

5So 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."

It might have been a story all about her. Five husbands she had had – living with a man that was not her husband now – there must be a story in that. Until this week I had always assumed that she was a woman who liked men but not for long. When I was young there were headlines about Liz Taylor and Eddie Fisher – one of the eight

men she married. I always thought of this woman at the well as being like Liz Taylor – going from one man to the next. But this week I read a blogger who was insistent that this woman could have been widowed five times and was afraid to marry again. Should I look down on her for her unfaithfulness or pity her for her tragic life? Now I do not know which.

What is surprising is that while Jesus knows all about her – about her five husbands and her living with a man she is not married to - Jesus neither condemns her nor pities her. Her encounter with Jesus might have been all about her personal life – but it is not.

Maybe we make a mistake beginning worship with a confession of sins each week. Right away we put the spotlight on ourselves. Are we saying that our sins are the most important thing about our week?

Maybe we make a mistake by individually naming in prayer each week those who are being victimized by illness or loss or facing difficult challenges as if our having compassion on those who suffer is most important. If this had turned out to be a story about her then our focusing on our sins – our focusing on our neighbors' suffering would make sense. But this encounter between Jesus and this Samaritan woman turns out to be a story about people coming to faith in Jesus – first the woman and then when she goes to tell the people of her village about Jesus it becomes a story of them coming to believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Instead of beginning worship with turning our minds to our failures what if we each spent a moment thinking about the times during the week that we talked with someone else about Jesus. We could kneel and observe a moment of silence and during that moment pray for the people we had introduced to Jesus the past week. We could pray for Jesus to be with them – pray for fruit of the Holy Spirit to be evident in them – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control.

On April 10 you are all encouraged to bring someone to our worship of Jesus. Now some of us might think – who am I to be inviting others when I do not even have my act together? Maybe if my faith was stronger or I felt

closer to God or if I knew more about the Bible and Jesus I could invite someone but the way I am I would not know what to say.

The woman who encountered Jesus that day had heard from Jesus that he would give living water that gushes up to eternal life but she said nothing about this. She had heard Jesus tell her that the Father wants those who worship him in Spirit and truth but she said nothing about this. She could have told people that Jesus is the Messiah and she almost did but this is the way she said it, “He could not be the Messiah, could he?” The only witness that she gave with certainty was this, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done.” Any one of you could have done better in witnessing to Jesus than she did that day but God was able to use her witness to bring many from the city to the well where Jesus was. And once they were there and met Jesus this is what 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.”

Are you worthy to go and invite others to come and see Jesus? It does not matter whether you are or whether you are not. Jesus can use your invitation to bring others to faith in him.

What if you do not use the right words? Finally it will not depend on your words or my words but on Jesus. He knows these people who will come to him – the most important thing will not be their sins or their suffering – Jesus is most important.

Invite someone for April 10. Let Jesus do the rest. Amen.