



YEAR A – MARCH 15, 2020

The Samaritan woman in the Gospel today (John 4:5-42) was an outsider to the Jewish community in several senses. She was a woman in a society that did not respect women. As a Samaritan, she was not welcome in the Jewish village and on top of that, her multiple marriages made her a subject of social disapproval even among people who used to be her friends.

She was a loner. She was not allowed to come to the well in the early morning hours like the rest of the women. She had to come to the water when they were finished drawing their day's supply.

She tried to find what is truly valuable in life, as we all do, but she failed. It may not have been her fault. We don't know. But she was now the object of derision and no one would give her the time of day. No one would even speak to her. All that in the name of religion – their religion, not God's.

And so, she says to Jesus, "How can you speak to me. I am a Samaritan woman." Jesus sensed her unhappiness and her loneliness, and he disregarded the barriers that the culture had set up between them. Those barriers were not created by God, so he ignored them, and continued to talk to her and listen.

There is a powerful message here for all of us. Jesus did not accept the man-made walls that separate us from one another. He came to build bridges that would connect him to everyone.

He asks the woman to give him some water. She comes back with a response that is indicative of her negative feelings and her poor self-image. There is much in her life that needs healing. Jesus then offers her "living water"; the kind that only he can give. He took the conversation from the world of physical reality to the world of the human spirit – the heart, the mind and soul. It is interesting to note that Jesus offers this gift of eternal life to the woman even before repentance on her part is mentioned by him.

Here we find our second lesson for today. God's love is available to all of us even while we are still sinners. It is this unconditional love of Jesus that prompts us to come to our senses like the prodigal son, acknowledge our need for healing and accept his marvelous gift of "living water". God's forgiveness is offered 24/7 even before repentance. Acceptance of that forgiveness requires repentance.

For a few moments in silence, talk to Jesus about naming your own sins during this holy season of Lent. His offer to help us as he helped the Samaritan woman is there for all of us, even before we come to our senses.