



DIGNITY AND WORTH

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

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.)

John 4:7-9

Have you ever wondered what it might have been like to be that Samaritan woman? To enter this story and experience what Jesus was for her? What he might be for us?

As we read further in John 4, we see that she had been divorced from five husbands. A woman of ill-repute, not respected in her town. Undoubtedly familiar with poor treatment.

Samaritans were half-Jew, half-Gentile. They were despised by the Jews who did not normally have dealings with them. And so, it was a surprise for the woman to be talked to by Jesus, a Jew. Not only that, as a woman she was considered a second-class citizen and not normally talked to by men.

Jesus told the woman, *“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.”* (vs 10) *“. . . whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”* (vs 14)

This gift of living water that Jesus offers describes the active and flowing source of life the Holy Spirit supplies when we become believers. Jesus himself is our spiritual fountain of living water. He offers himself to the woman and all who will accept him.

The more I study this, the more I see it as a story many of us might like to enter into, especially those who live with illnesses that make them different in the eyes of many. I, for one, would love to be in as close proximity to Jesus as this woman was—to experience his acceptance and kindness. Though she differed from others in so many ways, though she was ill-regarded by others, Jesus treated her with equal dignity and worth.

Imagine if we were to be accepted into a friendship with someone who follows Christ’s example—someone who treats us with dignity and worth. Imagine how good it would be to spend time with this person, perhaps going for an occasional coffee. Imagine how good it would be to have an unhurried visit and chat with someone you care about—someone who loves Jesus like you do.

And yet, for many living with mental health issues this doesn’t happen.

Why?

But . . . can we imagine again?

If we were like the Samaritan woman, we might be looked down on by many. But Jesus would not do so. There was only love and acceptance in him. He sees us as human beings, equal to other human beings. If we were to do the same for each other, how much kinder a world this would be for those who are struggling!

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, your spiritual fountain of living water. Although you might wish yourself to be carried to Jacob’s well to be with him, that kind of wishful thinking isn’t necessary at all. Open your heart to him and he will stay close to you right where you are.

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