

## “Could This Man Be?”

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*Third in a series on “Come and See”s in the Gospel of John*

John 4.25-30,39-42

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Read the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

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In the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, the “woman at the well” is known as Saint Photina, which means “Luminous One.”<sup>1</sup> So I call her “Dawn.”

We just heard the end of the story. Dawn rushes into town. “*Come and see!*” she gushes. “*Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done!*” “*Come and see! Could this be God’s promised Messiah?*”

Dawn can teach us about being “come and see” people.

### II

We are going to hear the whole conversation Dawn had with Jesus. First, though, we need to see how she’s pretty much the last person you’d expect to be telling people to come and see Jesus. But she does! You would not expect people to listen to her. But they do!

First, the fact Jesus and Dawn had a conversation is surprising. It surprised her! A man of honour would not talk with a woman who was not family. Certainly not when she was a stranger. Definitely not when they were alone. Concern about acting rightly and properly, with honour and avoiding shame, would keep them apart.<sup>2</sup> But Jesus brought them together.

The conversation should not have happened because Jesus was a Jew and Dawn a Samaritan. Their communities shared much in common . . . including generations of hostility and grievance against each other. Mistrust, stereotypes, and a mutual policy of avoidance should keep Jewish Jesus and Samaritan Dawn apart. But Jesus brought them together.

Then, there was Dawn herself. You will hear Jesus mention her history. It sounds like she’s known a lot of failure, a lot of disappointment, a lot of grief. We don’t know the details. We sense her pain. And, I strongly suspect, whispers and gossip chased after her. Shame and judgement crushed her down.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan\\_woman\\_at\\_the\\_well](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan_woman_at_the_well)

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, “The Woman at the Well” in Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2008), 203f.

After all, you'll see that she came to the well alone. Women would walk the path to the well together, for company and protection. You'll hear that she came at noon, in the heat of the day. The heavy work of carrying water was best done in the cool of morning or evening. She came by herself, when no one else would be there. Was she avoiding others? Were they avoiding her?

But you will see that, the next time she comes to that well, she is not alone. She's bringing the neighbourhood. They are listening to her! Following after her! Dawn!

### III

What happened? Listen.<sup>3</sup>

*Jesus had to go through Samaria. He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his journey, so he sat down at the well. It was about noon.*

*A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food.*

*The Samaritan woman asked, "Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.)*

*Jesus responded, "If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would be asking him and he would give you living water."*

*The woman said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where would you get this living water? You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave this well to us, and he drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."*

*Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."*

*The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty and will never need to come here to draw water!"*

*Jesus said to her, "Go, get your husband, and come back here."*

*The woman replied, "I don't have a husband."*

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<sup>3</sup> John 4:4-30. At Elora UC we watched a clip of this scene, from [The Gospel of John](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HS2hY3A3HsE) motion picture (2003). You can find the clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HS2hY3A3HsE>

*“You are right to say, ‘I don’t have a husband,’” Jesus answered. “You’ve had five husbands, and the man you are with now isn’t your husband. You’ve spoken the truth.”*

*The woman said, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you and your people say that it is necessary to worship in Jerusalem.”*

*Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you and your people will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You and your people worship what you don’t know; we worship what we know because salvation is from the Jews. But the time is coming—and is here!—when true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth. The Father looks for those who worship him this way. God is spirit, and it is necessary to worship God in spirit and truth.”*

*The woman said, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will teach everything to us.”*

*Jesus said to her, “I Am—the one who speaks with you.”*

*Just then, Jesus’ disciples arrived. . . . The woman put down her water jar and went into the city.*

#### IV

This month we are listening to “Come and See” stories of Jesus. “Come and See” is an invitation to look further. It’s an invitation to look together.

I’ve been imagining a park bench. It’s a symbol of sitting together. You can imagine it being any place you find yourself. That’s a place where Jesus is inviting you to come and see with him: see what he is seeing, see the people in that place as he sees them, see what he is doing in their lives, and join him.

You can also picture the bench as where you invite others — your friends, your neighbours — to sit alongside you, as together you discover and experience Jesus.

That’s what Dawn does. Because she had just had this most unlikely conversation with Jesus, Dawn — Dawn! Dawn, who has learned to avoid her neighbours — now rushes to tell them. *“Come and see a man who has told me everything I’ve done! Could this man be the Christ?”*

“Come and see,” she invites. They come, and they sit with Dawn, and together they discover Jesus.

Notice that she does not have Jesus figured out. “Could he be the Christ (Gods’ promised saviour)?” She wonders that, but she does not know. She does not get what he means by “living water.” She does not understand what worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” is

about. We're still figuring Jesus out, 20 centuries later. We do not need to have all the answers to invite: "*Come and see!*"

Notice that Dawn does not have herself figured out. She's a mess. Everyone knows that. We do not need to have ourselves together to invite: "*Come and See.*"

We are not inviting people to us. Or, to check out our congregation. Or, to check out our minister. It's not about you. It's not about me. It's not about us.

"Come and see," is an invitation to sit with us, so together we can discover Jesus.

He is on the bench. He's invited us over. But there is so much room, for many, many more.

Amen!