

Give Me a Drink

WHAT WE FOUND

- Jesus had to pass through Samaria, sat down tired at noon, and opened the conversation by asking her for something he had no means to draw.
- She named the barriers herself: a Jew asking a Samaritan, a man asking a woman. The narrator added a third. Jesus crossed all of them by asking a favor.
- She deflected twice and he never chased the deflection. He raised the stakes each time until she followed, and at verse 15 she asked him for the water.
- Only then, at verse 16, did he name her situation. One statement of fact, no adjective, no verdict, and he never mentioned it again.
- The text does not tell us her moral history. A woman could not ordinarily initiate a divorce herself in that world. We fill that gap in; the evangelist did not.
- When she escaped into a theological controversy, he answered it seriously, and not softly, and then moved through it rather than letting it become a hiding place.
- The first time Jesus plainly tells anyone in this Gospel that he is the Messiah, he tells her, alone, at a well.
- She evangelized with an invitation and a question, from inside what she actually knew. And the town ended up believing because of him rather than because of her, which is what a bridge is for.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on who was really thirsty

St. Augustine, preaching through the Gospel of John, teaches in substance that the one who asked for a drink was thirsting for her faith. He asked for water and he was seeking the woman.

The Catechism makes the same move at CCC 2560, where it says that Christ is the first to ask for a drink and that his thirst arises from the depths of God's desire for us. If you take only one image away from this session, take that one: the conversation opened because he wanted something, and what he wanted was her.

St. Augustine, summarized from his Tractates on the Gospel of John. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on where the word comes in

Pope Francis described person to person evangelization as beginning with personal dialogue, in which the other person speaks first and shares their joys, hopes, and worries about the people they love, and said that only afterward is it possible to bring up God's word.

That is the order in John 4, put in modern words. He also insists in the same passage that the word does eventually get brought up, which is why this study has a Movement Three.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 128 (2013).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Eastern tradition on the woman at the well

The Eastern churches have long honored this woman as an evangelist and martyr under the name Photini, "the enlightened

one," with a body of tradition holding that she preached and died for the faith. The Syriac tradition, associated with St. Ephrem, dwells on her as the one who carried the news back into the city.

Take it exactly as it stands: a venerable tradition rather than something St. John reports. The Gospel tells us that many believed in Jesus because of her testimony, and that the town then came to him themselves. The tradition tells us the Church never forgot her.

Eastern liturgical tradition, honoring her as St. Photini. Tradition, not Scripture, and offered as such.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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Rung 4 of the ladder. One question that goes a layer deeper than you normally go, and then silence.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- With one of them this week, ask one question that goes one layer past where you usually stop. Not about faith. About their life, what they are carrying, what they actually hope for.
- Then stop talking. Do not fill the pause, do not solve it, and do not attach anything to it.
- If they deflect, do not chase it. Notice where they went, and let them stay there.
- Write down afterward: what did they ask for, if anything? Bring that back next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

John 4:29

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 17:16-34 before we meet, in one sitting.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 2560.** Christ comes to meet every human being beside the well, and he is the first to ask for a drink.
- **CCC 2561.** Our prayer is a response to the living God who thirsts for us.
- **CCC 728.** Jesus alludes to the Holy Spirit in speaking with the Samaritan woman.
- **CCC 694.** Water as a symbol of the Spirit's action in Baptism.
- **CCC 839.** The relationship of the Church with the Jewish people, behind "salvation is from the Jews."