

“Quenched”  
John 4:1-42  
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### *Introduction to the story*

**(Slide One of the Woman at the Well by Hyatt Moore)** The text today is a familiar story to many. Traditionally, the story of the woman at the well has focused on the woman, who despite all of her indiscretions, Jesus saved. More often than not the woman is depicted as a harlot, someone who had left her 5 husbands, one after the other, and was with another man when she met Jesus at the well.

Although there may be nuggets of truth with this traditional understanding, I think we are missing something if we don't dig a little deeper. **(Slide two of the Woman at the Well from the Well's perspective)** The gospel of John is well known for its poetic prose. If we look, we often find more than one meaning within a reading in this gospel. In our passage today, we will hear the difference between water and living water and food and the sustenance of God, which sustains us; we will also hear about the woman's five husbands, who can be compared to the five kingdoms that the Samaritans had been subjected to, as well as the Roman Empire, to whom they paid homage at the time of the interaction.

Another thing that should be pointed out are the differences that the author created between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. It is well known that Jews despised Samaritans and that Samaritans felt the same way about the Jews. So it is that we find two peoples from opposing tribes (Like Romeo and Juliet) meeting at a well, which was a well-known meeting place for lovers in Biblical stories. **(Slide three of the woman at the well. The gold picture)** In addition, we should notice the fact that “the woman” was at the well at noon, can be contrasted with the story before this where Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the dark of night to find out how Jesus is healing and teaching with such authority. So, in the scope of the gospel, we find the difference between darkness and light.

The final little thing I would like to point out is found in verse four, which tells us that Jesus had to go through Samaria. If we look at the map **(Slide 4 first Map Slide)** we can see that this is, in fact the most direct route to Galilee. The issue is that as I mentioned Jews, including Jesus, would have normally taken another route in order to avoid Samaria all together. **(Slide 5, second Map Slide)** The words “had to”, many scholars suggest, point to the fact that what was to happen next is very much a divine appointment, a God thing.

With those things in mind, let us listen to the scripture discover the Spirit of the living God anew this day...

*Scripture- John 4:1-42*

*Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John'— although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.*

*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 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.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks, drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'*

*Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The*

*woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'*

*Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' 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! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.*

*Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.'*

*Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.'*

There is a project in England that I find myself drawn to. It is called *Crossing the Divide*. A poet by the name of John Lindley is responding with his rhyme and verse to the paintings of Daniel Bonnell. Today's painting is, appropriately, entitled the *Woman at the Well*, Lindley's poem is entitled the same. Perhaps these words will provide greater depth to our scripture.

Go down deep enough  
and something will be found  
and fetched up.

Around the mouth of the well  
they exchange thirsts –  
he tells his parched tale, she hers.

His speech makes a small orbit  
of interrogation without trial.  
Not much else is heard or said

but in the quiet air of revelation  
the knock of her risen heart  
in the well of her breast

ascends like a hauled pail  
brimming with faith fulfilled.  
She is a quenched soul

rippling away to tell others;  
returns as a wave  
breaking on his shore.

### ***Exchanging Thirsts***

Have you ever found yourself gathered around the mouth of a well with another, exchanging thirsts? Have you ever found the words or actions of another to satisfy your thirst? There is something beautiful it occurs; when you meet someone who seems to know you. But it is strange to receive these satisfying words from a stranger (like people within the Occupy Wall Street movement taking sage advice from people of the Tea Party). One would think and hope those words would be reserved for a best friend, a family member, or a partner.

***Slide 7 YouTube Monologue video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q49BbfgJbto>***

### ***To be known is to be loved and to be loved is to be known...***

We long to be known. This story reminds me of this. When the woman, leaves her jar behind and proclaims that Jesus is the Savior of the world, all because he knew her. Of course

there are things like Facebook and Foursquare and a host of other social media creations that confirm this idea: we want to be known.

### ***Conclusion***

May you discover the unexpected that will quench the thirsts that reside within you. May you find this place to be filled with living water that allows you to fill your empty pail. May you share that water with all who find themselves in an arid area. Amen.