

## “Meeting Christ at the Well” — John 4:1–42

Good morning! This narrative was a long story, but a beautiful one if you ask me. This week’s Gospel reading takes us to a well—an ordinary place, a necessary place. Wells were not sacred spaces like the temple. They were practical. People went there because they had to. They went thirsty, tired, carrying heavy jars, doing what needed to be done for daily life.

And that is exactly where Jesus chooses to show up.

Jesus is tired. He’s traveling. He’s thirsty. And he sits down at a well in Samaria—already crossing boundaries before he ever opens his mouth. Jews didn’t go through Samaria if they could help it. The Judeans (the Jews in John’s Gospel) saw Samaritans as a mixed race, not true descendants of God’s people. Jewish men did not initiate conversations with women in public. And yet Jesus speaks first: “*Give me a drink.*”

As a nurse practitioner, I think a lot about the power of first questions. Sometimes a simple question opens a door to a much deeper story. A patient may come in for something routine—blood pressure, a cough, a refill—but underneath there is grief, fear, exhaustion, or shame. And often, it starts with noticing: *You look tired. How are you really doing?*

That’s what Jesus does here.

The Samaritan woman comes to the well alone, in the heat of the day. That detail matters. Women usually came together in the morning or evening. Midday suggests avoidance. Isolation. Maybe shame. Maybe just survival. And Jesus doesn’t ignore her, doesn’t fix her, doesn’t lecture her. He sees her.

He asks for water—but then offers living water.

What strikes me as both a clinician and a mother is that Jesus doesn’t bypass her real life. He doesn’t say, “None of that matters anymore.” He names it. He acknowledges her story—her relationships, her pain, her complicated past—not to condemn her, but to tell her: *I know you. And I am still here.*

In family practice, I’ve learned that healing rarely happens without trust. And trust rarely happens without being known. This woman is known—fully—and instead of being rejected, she is invited into relationship.

That is grace.

As a mother, this story also resonates deeply. There are so many seasons in life when we show up just trying to get through the day—making meals, driving kids, tending to others’ needs, carrying invisible loads. Sometimes faith feels like one more thing we’re supposed to do well. And yet this story reminds us that Jesus meets us *in the middle of the doing*. At the well. In the routine. In the exhaustion.

He doesn’t wait for her to get her life in order. He meets her exactly where she is.

And then something remarkable happens.

She leaves her water jar behind.

That jar represented her daily burden—necessary, heavy, defining. When she encounters Jesus, she doesn't abandon her life, but she momentarily forgets what she came for, because she has found something even more urgent: *"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!"*

She becomes the first evangelist in John's Gospel. Not a disciple. Not a religious leader. A Samaritan woman with a complicated story. She doesn't have all the theology right. She simply tells the truth about what she has experienced.

We are not saved by having the right answers. We are saved by grace. And then we are sent—not as perfect witnesses, but as honest ones.

In rural communities like ours, we know wells. Maybe not literal ones as often anymore, but we know shared places: the clinic, the school, the café, the co-op, the ball field. Places where stories are exchanged, where burdens are visible, where people come because they need something.

What if those are the places where Christ is already sitting, waiting?

What if sharing faith doesn't always look like preaching, but like listening well, offering compassion, telling the truth about where we have encountered grace?

This story ends with the Samaritans saying, *"We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."* Not just the Savior of the right people. Not just the Savior of the put-together. The Savior of the world.

Including tired mothers. Including overworked clinicians. Including people with complicated pasts. Including rural churches faithfully showing up week after week.

For my Master's and Doctoral education, I attended Creighton University. I chose Creighton for very logical reasons. The classes met on Wednesdays so I could adjust my work schedule around the in-person classes. The application period was still open, so I had time to apply and start within a few weeks. What I realized as I was accepted and moved through my nursing education at Creighton was how much I loved incorporating the Jesuit values in my education. As I wrote my message for today, I kept thinking about how much of the "relationship" Jesus built with the Samaritan woman embodies what I strive to do as a nurse every day. I took time to reflect on the Jesuit Values as I prepared for today's message. If you have not heard of the Jesuit Values, I will share them with you.

- Finding God in All Things: Everything that exists comes from a loving God who can be discovered in the world and in each person. Living with a commitment to "finding God in all things" means noticing and experiencing God's active love in other people, in the world around us and in everyday moments.
- Cura Personalis: *Cura personalis* means "care for the whole person" or, more accurately, "care that is personal" in Latin. It's about recognizing that every person is a unique gift from God, with their own talents, strengths and needs. Each of us is made in God's image and inherently worthy of dignity. We are all meant to live fully, freely and authentically. We take time to understand, respect and support each individual as a whole person.

- Reflection and Discernment: In our busy lives, it's easy to get caught up in constant activity and distractions. The value of reflection and discernment invites us to slow down, pay attention and look inward. Make time each day to reflect and to notice God's presence in our lives and hearts.
- Magis "More": *Magis*, meaning "more," challenges us to seek what leads to the greatest good; the choices, actions and commitments that help us grow more fully and contribute to something bigger than ourselves. It reminds us to live with purpose and aim for what matters most.
- For and With Others: We are called to look beyond ourselves and live as people who are "for and with others," building genuine relationships with individuals and communities who are poor or marginalized. These connections help us understand our shared humanity and develop a sense of solidarity that inspires us to use our talents, time and energy to work toward a world that better reflects God's vision for all people and the earth we share.
- Faith that Does Justice: faith is not only what we believe but also how we live. "Faith that does justice" means putting love into action. It means working alongside God and with others to seek the common good and help create a more just world.

In healthcare, we are trained to diagnose. We look at numbers, charts, symptoms, and histories. And all of that matters—it saves lives. But as a nurse, I am trained to care for the whole person. People heal differently when they feel seen.

I've had patients come in for something simple—a blood pressure check, a refill—and when I slow down and really listen, a deeper story comes out. Grief. Exhaustion. Fear. Loneliness. Often, nothing on the chart changes in that moment—but something in the person does.

Jesus doesn't meet the Samaritan woman as a problem to solve. He meets her as a person to know. Before he offers living water, he offers attention. He sits with her at the well and stays.

In a world that rushes to label and diagnose one another, Jesus shows us a different way: healing begins when someone is truly seen.

This week, we may not be able to fix one another's lives. But we can practice the holy work of seeing—at the clinic, at the coffee shop, in our families, and in this church. Because sometimes, being seen is the first taste of living water.

So today, hear this good news:

Jesus meets you at your well.

Jesus knows your story.

Jesus offers living water that does not run out.