

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Third Sunday of Lent
March 19, 2017

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It does not get any better than this: Blessed Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well. No incident in the Gospels convinces us more perfectly that the Lord Jesus Christ is ever seeking every human soul, and doing it with all His boundless wisdom, zeal for holiness, and tenderness for those who are sin-sick.

Imagine the very idea of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity hanging around a town with a bad reputation! That is what we have here. And He picked the very place where the *especially disgraced people* came to draw water. *Jacob's Well* has a lofty sounding name. But it was *outside* a town that had wells of its own. It was into that town the disciples had gone to buy food. Jacob's Well was where you could get water if you needed to escape the notice of your neighbors.

Left alone at the well, the Lord soon began conversation with a representative of the local low life. The Samaritan woman was at Jacob's Well for a reason, which soon became evident. She was amazed Jesus asked her for a drink of water. Then, after some further conversation, more or less off the cuff, the Lord told her something He would never say so plainly to all the rabbis and scholars or the Roman governor in Jerusalem: that He is the Son of God.

The Gospel account is lengthy. That is because there are many instances of the great care Christ took to gain this one soul for the Kingdom of Heaven. You and I are invited to ponder every one of those Divine moves. When we do, each of us will have a favorite. And as your life in Christ progresses and your soul has need, you may change your favorite part of the story. It is a wonderful thing to know the eternal Creator patiently seeks, by every device of love, to gain the faith of His Own creatures. Every one of us is being besieged by this same Infinite Personal Love named Jesus, *on a daily basis*.

The preacher gets to choose one such moment in the story. So let's look at that spot where Our Lord Jesus has been talking about living water springing up into eternal life. In her response, it was evident the woman only saw this teaching from an earthly, practical, point of view. She figured if she had this living water it would save her a trip to this out-of-town well! Okay. So what did the Lord do? *He changed His approach*. Jesus spoke straight into her true self. "Go, call your

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husband, and come here.” Christ touched the sore spot, and the woman cringed and confessed, “I have no husband.” And the truth comes out. She had had *five* husbands. That is why she comes to the out-of-town *Jacob’s Well* for water!

Up to this point Christ’s teaching about grace and eternal life had made no impression upon the Samaritan woman. That is because she had not been convinced of sin. So the Lord put His instruction of living water on hold. And He set about the task of awakening her conscience. The Saviour opened the wound of guilt so she may understand the remedy of grace.

You have heard the saying *when we break down God breaks in*. The Samaritan woman broke down. And then when she desperately tried to change the subject, Christ spoke ever so gently of the Fatherhood of God. She had never before thought of herself as the child of God. *Right there*, in that moment, she was won for the Kingdom of Heaven. And we see it immediately in the account of the incident. As a result of all Christ’s care and effort, this Samaritan woman now spoke of the Messiah more knowingly than anyone else in the Gospels except the Lord Himself.

The Son of God was tired and hungry when He sat down by *Jacob’s Well* waiting for the return of the disciples. But Jesus soon forgot hunger, thirst, and weariness in His ardent love for this one, ignorant, obscure, sinner. Jesus meant business when He said the old rules for approaching God were obsolete. Ever since the Incarnation, here is God Himself seeking out the last, the least, and the lost. *No one is safe!* Not even in a seedy Samaritan town nicknamed *Sychar*, which may translate as “city of liars.”

If you don’t look out, Almighty God might come around looking even for you! And the Gospel Good News *is that He does*.