

***Faithful followers of Jesus boast in their sufferings
knowing that suffering produces endurance
and endurance produces character
and character produces hope
and hope does not disappoint us***

In chapter 4 of John's gospel
We hear that Jesus "***HAD to pass through Samaria***"

He ***HAD to pass through this region...***
so a new divinity could be revealed.

The Samaritans believed the place where they lived...
Was ***the center*** of the world... ***not*** Jerusalem
They worshipped ***correctly***... In the ***correct*** place
How did they ***know***?

Because... in Genesis...
This is where Jacob met his wife Rachael... a shepherdess...
and single-handedly... removed a large stone covering the well
where she could water her flock...
He immediately fell in love with her...
Yes... That well...

Genesis... the same book where Jacob awoke
from a dream of angels ascending and descending
to and from the throne of God
and he cried out...
God is in this place!
God is in this place and I didn't even know it
Yes... That well...

*Fast forward a **couple thousand** years...*

and we find *Jesus* at that *same well*...

Where he met *the Samaritan woman*.

In the middle of the day...

when nobody was there...

Why... would anyone... go out in the scorching sun

To get water... in the middle of the day?

Because the Samaritan woman was *Concerned*...

Worried about what might happen to her.

Concern... is the *Third Word* of the *Sneak Attack of the five C's*.

Two Sunday's ago... we heard about *Complaining*

Last Sunday... it was *Criticizing*

This week... the word is *Concern*... slash... *Worry*...

There's explanation on the back of this week's bulletin...

When I say *Concern*...

I don't mean empathetic care for others...

which is a constructive... fact-based... focused approach...

to identify problems... set boundaries...

that motivat proactive manageable solutions.

I'm addressing *Concern* that *evolves* into *Worry*...

An uncontrolled... often irrational... mental cycle...

that causes anxiety... stress... and inaction...

focusing on uncontrollable... future... "what-ifs."

The thing I find most interesting about worry...
Is how often people worry...
Research tells us... 80% of people's thoughts... are worries...

But even more remarkable... is that most of our worries...
Are repeats.

However... my biggest surprise... 90% of everything we worry about
Never Happens!

We know... scientifically... Worry rips souls apart.
We know spiritually... Worry blocks our hearts to God.

But there are ways to conquer worry...
And today's Gospel reading illustrates it quite well.

The unnamed woman at the well had a lot to worry about.
She was ostracized by her own community
Because she had Five husbands...
And to top it off... didn't marry the man she lived with...

Facing the other "righteous" women in the community...
Would have been terrible... frightening... even dangerous...

But Jesus... knew everything about her...
And because of that... she had nothing to worry about.

And she moved for *worry*... fear for her life...
To *concern*...
Where she might be able to find a constructive... focused approach...
Perhaps even identify her problems... maybe set some boundaries...
Seek a proactive... manageable... solutions...

Rather than the uncontrolled... irrational... mental cycle...
that caused anxiety... stress... and inaction...
focusing on the uncontrollable... future... “what-ifs.”

So she began *defending*... *her* own... belief...
Her own... understanding...
How *her* church... was *in*... *the correct* place

To her surprise... Jesus *didn't* debate with her.
And maybe... that's a lesson for us as well.

Debate rarely changes opinion or understanding.
You will never argue someone into Faith in God...

Instead... Jesus declares
True worship of God... has *nothing* to do... with *geography*.

It is defined by *God's own* nature... *Spirit and Truth*.

God's *Spirit and Truth*... destroys man-made boundaries

God's truth... *cracks open* the shell of *authoritarian religion*
And reveals the *kernel*... *The Holy Spirit*.

Faith... in *God*... *creates anew*... *Opens* the future.

God transcends Sex... Race... Tradition... Place... Worship styles.

The *spirit and truth of God*...

Can even be manifested... to a *Samaritan* woman... with *a past*.

The Love of God in Christ Jesus changed everything for her

And so... she pivots...

She's no longer *Worried* about *her own destiny*

She's now *Concerned*... about *others*

And here's the really cool part...

She runs back to her people... the leadership...

Not with an answer

But a question

Can this man be the Christ?

She didn't run back reciting *The Apostles Creed*

Instead... she said this man

Told me everything... I ever did.

No Declaration... *He is the Messiah!*

But a *Question*... Can *this...* be *the Christ?*

or literally

He cannot be the Messiah... can he?

Her witness was enough

It's an invitation to *come and see*

It's honest... even *with* its *uncertainty*.

It's for *everyone*... Who hears.

No answers to unasked questions.
No ultimatums about heaven... or threats of hell
She *Invites* her listeners... *To arrive at their own conclusions.*

And they do!

Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.
And was met with a question

How is it that you... a Jew...
ask a drink of me... a woman of Samaria...
since Jews *never* deal with Samaritans?

