

## **A Story Worth Telling**

The Rev. Renée Marie Rico  
Sunday, March 15, 2020  
Faith Presbyterian Church, Sierra Vista, AZ

Read John 4: 4-15 (16-42)

(Note: This sermon is in a style called “Narrative” in which the preacher imagines oneself in the story. At the end, I am offering some reflection questions, as well as a poem from our Wilderness Theme and a prayer on reframing our current situation.)

I am that Samaritan Woman, I am the one that Jesus talked to, on that hot dusty day.

He saw me at the well, and I was alone - collecting my water for my household long after all the other women had come and gone. The other women wouldn't speak to me, they shunned me. I missed out on everything that the daily water gathering was where women would check in with each other, share gossip and news and laugh and cry and care for one another. I was the one alone.

I had been alone a long time, long enough that the pain no longer tore at me. Instead I carried it like a dull ache, another burden to carry along each day. The nearest thing that I can compare it to is like walking in a desert wilderness for long time. You know how you get thirsty, but there's no water?

I was always thirsty.

Back to that day. I was there midday, on my own, that is the only reason that he saw me.

Jesus knew, of course, that something had happened to make me the outsider. He knew well enough all the reasons that might be in our conservative community.

But him being there in the village with his Jewish friends, well, that was setting everyone on edge because our people do not get along at all.

It wasn't always that way. In the long past his people, the Judeans, and mine the Samaritans were all part of the same kingdom, and worshipped the same. But also long ago, something happened, an argument about who really knew how to worship best. That caused a rift between our peoples ever since. We don't talk to each other, we don't marry into each other's families, and try to keep our distance.

In spite of this, Jesus came to talk with me. He did, really! He *intentionally* talked to me, the woman that no one will talk with. Unclean. Nobody.

And you just heard, he said the oddest thing. "Give me a drink." I laughed a little on the inside. I thought to myself, "This is strange. He's acting like I'm the host of a great house, ready to serve a visitor who has welcomed in."

Instead across the few feet between us I saw all the barriers:

Me the Samaritan, he the Jew.

He a man, me a woman.

He a person of some respectability, and me, well...

I looked him up and down...and then we had that amazing conversation that you just heard – each time we each said something it was like we dipped down and down, until finally he and I had some of the most honest conversation that you can imagine. He saw *me*, not the mistakes that I had made, or the troubled life I have. No, Jesus saw me as God had created me, a beloved child.

And, he talked about water, flowing, gushing water, just like the flow of God's spirit over our mountain.

It came to me that Jesus saw Samaritans, all Samaritans, as people just like him, people of God's covenant wanting to worship God in the best way that they knew how. That, despite the arguments and the differences that we had, he knew that really, deep down, we are all God's children.

At one time he simply said, "I am." That was when I talked about the messiah. Well, just saying "I am" isn't totally clear if you just hear me saying it, but I think I know what he means. That (perhaps) the matter of messiah was not just a matter of one person, but of all the people too.

It came to me that just like Jesus, "I am." I am not simply the woman with all the mistakes in my life, I am more than that. I am.

Then it came to me: A Rabbi, a teacher who would talk to a woman like me was likely to talk to anyone. And by talking, I don't mean giving them a bunch of new rules or taxes, which is about all any of us see around here.

When he and his friends (who frankly looked irritated at Jesus for talking to the crazy woman, he must do this a lot), when they left. I sat down for a moment. And I took my pail

of water, and – I’m not sure why I did this – I dipped my hand in it, and I let the water flow over my hands. I kept saying the name of God as I did it. Adonai, Adonai...

Later, after a time, I went out to the people of my village – they must have been really shocked at my appearance and me coming to them. I said, “I met someone who knew everything there is to know about a person, come and see if he might be the messiah.”

And they came! I couldn’t believe it, maybe they thought I was mad (maybe I looked a little mad by this point), but I was amazed that *they came*.

As we came up, it was clear that Jesus’ friends were not happy with their being in the middle of Samaria, they wanted out.

But this man, this Jesus, decided to stay.

He stayed to eat with us – Samaritans!

He stayed in the village some days, and we listened to his stories, and learned about a bigger God than we had known. This was a God bigger than either of the mountains on which our people’s temples had been built. This was a God that embraced all people.

And I was not an outcast any longer. This was a sign, a miracle for me. Because Jesus talked to me, because he took the time to be with me, my whole life changed. Now, I had a place in the village, and no longer did I have to come to the village in the middle of the day to get water.

Now, I know what you are wondering, was this Jesus the one that God sent? Was he the one that our people have been waiting for all these generations?

All I can say is, “Come and see.”

Stay a while. Eat together, pray together, work together.

The secret is to come and stay.

Then you will be – new.

Then you will know the messiah. Amen.

**Questions:**

**In this time of fear and anxiety, what does it mean to you to abide with Jesus?**

**Where might you find living water in your life today?**

THE WILDERNESS IS A PLACE OF DISRUPTION

Sarah Are  
A Sanctified Art | sanctifiedart.org

My grandfather was a good man,  
But he believed  
That wilderness emotions  
Were not to be seen.  
Cry with the door closed,  
Don't dwell on the negative.  
Chin up, kid,  
We've been here before.

My grandfather was a good man,  
But I'd like to say—  
The wilderness is here to interrupt your  
    previously-scheduled programming.  
Like water in the desert  
And setting the slaves free,  
The wilderness might be  
The very thing we need,  
The very thing we dream,  
The very thing we plead  
For.

I guess what I'm trying to say is—  
It never seems appealing to let a bird  
    in the house,  
But if you do,  
Then you might as well  
Open every window and door.

And if you do,  
Then you just might find yourself  
Basking in the light,  
Dancing in the breeze,  
Overwhelmed with the beauty  
That an open door brings.

So I'm opening my door  
And inviting in the wind,  
To rustle up my heart  
And start over again.

For sweeping the truth under the rug  
Has never gotten us far.  
So may the wilderness be like a  
Bird in your house.  
Throw open your doors.  
The truth must come out.

Pandemic  
By: Reverend Lynn Ungar

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath --  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from being and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love --  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.