

My Cup Overflows

July 6, 2014

John 4:1-26

1 Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again to Galilee. 4 He had to pass through Samar'ia. 5 So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called Sy'char, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" 13 Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." 16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." 17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

As most are aware last Sunday I was enjoying worship at Quadrennial Assembly, in Atlanta, which is the International Disciples Women's Ministries gathering that occurs every four years. This Assembly is similar to our denominations General Assembly held every two years. At Quadrennial we worship, we praise, we pray, we come together for workshops, small groups, talk about tough topics like Human Trafficking with authenticity and faith. We ask questions of one another and see where we as a body of believers are heading and moving forward. The biggest difference is that Quadrennial is primarily for Disciples women. Some men do come with their wives and participate in other ways but it is mainly for and focused on how we as women can work together to be more faithful and grow together as a body of believers.

There were a lot of wonderful speakers who talked about a variety of women in the scriptures and the scripture I shared with you today is one that we heard about in a small way last week. The woman at the well. The Samaritan woman at the well. The sinful woman at the well. The one whom Jesus promises living water.

There are a few things to take note of within this passage in particular in the Gospel of John. Jesus did not have to go through Samaria on his way from Judea into Galilee. There were other possible routes that Jesus could have taken through less hostile territory. Recall another favorite Bible story, that of the Good Samaritan. The reason for such a radical distinction between the two cultures and why the Good Samaritan was such a shock to those who heard the story is because the Jews and the Samaritans had a turbulent and ofttime violent history with one another. There was little love lost between the two cultures. Jesus was also leaving Judea as it tells us in verse one to avoid too much confrontation with the Pharisees who had heard that he was baptizing more than John.

It would seem since he was leaving to avoid conflict and confrontation that he would have gone a more peaceable route yet here again we have Jesus talking about or meeting with a Samaritan and this time a woman. Jesus speaking directly to a woman in public is not something we are terribly unfamiliar with as he seems to speak to them in a variety of

different ways in the various stories found throughout the Gospels. What is distinct is that Jesus was a radical in this in a lot of ways. It was a practice of the culture and of the time for men to not speak directly to women, even those they were related to in public at all. There is actually an old rabbinical saying "A man should hold no conversation with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, still let with any other woman, lest men should gossip."

So Jesus is speaking to a woman in public, not terribly radical for him but what distinguishes this particular meeting is that it was a Samaritan Woman. So not only is he speaking to a woman he is also speaking to a woman of a culture that he as a Jewish rabbi is supposed to avoid. It is important also to note that we never get her name so her cultural background was of more significance than any name she might have had. She herself though is distinguishable from others of her cultural background because she was not a stellar example of Samaritan womanhood or in accordance to the time any version of womanhood. She had had multiple husbands and even now was with a man who was not her husband. Even in today's language the translation is pretty clear cut for who and what she was. Or is it?

We also have to remember that women had no property on their own, no rights outside of their own household as afforded them by their husbands, or their sons, or their fathers or whatever man had authority over her. So while she might very well have been a manipulator and a whore, she also could have been a woman using what she had to get ahead in the only way possible due to the limits of culture and the times.

We will never know the exact circumstances of that particular woman but in understanding scripture it is important to understand the context and also not just jump to conclusions based on our own understandings and cultural identities. I heard this once and it has stuck with me "We know God is man made when God hates the same people you do" Who and what she had done does play a part however in better understanding the radical nature of her encounter with Jesus. She was at the well during the middle of the day. This was an unusual time of day for women to be at the well, they would normally come after the heat of the day to draw water and to gossip with one another as women are wont to do. The Samaritan Woman however was obviously either avoiding the other women or not invited to join them for a variety of unknown reasons although we can assume it is due to her status.

So we have a Samaritan woman at the well during a time she should not be there meeting a Jewish man who also should not be there or speaking to her. It is important too for us to note that most historians place this well as the Well of Jacob, a well that was also in good part a spring. Springs as you know continually feed the well and are a better source of water over the pocket of groundwater that can also be tapped to form a well. Springs do not often run dry and a pocket of groundwater can when there has not been enough rainfall. So this woman is drawing from a well that for hundreds of years has stood and offered water to the people of the area.

Yet, along comes Jesus offering living water so she will never be thirsty again. Can you imagine her astonishment because she is drawing from a well that has a spring and perpetually and literally never runs dry so her concept of never being thirsty is already there? As we know and as she comes to find out Jesus was not talking about filling her cup with the earthly water but rather with spiritual water, with Living Water so she will never be thirsty again.

After such a retreat I come back feeling refreshed and full of the spirit, refreshed and full to the point of overflowing. We all know the feeling do we not? That spiritual high of God's grace almost overwhelming in how it rushes through us calling us and compelling us to further in the works of the Lord. We come back not thirsty for the Lord but with a fervent desire to share and help quench the thirst of others.

And yet as the weeks go by and as time away from such overwhelming spiritual enrichment passes other things can enter into our cups. Sometimes our cups overflow with tiredness, with the bone deep weariness that comes from spiritual dryness. Sometimes our cups overflow with overwhelm, with depression for not being able to get it all done. Sometimes our cups overflow with insufficiency, with desire for the greener grass on the other side and we feel like we can not measure up to some misplaced mark. Sometimes our cups overflow with too much, too little, too something. Sometimes our cups just simply are empty of everything and anything and whatever we try to fill them with does not stay inside.

Jesus when he talks of the thirst of the woman at the well is talking about a Spiritual thirst, a soul thirst. He is speaking of a spiritual dryness a time when Sin, missing the mark, keeps our cups full to the brim already so that they can not overflow with living water. Sin, can and often does fill our cups to overflowing or dries them up and the Spirit can not flow in us or through us in either circumstance. Sin blocks our overflow of living water. We have stuff that needs to be dealt with in our lives, stuff that needs to be named so that we can deal with it. In the end some of us come to the well empty with the need to filled and others of us come too full with other things that we need to be emptied.

Jesus, that wonderful Jesus, though offers us the same thing he does the Samaritan woman. He is a master at filling our empty spaces and He offers us living water. He offers himself and by knowing him and accepting him into our lives our cups fill with living water pushing everything else away and only allowing the Spirit to overflow from us. There is little to no room for Sin when we allow the Spirit of God into our lives through God's son Jesus. The more we know God, Jesus, and the Spirit the more we want to know God, Jesus, and the Spirit. Why do we read the word of the Lord, if we are not going to apply it in our daily lives? This woman at the well is just simply us, sinful wonderful people who come to be another vessel of the living water of the Lord. God is saying I need you as another wellspring of living water, another vessel. God has all the Spirit we can need, we just have to be open to accepting it.

Pray with me,

Fill our cups Lord, fill them up Lord, come and quench this thirsting of our souls. Fill our cups, fill them up and make us whole. (Fill My Cup, Lord-Chalice Hymnal 351)

Amen.