

2008 February 27th

How unutterable sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us completely. No talebearer can inform on us; no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew him and called us to himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us. A.W. TOZER, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY.

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It is safe to say that this Woman at the well's life is a mess. But what do we really know about this woman? There have been a lot of assumptions made about her over the centuries, most of which are not good. But what does the story tell us?

We know that she is a Samaritan woman. We know that she has been married five times but at present she had no husband. And we know that she was living with a man that was not her husband.

We have often heard that this woman was not of the highest moral character. This has been deduced from the fact that she has gone through 5 husbands, is living with a man that is not her husband and is at the well getting water when no one else is there.

But we don't know what happened to those husbands. Did they divorce her, if so why? Remember a woman couldn't divorce a man. Men divorced women. It could have been because of something she did. It could have been because they were through with her and wanted to trade her in for a new model. Maybe she went through husbands because they died. Maybe she killed them or they could have just died. I knew a woman who was twice a widow. That's really hard. Imagine if you were widowed 5 times? Imagine the heart ache. I wouldn't want to get married again, would you? Or would you marry a woman who was widowed 5 times? I don't want to be superstitious but I wouldn't want to be stupid. Remember that song, "I'm Henry the 8th I am Henry the 8th I am, I am. I got married to the widow next door, she's been married 7 times or more and everyone was a Henry. I would definitely not marry that woman, especially if my name was Henry.

Maybe the woman at the well married a man that beat her so she ran away, only to pick the same kind of man time and time again. The point is we don't know. But that doesn't stop us from making assumptions. Just because we don't know the circumstances of a person's misfortune doesn't stop us from making assumptions. And those assumptions are not usually very fair or gracious. We like to assume that when people go through hard times that it's their own fault? We don't like to think about bad things happening to good people because then maybe bad things will happen to us.

It is interesting that Jesus does not say anything about her lifestyle only points out that she has had 5 husbands. Jesus doesn't even say anything to her about the man who is not her husband that she is living with.

Jesus meets this woman who most people would think he wouldn't or shouldn't meet. And he talks with her. She's a Samaritan, a woman, who knows what kind of woman, and he talks with her, listens to her. He even got her to ask for his living water. She never would have thought she needed it wouldn't even have thought of asking for it if he wouldn't have suggested it.

Yaconelli suggests that our past is a reflection of our longing. He says, "Our search for love, for meaning and for happiness is often our search for God in disguise." Was Jesus' visit with this woman, a chance meeting or not? Did this encounter happen by chance or was it part of God's plan? Is this God meeting her in her search for love, for meaning and for happiness? Look what happened as a result of this

conversation? She runs and tells everyone about Jesus and they believe in him. Is that the answer to her search for love and meaning and happiness?

So we have a person whose life is a mess. Maybe it's her fault maybe it's not. But her life is a mess yet Jesus meets her. Jesus offers her the living water of everlasting life. Jesus puts her to work in the kingdom. Jesus uses her just as she is. Come and see a man that told me everything I ever did. Maybe some of them said, Well I could do that. Everyone knows about you.

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Again there is a lot we don't know about this woman but it sounds like the things she overheard people saying about her weren't very flattering, weren't very affirming. Looks like she is going to the well in the afternoon so that she could be there without any other people, without the looks, and the comments.

But after meeting Jesus she is inspired and becomes an evangelist leading people to Christ. Why would they listen to that message? Why would they listen to this woman whose life is a mess? I don't know but they did.

So what a difference Jesus made. What a difference Jesus makes.

From one religious camp we are told that what God wants is obedience, or sacrifice, or adherence to the right doctrines, or morality. Those are the answers offered by conservative churches. The more therapeutic churches suggest that no, God is after our contentment, or happiness, or self-actualization, or something else along those lines. He is concerned about all these things, of course, but they are not his primary concerns. What he is after is us, our laughter, our dreams, our fears, our heart of hearts. Brent Curtis and John Eldredge. **SACRED ROMANCE**