's Word could come from such an unexpected voice? But it does. She is God's voice!

If Jesus can quench the thirst of a broken one such as this, imagine what he can do for you. If you're like me, sometimes you find yourself carrying around the empty "water jars" of shame, grief, fear, and brokenness. Sometimes the wounds seem too deep and the pain too intense. If that's the case with you as it is sometimes for me, come and join me at the well and see who's hanging out there on Sunday morning and every other day of the week, when two or three are gathered in his name. Come and see! Jesus is here and behold, all has been made new!

Peace and Love,
Pastor Doug



"Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!'" (John 4:28-29).