A *boundary* is broken... *reform* occurs.

Actually... A *bunch* of boundaries are broken.

Just look at all the other stuff in this story:

There are *women's issues*.
In those days... men *didn't* deal with women
Rarely spoke to them...
even their own wives in public...
let alone *ordain them as priests*.

And there's the *racial problem*.
That's what we call it today.
In those days it was called the *Samaritan problem*.

And there's that mysterious food that sustained Jesus.
My food... is to do the will of him who sent me.

And the reference to the fields *ripe for harvesting*.
God's work with people is *not* to be *postponed*.
The fields are ready *now!*

And the story *the conversion* of many Samaritans.
After Jesus stayed with them for just two days.

So much **new** theology
In such a *brief passage of scripture*.
And all... *without miracles of healing... or walking on water*.

John uses the ordinary events... of every-day life
to describe how people meet God...
and how their lives are changed by that meeting.

There are no voices from heaven in the Gospel of John.
There are no angels.
There are no mysterious mystical experiences like the transfiguration.

Instead, Jesus uses every-day stuff,
common events to help people meet God.

Like a wedding party at Cana.

Did you ever meet God at a crowded reception?

Or a late-night conversation about the meaning of life.
Like Jesus's encounter with Nicodemus.

When the phone rings at night... or when a friend asks...
Can I talk to you a minute?

Does it occur to you... you might be about *to meet God*?
Or... to help *someone else* meet God?

This is an opportunity... *To come and see*

An opportunity... to *share our trust in God*.

Being around someone with a physical handicap or an illness...
as Jesus frequently was.

Have you ever met God *in a new way* in a hospital room?
Or a nursing home? or a wheelchair?

Or like the death of a close friend... like Beryl Bushay
Have you ever rediscovered God at a funeral?

Or like today's story...
A chance meeting between a tough lady and a weary thirsty Jesus.

It is all every day stuff.

Common experiences.
Routine events.

I like that... about the Gospel of John
Because most of my life is every day stuff...
Rather than great epiphanies.

So if Jesus can re-introduce *me* to God...
or *use me* to re-introduce someone *else* to God
and re-awaken *my* faith... during a normal, every-day circumstance...
I like that.

Maybe some of the women *here* experienced *unfairness* or *condescension* simply because *you are women*.

Those sentiments are expressed by the disciples who came back from a run to a convenience store and wondered... *Why is Jesus speaking with a woman?*

They were probably **more** astonished that Jesus was breaking the sex barrier than breaking the racial/Samaritan barrier. *Is there a connections here you?*

Maybe... understanding that Jesus treats women *not just politely but takes women seriously*.

And when this Samaritan woman discovered... Jesus knew all about her... not just her spiritual thirst... but the most personal and intimate matters of her living and working and loving.

Any connections *for you?*

Is there *anything* in your past that is *so shameful* you think it *prevents Jesus* from *accepting you?*

The woman was a *Samaritan*. Jesus *was a Jew*.
Hundreds of years of separation and prejudice...
Hundreds of years of disagreement about God...
How... and Where... to worship God.
Hundreds of years of being enemies. Due to narrow theologies

All of this was challenged in that conversation at the well.

God reaching out... through Jesus... building a bridge...
opening a door... opening a future... with hope...

and all of it... in one "chance" conversation...
between Jesus and a Samaritan.

This is the time for all of us...
To break down man made boundaries.

Now is the time to listen afresh for God
in new conversations
with those who are **different** from us?

Earlier... I referred to the meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman
as a *chance* meeting.
Maybe... I was wrong.

If the Gospel of John is onto the truth...
Maybe... in our every-day lives...
Christ himself is waiting there...
to offer us living water.

We pray that God's kingdom might come.
I don't think that means... We hope for the apocalypse.

The kingdom is not so deadly
It is a kingdom of children at play.

Children don't hold the prejudices we do.

The kingdom pours oil on old wounds.

The kingdom is a place where we are **all lifted** up... All forgiven.

The kingdom is madness... Because it comes to us **unconditionally**.

The kingdom renounces getting even... Paying back in kind.

In the kingdom... There is no Jew. No Greek. No slave. No master.

There are differences for sure... But in the Kingdom of God
Differences are *embraced*... Never rejected.

All this diversity... *is* embraced By God

God is the opening... the way out

God is the future... the horizon... Justice in itself.

God is love.

Love is the element and the energy of the kingdom

In the kingdom... All of life is a gift

And every good gift is from God.

That is the *witness of faith*... of *the gift of faith*

It is to have *faith in the gifts*.

Gifts like you... And me...

The woman at the well was so excited by this new teaching

She *ran* back to her village... And shared this good news.

Can this be the Christ?

Come and See

Amen.

