

## **“Being the Well”**

by Greg Smith-Young (Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge)  
Continuing a series on the Gospel of John

John 4.25-42

May 24, 2015

The woman said to Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called “The Anointed One”). “When he comes, he will explain all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I who am speaking to you . . . I AM.”

Just then his disciples came up. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman. Yet no one said to her, “What do you want?” or to him, “Why are you speaking with her?”

Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to her city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! You don’t think he can be the Messiah, do you?” 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 know nothing about.” So the disciples said to one another, “No one has brought him something to eat, have they?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the One who sent me and to complete his mission.

Don’t you have a saying, ‘Four months more, then comes harvest’? Look, I tell you. Lift up your eyes! See how the fields are white for harvesting! The reaper is already getting paid and is gathering a crop for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may celebrate together. For here this saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not work. Others did all the work, and you have come into the results.”

Many Samaritans from that city entrusted themselves to him because of the woman’s evidence: “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of what he said. 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 cosmos.”

John 4.25-42

Adapted from the New Revised Standard Version

I

She came to the well alone. She came in the middle of the day, when everyone knows it's too hot to lug water. She was avoiding people. We learned why. Dawn's got a reputation. Her neighbours have decided she's bad news. Maybe she believes that too. So she goes for groceries when she knows the aisles will be empty of gossipers and judges.

Since we don't know her name, last week I suggested we call her "Dawn."<sup>1</sup> Imagine Dawn's mood as she trudged out to the well. Hard. Bitter. Disappointed.

Then, she met Jesus. It was not an easy conversation. Barriers of race, religion, gender and propriety should have kept them apart. But Jesus broke through. It was not an easy conversation. Somehow, he knew her rough past. He named it bluntly. However, Jesus tells our truth, not to shame or condemn us, but to forgive and heal. It was not an easy conversation. Jesus challenged Dawn's spiritual sensitivities; religiously, Dawn and her Samaritan people were living in ignorance. However, Jesus shows us our errors, so we can live in the freedom of truth.

It was not an easy conversation, but it was a conversation with Jesus. So Dawn, who arrived empty, went away full. She who came to get, left to give. She headed out thirsty for her day's supply of water. She ended up overflowing with Living Water. Poured out by Jesus, God the Holy Spirit was now filling her up, never to run dry. Someone said, "this is the story of a woman who came for water but who went home with the well."<sup>2</sup> Exactly!

She rushes back to her neighbours (the same ones she'd learned to avoid). Joy is pouring out of her. The Living-Water Spirit of God, has become in her a fountain: filling her, overflowing her, and rushing out with the presence and power of God.

II

Her neighbours hear her news. They go see for themselves. They come to believe in Jesus with that same joy.

No way you saw that coming! They are Samaritans! Spiritually, Samaritans were hard ground, not the sort you'd expect salvation to spring from. Jesus pretty much said so himself.<sup>3</sup> Why would they listen? She is a woman! Women had no public voice. Why would they listen to her? She has that reputation! Why listen to *her*?

But they listen. They go see for themselves. They believe in Jesus, even more! Makes you wonder what is working on them. Or, who?

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<sup>1</sup> In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, she is honoured as Saint Photina, which means "Luminous One." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan\\_woman\\_at\\_the\\_well](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan_woman_at_the_well)

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Donn Moomaw, quoted in Frederick Dale Bruner, The Gospel of John, A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 273.

<sup>3</sup> In verse 22, we heard Jesus say to her, "You [Samaritans] worship what you do not understand; we [Jews] worship what we know, for real salvation comes from the Jewish people."

There is nothing complicated in what Dawn says.

- *“A man told me everything I ever did.”* (She just tells what happened to her.)
- *“. . . everything I ever did.”* (She is honest.)
- *“Could he be the Messiah?”* (She wonders, but doesn’t have all the answers.)
- *“Come and see.”* (She invites them to discover for themselves.)

What is happening? The Living-Water-Spirit is now in her a fountain, filling, overflowing and splashing onto her neighbours the joyful presence and power of God. She went out to get water, and came back an overflowing well.

### III

Meanwhile, let’s go back to the source. Jesus is bursting. He is filled up with the work of God.

His disciples are trying to make sense of what’s happening. (If you follow Jesus, you soon know the feeling.) So he tries to open their eyes.

There was a well-known farmer saying. *“Four months more, then comes the harvest.”* In that region, you sow the seed in December and harvest in April: four months. The saying is about patience. Sow, then wait four months. Not three months, certainly not two, never one. It takes time. Be patient.

*“Except now!”* says Jesus. *“The sower has barely finished, and already the crop is ready for reaping.”* Huh? *“Just look!”* he says. *“Look! Look!”* They look. They see some people, coming down the road from town.

Jesus gives them another farmer saying: *“One person sows, but another reaps.”* One does all the work, and another harvests all the rewards. Sometime, life is like that, and it’s not fair. *“But this time,”* says Jesus, *“rejoice in the injustice! You did not sow a thing. The work’s been done for you. Enjoy the harvest.”* The Samaritans from town are now crowded around them.

Who is this Sower, who has already done the work? Jesus, who steps through barriers and taboos to speak to the woman (and does the same to speak to us). Who is this Sower? God the Father, who is seeking people for a loving relationship of worship. Who is this Sower? The Living-Water-Spirit, who finds and fills the most unlikely people, like Dawn, like her neighbours, and like us.

We never bring people to God, or God to people. The Living and Loving God—Father, Son, Spirit—is already working, sowing seeds and building wells. Building wells in Dawn, and you, and me. Before we come close to thinking about it, God is already seeking, speaking, and filling. God is excited. And God is inviting us to share in the harvest

celebration of God's work.<sup>4</sup>

#### IV

Jayda's Mom said I could share this with you:

*Each morning, Jayda digs something out of her room that she would like to take to school to show her friends. One day this week, it was her "Jesus Candle" which is the candle she received when she was baptized as a baby. It has been sitting, on her shelf, at the back, in its box, probably since they brought it home from church six years ago. But one day this week she decided that it needed to come down from that shelf and be shown to her friends. She even mentioned at the bus stop that she might ask her teacher to light it so she could show it to everyone lit.<sup>5</sup>*

Jayda, a fountain of the Living-Water-Spirit of God.

What's your story? What has meeting Jesus done in you? The Living-Water-Spirit is moving through your story.

You have more questions than answers? Join the club! We're all still figuring it out. The Living-Water-Spirit uses us. You are worried you won't have the right arguments or the best words? Don't argue. The point is not to persuade people about Jesus. It is to make the introduction, and let Jesus do the work.

When you do, when you are part of what he is already doing, when you are the well of Living Water . . . such joy! Such delight! The Sower smiles. The Source of the Water rejoices.

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<sup>4</sup> "Do we have the audacity to think that it is we who bring God to the converting of people? Or can we be freed to see and to see, as Jesus specifically asks, 'Look, lift up your eyes, see . . . !?' The living God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — is at work already, *ahead of all of us*, seeking, speaking, and seizing men and women whom he loves very much (3:16) to bring them to the Savior of the World (4:42)." Bruner, 276.

<sup>5</sup> From a Facebook post by Jayda's mom, Kim. Jayda and her family are part of Elora United Church.