**THE WOMAN AT THE WELL: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? *MM online***

**Do you remember a fortnight ago we looked at the famous story which John told of when Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well? Do you remember how Jesus had entered enemy territory by going into Samaria in the first place? Things had been going really well in Judea, but He had to avoid any suggestion of competition with John the Baptist, so He went back to Galilee *through* Samaria (Jn. 4:1-3).**

**We’re told that *He had to go through Samaria (v. 4),* even though there were other, longer routes available. But He *did* have to go, because, by going where other Jewish teachers wouldn’t go, He met that woman at the well. If we go where God sends – even if we’d rather not be there – we’ll find that we’re actually in the best place in the world, because we’ll always find Jesus there!**

**Do you remember how He told her to call her husband and that elicited her confession that she had no husband but was living with a man who wasn’t her husband (vv. 16-17)? Perfectly normal today, of course, but then? Shocking! They had quite a conversation together and then Jesus’ disciples returned and interrupted them and that set me wondering – did she ever call that man with whom she was living? Let’s find out: what happened next?**

**Jn. 4:27-42**

**The disciples were *surprised.* What was it that surprised them? That He was wasting His time talking with a *woman*. Their religion was for men only! Women were thought to lack the capacity to understand Bible teaching. A rabbi’s prayer of the time has survived: *Blessed art Thou, O Lord….who hast not made me a woman*!**

**That wasn’t Jesus’ attitude. He valued women – and children – as highly as men, if not higher: whom did He choose to appear to *first* after His resurrection? Not one of the apostles, but Mary Magdalene – a woman (Mk. 16:9)! So He spent time with this lone woman, although He *did* tell her to call her husband – that would have doubled the congregation, after all! But when she didn’t go, He didn’t refuse to speak to her. All Jesus’ congregations are congregations of *one* – even if He’s speaking to thousands**.

**Jesus was pleased to speak with her, but, when His disciples – a bunch of men – returned, even though they wouldn’t speak to her, she was embarrassed and hurried off. In fact, she was so embarrassed that she left her water pot behind (v. 28) – forgetting the very reason she had gone to the well in the first place! She hurried back and spoke to the townspeople. Her partner may well have been among them, but she didn’t single him out as Jesus had suggested, but, instead, gave a general message to everyone in the village (vv. 28-9). Now, she had a certain reputation – the fact that she had gone to the well *on her own* suggests that she wasn’t polite company. She had had five husbands and was currently cohabiting with a sixth man (v. 18). So when she started talking about *the Christ* (v. 29), this probably wasn’t what they expected from her. Look at the effect it had! They heard her, went to see Jesus for themselves (vv 29-30) and, then, having heard Him, believed in Him (v. 42)! Some of us talk about Jesus a lot, or, like me, for a living. People *can* get used to it. If *you* rarely say much about Him, the little you do say from your own experience – your *testimony (v. 39)* – can have a powerful impact.**

**But why didn’t she specifically call her partner as Jesus had requested? I think the answer is in v. 29 – she said, *Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?* Now, of course, Jesus didn’t literally tell her *everything* she ever did. So what did she mean? Well, He’d talked to her about her colourful past and she’d called that *everything*! He hadn’t condemned her, but, by telling the truth, He must have awoken her conscience. She was in a toxic relationship, so she broke it off - that’s why she didn’t call her partner: she didn’t have one anymore! Jesus does not condemn us, He tell us the truth. Then He hears our confession, forgives us and strengthens us to repent.**

**Why did the other villagers believe in Jesus? Because they met Jesus for themselves, but *she* was the one whointroduced them to Him. This humble woman who thought she was unworthy of any Jew’s attention (v. 9), let alone the Messiah’s and who had been used and abused by many men, was chosen by God to be the evangelist to her home town! Don’t despise yourself - will you? - or your potential. You may be the only Christian some of your acquaintances know. I’m not calling you all to become preachers – her sermon as recorded was only two sentences long (v. 29)! Just tell it as it is and leave the rest to God.**

**Jesus had used the imagery of water when He spoke to her because He had met her at a well, but He spoke to His disciples about food because that’s what they’d brought back from the town (vv. 32ff). Ain’t that just like Jesus?! He enters into our experiences, interests and desires, or, as they say, He meets us *where we are*. And He speaks in simple everyday language that we can all understand.**

**And what does He say? Well, what did He say to them? “It’s four months to the harvest (v. 35)!” Well, yes, they knew that. “You’ll be busy reaping what the sowers have sown (v. 36).” Yes, they knew that – it would be very busy in four months’ time, but worth it. “You’ll be rejoicing, sower and reaper together (v. 36)” Yes, of course, they knew that – party-time was the best bit of harvest time! But did you notice what else He said? *Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest (v. 35).* What? But He’d just said that harvest was four months away! Ah, but there are *two* sorts of harvest, just as there are two sorts of water. He’d spoken to the woman about the *living water* of the Holy Spirit (v. 10) and now He was talking about the “harvest” of the Holy Spirit.**

**As we pray and speak and serve, we sow seeds of faith in others’ lives. When the seeds are ready, they grow into the harvest of the *fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-3).* But sowing and reaping is hard work, which is why He also spoke of another sort of “food”. We need food for energy and He said His food is to do God’s will (v. 34). So, as we do God’s will, we receive the energy we need to sow those seeds of faith and to reap them at harvest-time. And, though the farmer sows and reaps, it’s God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6), so we don’t even have to worry about it!**

**So, put right what’s wrong in your life; do God’s will – this is your spiritual food; and, as you tell it as it is, watch others grow in their faith!**