



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of January 30, 2022 (John 4:1-42)

Prayers for Groups & Personal Devotion:

Holy One,
Water and Words have become so important, such life giving things. We thank you for the Water of Life, that brings us glimpses of your glory; a taste of eternity; and hope for the future. Yet, even as the thanks leaves our lips we are all too aware that not all have this luxury. We pray for places where water cannot be taken for granted; where water is not the bringer of life, but instead a harbinger of disease: we pray for those who strive to bring clean water and sanitation into places where there is none. We pray for those for whom words are not cheap; where expressing faith in the Word, can bring persecution and fear. ...Word of Life, bring comfort to those who are fearful and peace to those who are troubled; as we

Devotions for Life A LifeGroup Resource

The Story: John 4:1-42

Context: Today's story is a pretty famous one, but also a famously misunderstood one. Before we get into that, note that this is the longest conversation Jesus has with any one person in all the Gospels, and with that in mind, also note that the subject is not even named. This story intentionally follows Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus because Samaria (probably Israel's most present enemy of the time) represents "the world" that "God so loves" in John 3:16. This is why Jesus "had to go through Samaria". Geographically he did not, but theologically he did. Where this story is widely misunderstood is in the casting of the Samaritan Woman as a prostitute or "loose woman" of some kind. These interpretations are



rooted in Christian patriarchy and sexism and necessitate correction. The five husbands the woman had likely died or divorced her for the sexist and petty reasons a man could divorce a woman. And the man she's with now is

pray for all who live with constant uncertainty and violence. Holy One, where your creation groans and cries out for want of water, bring the refreshing water of life, we pray.

Amen.

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Acts of Compassion & Justice:

- It is far more likely that the Samaritan Woman is a widow (perhaps even 5 times over) than it is she is living some kind of promiscuous life. The man she's with "now" who is not her husband is likely a brother of a deceased husband of hers, who, by law, would be required to take her in to make sure she is cared for. The law is the law that commands that we care for the widows in our community. Are there widows or widowers in your community who could use a visit? A helping hand? Consider reaching out this week.
- LAST CALL! This month we are collecting socks and underwear for Simpson Housing Services. If you have the means consider contributing to our efforts. Just drop them off at church when you come to worship or during office hours. You may also have them shipped.

likely the brother of a deceased husband who the law would require to take her in to what is called a "levirate marriage", which is when the brother of the deceased takes in a widow to ensure that she is cared for. This should change how we read the tone of the conversation.

Reading the Story: Read this story on its own, simply tracking the conversation and consider writing down questions as you go. There's a LOT in it. But then also read it in comparison to last week's story with Jesus and Nicodemus. They are meant to stand in contrast to one another. How do they? And what are the implications of this?

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

- If you could ask a Biblical scholar one question about this story, what would it be?
- What is your take on the Samaritan woman? Who is she? What's her story? What do you know about Samaria and its history with Israel?
- Why do you think Jesus went to the well if he had nothing to get water with?
- What two intersecting identities does the woman carry that she names and which separate her from Jesus.
- What is a "spring of water gushing up to eternal life"? What does Jesus mean by this? What are the implications of this on the woman's life and on ours?
- What is Jesus' response to her about where one is to worship? What might this mean for us today?
- What does it mean to "worship in spirit and truth"? How and where does this kind of worship happen? Who gets to participate in this kind of worship?
- What is the woman's active response to her conversation with Jesus? What does she immediately do?

