



The Nourishing Vocation Project Engaging the Living Word

John 4

What is this particular text?

- Narrative
- Dialogue
- Conversion
- Theology
- Salvation

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Shows how Jesus breaks down barriers
- Shows Jesus' power to transform lives
- Jesus is increasing in fame and notoriety
- Makes Jesus and his message available to outsiders
- Follows the same format of dialogue as Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in chapter 3
- In Genesis, whenever a man met a woman at a well, he married her—is this a parallel of that type of narrative by John?

How can this text function in the church today?

- Helps us to discover the “living water” that Jesus offers
- Reminds us that Jesus sees and loves outcasts
- Invitation to think about community and who is included and who is rejected
- Invitation to ponder what we thirst for
- Helps us to meet Jesus and come to know him as the Samaritan woman did

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- A little anger when Jesus presumptuously Jesus says to the woman “Give me a drink.”
- There is witty banter here between Jesus and the woman that I delight in
- I am uneasy with the way Jesus tells the woman her own story about her husbands—she doesn't get to speak for herself about her past
- Reminds me of times when I was ostracized from a community

What do you have to say to the text?

- I wish the woman could have told Jesus about her past on her own terms
- Jesus puts the woman in an awkward and potentially dangerous situation by demanding a drink from her
- I enjoy so much that the woman holds her own in conversation with Jesus. “You have no bucket.” She is not intimidated and I love that.
- Why can't the townspeople let the woman have her moment? At the end, she seems to be ostracized once again, or told that herself and her testimony is not needed.

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Jesus' humanity—he is weary and needs a drink
- Jesus' truly takes time to see and hear a woman who is alone
- As the woman gradually learns more about who Jesus is, she seems to know exactly what she wants to ask—her faith has prepared her for this unexpected encounter
- Jesus changes her life—she leaves her water bucket (her old way of life) behind at the well in order to share the good news

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- Sexism—we ASSUME the woman is living an immoral life, but Jesus doesn't say that and neither does the woman, who doesn't get to tell her own story about her past
- Women who do not meet the right standards in the context of beauty or careers or family life are often ostracized, shunned, and mocked. (and those standards are typically defined by white males)
- More and more communities do not have access to clean water or enough water
- Does worship in our church communities inspire us to leave old ways behind to go and share the good news?
- Women deserve to be able to tell their own stories and to be listened to
- We are eager to divide ourselves into groups who do not share things in common, and we do not wish to find common ground, nor can we have civil conversations about our differences
- We do all thirst after living and life-giving water
- Crises of today:
 - Sexism and Transphobia which enforce standards of womanhood that exclude and harm
 - Environmental Justice and access to clean water for all
 - Widening divisions between political groups which make reconciliation and even conversation next to impossible

What do you see within yourself?

- Times when I have had to go alone to the well
- Fear of someone pointing out "everything I have ever done"
- Times when I have done the ostracizing or not really bothered to see or hear someone

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, and models it in form (except that the woman is transformed immediately and Nicodemus is left in confusion)
- Right after this, Jesus goes to Galilee and heals a boy, the son of a royal official
- Follows a pattern in the Gospel of John for people seeking Jesus and engaging with him in dialogue
- Has similarities in form with the pattern of the stories in Genesis where Isaac and then Jacob meet their wives at the well

What questions does this text raise for you?

- Why does Jesus bring up her past?
- Why doesn't Jesus let her tell her story?
- What else did they talk about together?

- At what point did the woman realize who Jesus was? When he told her he was the Messiah, or before that?
- Why did the rest of the townspeople listen to someone they usually had nothing to do with?
- What do we really thirst for?
- Who are the outcasts in our communities today?
- If people had found fault with Jesus and the woman talking together, would the woman have been blamed? Would she have been in danger?
- What groups of today's world "share nothing in common"
- Did the woman ever return for her bucket, or did she leave her village behind altogether to follow Jesus?
- How did other people react when they heard that Jesus befriended a Samaritan woman?
- Why doesn't John tell us her name?
- Does the woman ever give him a drink?

What words/themes seem of particular importance?

- Water/thirst
- Woman
- Well/springs
- Water-jar
- Living
- Messiah

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- Jesus breaks down barriers between peoples
- Jesus truly sees and knows us
- Encountering Jesus is life-changing
- God uses us to spread God's love
- Jesus chooses outcasts
- Living Water is for all of creation

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- We over-emphasize the sinfulness of the woman
- We hoard the living water for ourselves because we fear there is not enough to go around (we don't leave our buckets behind).
- We put our hope in water that is not living water
- Following Jesus does not always restore us to our communities
- Following Jesus means we have to cross boundaries and be uncomfortable
- Following Jesus means learning to love those with whom we disagree, and that's hard work
- The divide and hostility between various groups is particularly wide and volatile today
- This story can be difficult in contexts where people do not have enough water or clean water

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- Jesus is available to everyone
- Jesus sees us and knows us individually
- Jesus is bigger than any human barrier

- Jesus chooses outcasts and marginalized people
- Jesus sees us for who we really are and loves unconditionally
- Jesus is Living Water—he is who we thirst for

What have others said about this text?

- [“This is a story of a woman](#) presented as a paradigmatic disciple who encounters the Light of the World at the brightest time of day, noon. We the readers are supposed to do exactly as she does. What does that entail? Engage in continued, vital theological conversation with Jesus, gain a deeper, layered understanding of who he is and the **life** he brings, then testify to others and invite them to have their own primary encounter with Jesus.” by Jaime Clark-Soles
- [“A woman — strong, smart, and savvy](#) despite her vulnerable location in the world — becomes an example of someone who crosses boundaries to encounter Jesus in a real way. Refusing easy answers, her exchange with Jesus presents a powerful image of who Jesus is — a tired man without a bucket asking for a drink, and the Messianic giver of water for life, eternal and abundant, Savior for the world.” by Lindsey S. Jodrey

What will I teach or proclaim?

- Jesus chooses the woman at the well to point her community to Jesus
- A calling always leads to a sending out
- An encounter with Jesus changes us/our plans
- Jesus offered the woman Living Water; Jesus offers Living Water to us
- The woman realizes who Jesus is through a conversation and a relationship, NOT a miracle or sign
- Jesus crosses earthly barriers and divisions and calls us to do the same thing
- Whom Jesus chooses might surprise us
- Jesus hears, sees, and believes women
- Jesus trusts women to lead others to him
- Jesus knows everything we have ever done and yet loves us, calls us, and sends us out to love others
- Our callings sometimes send us to places and people that make us uncomfortable
- Jesus is the one we thirst for
- Where do we get refreshing sips of living water in our lives? Where do we encounter Jesus? Where does Jesus encounter us?
- Who helps us see who Jesus is? Do we help others know him?
- We are called to leave our water-jars behind
- In a world of scarcity, Jesus is abundance