

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. 7A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9The 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.) 10Jesus 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." 11The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" 13Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14but 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." 15The 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." 16Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." 17The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" 19The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." 21Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." 26Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

27Just 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?" 28Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" 30They left the city and were on their way to him. 31Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" 34Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35Do 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. 36The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." 39Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." 40So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41And many more believed because of his word. 42They 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 Savior of the world.”*

Do you remember a few weeks ago when I read Jesus words about divorce and adultery? They are crushing words: Anyone who divorces his wife except on the grounds of un-chastity causes her to commit adultery: and whoever marries a divorce woman commits adultery.

Well, today we will hear how God and Jesus deal with women who are adulterers and the men who cause them to commit adultery.

Let's start with Abraham - and Sarah, his wife. "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make of you a great nation." The Lord spoke, Abraham went.

What a man of faith, we say. But let's read on a little more.

First Abraham and Sarah wander here and there, nomads, built an altar or two, worshipped God, and wandered around some more. That's where our first lesson stopped.

But keep reading and you'll find the very next thing that happened was this: “There was a famine in the land, and Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt where there was food. But when he was about to enter Egypt he said to Sarah: ‘I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance and when the Egyptians see you, they will kill me but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me and that my life may be spared on your account.’

So that's what they did. They passed Sarah off as Abraham's sister to save Abraham's skin. And Pharaoh took Sarah as his wife, and to Abraham he gave all sorts of livestock.

“But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh with great plagues because of Sarah. And Pharaoh was angry with Abraham saying, ‘Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?’ And they sent him on his way with his wife and all that he had.”

What did God do with Abraham who had caused the mother of God's chosen people to be dishonored? God renewed the promise to Abraham that God would make of him a great nation.

That is how God deals with women who commit adultery and the men who cause them to commit adultery.

Or consider Jesus: From whom did he ask for the drink of water in the gospel for today? A woman who had had five husbands and was living with a sixth man to whom she was not married - an adulteress. Of course she didn't know he knew when he first asked. So her first response to his request was, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Jews did not think very highly of Samaritans. But Jesus told her that if she knew who was asking for the drink she would have asked him for living water. Before the conversation was over she was asking for the living water and Jesus was telling her that he was the Messiah.

But not before he made something else clear, that he knew all about her, about the five husbands, about the living with the man to whom she was not married. Then he told her he was the Messiah.

Of all the people he could have chosen that day he chose her. And she went into the village and told them that she had met a man who had told her everything she had ever done! "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" Not a very bold witness.

But the people came to see Jesus. And Jesus stayed with them two days, and 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 Savior of the world."

Abraham and Sarah and this woman - and you. How does it feel to be in that company? Adulterers and liars but chosen by God for great things.

And I think, "If I could only change then God could use me. If I could get control of myself, have more courage, always know the right thing to do then I would be some use to God."

Let me assure you: God wants to use you and me and it has nothing to do with our being good enough for that. Jesus is using the flawed people we are for his purposes. "Here, I forgive you, now let's get to work. No more sitting in a closet worrying about yourself. I know all about you just like I knew Abraham and Sarah and the woman at the well. You did not choose me, I chose you - time to get to work."

There are hungry people to be fed, and lonely people to be listened to. The naked need clothing and those who haven't laughed in a long time need to hear a joke or two.

Jesus promises, "I'll never be ashamed of you. Please, never be ashamed of me or any of those who I have called to work with you." Amen.

