

The Samaritan Woman

What might she have been thinking?

"So who is this travelling Jew crossing into our Samaritan territory? He asks me for a drink – he says he is thirsty. So am I, climbing up here several times a day to lower a container, lift it, carry it heavy with water. To do what? Wash, cook, quench thirst only to become thirsty again. Then back – how many times a day, up hill, down hill. Sweating. It's not that I am thanked. I've been married off to five guys over time, unloved, useful and now another without even wedlock – just to survive. And then the kids! I'm just a workhorse, getting no younger.

"I'm supposed to address this Jew as Sir. Of course he thinks himself superior, being a Jew with his spectacular Temple down there in Jerusalem. He probably doesn't think much of our Samaritan Temple here in Sychar. They think we are half-breeds, descendants, yes, of Jacob like them, but of so much mixed blood since God knows when – unclean, heretics.

"God! How I feel trapped in this monotonous life of one day after another – anonymous, forgettable. Let me lay it out to him: *How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman for a drink when you are not allowed to handle anything I touch?* And now what's he saying? He's offering me a drink of water fresher than I can draw from our traditional well? Where will he find that?"

What does she begin to think?

"He says if I continue to return to this well of stale water day after day, I will be forever thirsty; if I submit to this routine of do this and do that with nary a moment of deeper thought I shall continue to come up empty every day of my life; I will thirst for something more but lack the energy to think, to wonder, to BE all that I am primed to be. He speaks of living water, sparkling, splashing in the sunlight, sweet to taste, welling up incessantly – from where? From within me, inexhaustible once I let it be, let it rise, carry me like a tidal wave into the presence of kindred beings – like people, trees, clouds, tools, creation as somehow resembling me, addressing me, raising me out of my doldrums, releasing me to flow like a crystal clear stream, already stimulating my mind to recall what the world and I have forgotten – spoken of so long ago by the God of Moses: *The truth which I am giving you today is not too wondrous or remote for you. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.*"

What happened next?

His disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, . . . "Why are you talking with her?" The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything . . ."

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