

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 11th May 2008

Being Witnesses with Jesus – by the well

John 4: 1-26



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

With the simple request for a drink of water so the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman at the well begins. In the following 18 verses in John's account the unnamed woman and Jesus managed amongst other things to discuss politics (race relations and territorial claims v9-15), sex (the woman's various and varied relationships v 16 -18) and religion (how and where to worship v 20 -26).

John's account of this meeting follows his 'style' of reporting personal and intimate meetings with Jesus. John rarely reports Jesus speaking to large crowds, instead we see Jesus meeting secretly with a nervous religious leader (Nicodemus) or talking with a promiscuous woman such as the woman at the well. John paints close ups of individuals – real people who responded to Jesus – some followed him courageously, others remained sceptical, others reacted with hostility. The well known journalist John Diamond died of cancer 7 years ago and wrote about his agnostic position regarding Jesus as Saviour "I can't force myself to believe what I don't believe... I am happy at not believing.' After taking drugs and a severe bout of depression Derek Draper, a political lobbyist for the Labour Government in the 1990's, discovered faith through walking into Westminster Abbey and then his local Anglican church and writes ' I started to discover Jesus Christ, his life his teaching...I was hooked.' The common factor between John and Derek is that both were interested in spiritual questions and prepared to face big issues to do with life and death, meaning and morality. Despite the narrow minded militant atheism of some such as Richard Dawkins most people that we live and work with are interested in spiritual matters it's just that they don't look to us - the Church to find the answers to their questions! Like it or not religion with a capital R with rules to follow and doctrines to believe in is out and spirituality with an understanding of life as a journey, a quest for meaning and purpose that goes deeper than the physical and material is in! Our witness to a generation who are happy to be described as spiritual but not religious is not so much an invitation to join our club and to follow our rules as holding a conversation about experiencing God and accompanying others on a journey of faith. At the heart of this search for something deeper, is a yearning for an encounter with a deep love that brings meaning and morality into lifewhich brings us to the woman at the well.

The Woman: At the hottest time of the day the woman was performing the most mundane chore; she avoided others who would have drawn water later; she scores a few flippant cheap and sarcastic points off this interesting man who has asked her for a drink; she is argumentative; she doesn't just accept what Jesus has to say; she is a woman of the world, she will go her own way, she will cope.

The Well: Usually filled with half stagnant water this day the well contained living water (read v13-14). Here at the well the woman is truly 'known' for the very first time. Here at the well she is accepted, irrespective of her past. Here at the well true worship is found -worship not dependant on form or ritual but Spirit and Truth. Here at the well Jesus is found whose person and presence changes everything.

The Witness: Read v25 – 30 and 39 – 42. This witness was so natural, so normal, so powerful.

The story of the woman at the well is 2000 years old yet today it is played out everyday in our lives as we live in a generation full of scepticism and yet open to discovering more, a generation not really interested in the Church or Religion but intrigued by Spirit and Truth; a generation needing to know forgiveness, acceptance and love but yet to discover Jesus and to meet with him. As his witnesses may we embrace the call to be natural and normal in our faith, to tell the story, to share the journey that like the woman at the well many will believe in him because of our testimony v 39.



Witness: questions to discuss

- 1 Imagine yourself in a private conversation with Jesus, much like the Samaritan woman's. What would you want to talk about?
- 2 What were the problems that were keeping the woman at the well from a deeply satisfying life?
- 3 Is it true that 'Jesus can solve all our problems?'
- 4 Jesus talked politics, sex and religion with the woman at the well. How often do we talk openly about these areas with our non Christian and/or Christian friends?
- 5 Have you ever had a normal conversation about your faith with someone who is not a Christian?
- 6 What do you think it might mean for you to be 'natural' and 'normal' in sharing your faith?