

To Be Loved, Is to Be Known
written by Chris Kinsley and Drew Francis

I am a woman of no distinction, of little importance
I'm a woman of no reputation which is to say bad

You whisper as I pass by and cast judgmental glances
Though you don't really take the time to look at me, or even get to know me

For to be known is to be loved
To be loved is to be known
otherwise what is the point of doing either one of them
in the first place.

I want to be known.

I want someone to look at my face and not just see two eyes,
a nose, a mouth and two ears

But to see all that I am and could be,
all my hopes, loves and fears.
But that is too much to hope for, to wish for or pray for
so I don't, not anymore.

Now I keep to myself, by that I mean the pain.
Pain that keeps me in my own private jail,
the pain that's brought me here at midday to this well.

To ask for a drink is no big request, but to ask it of me

A woman unclean, ashamed, used, abused, an outcast, a failure, a
disappointment a sinner.

No drink passing from these hands to your lips could ever be refreshing,
only condemning. As I'm sure you condemn me now,
but you don't

You are a man of no distinction although of the utmost importance,
a man with little reputation at least so far.
You whisper and tell me to my face what all those glances have been about.

You take the time to really look at me, but don't need to get to know me
For to be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known.

You know me, you actually know me, all of me and everything about me.

Every thought inside and hair on top of my head,
every hurt stored up, every hope, every dread.

From my past to my future, all I am and could be,
you tell me everything, you tell *me* about me.

And that which spoken by another would bring hate and condemnation,
coming from you brings love, grace, mercy, hope and salvation.

I've heard of one to come who would save a wretch like me
and here in my presence you say I am he.

To be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known.

I just met you, but I love you.
I don't know you, but I want to get to.

Let me run back to town, this is way too much for just me.

There are others
brothers, sisters, lovers and haters,
the good and the bad, sinners and saints
who should hear what you've told me,
who should see what you have shown me,
who should taste what you gave me,
who should feel how you forgave me.

For to be known is to be loved, and to be loved is to be known,
and they all need this too, we all do, need it for our own.

Scott L. Thompson
First Presbyterian Church, Willmar, MN
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"To See and Be Seen"
John 4
Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

4 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John'—² although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' ¹¹ The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?' ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' ¹³ Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' ¹⁵ The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

16 Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' ¹⁷ The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' ¹⁹ The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' ²¹ Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming,

and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' ²⁵The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' ²⁶Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' ²⁸Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' ³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' ³²But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' ³³So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' ³⁴Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.'

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.'

When I was a little boy, I was terribly shy. Even around extended family, who I had been around many times, I was shy. I have some very early memories of meeting people with my parents – I had to have been maybe 3 or 4 years old – and upon seeing someone for the first time, I would hide behind my parent's legs. I would look away when they tried to say hello to me. I would even close my eyes and wish they'd look elsewhere. Why? I didn't want to be seen! To be looked at was to be noticed. To be noticed was uncomfortable for the shy little kid that I

was then. I want you to keep that shy little kid in the back of your mind, we'll return to him after a short bit. But before we do that let's take a look at the text.

What unfolds here in John 4 is one of the most intriguing long conversations we have in the gospels. Ultimately it is the story of a woman who is seen. A woman who is known by Jesus, and when she is noticed, her life is changed for the better. It's quite remarkable for a number of reasons. First is the contrast with the passage we saw last week from the previous chapter of John – the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night, he is male, powerful, educated, privileged, and a Jew. The woman at the well meets Jesus in the day, she is female, uneducated, a common person, of no special status, and she is a Samaritan. They are opposites in many ways. Her Samaritan identity is especially important. These people were the kissing cousins of the Jews but were looked down upon for practicing religion differently. They worshipped God at Mount Gerizim, instead of the temple of Jerusalem. They had intermarried with foreigners. They were the Jew's cousins, yet they were outsiders. They were the ancient equivalent of that old time feud between the frontier families the Hatfields and the McCoys. For Jesus to be meeting and talking with her at the well that day would have been unorthodox, transgressive, and very nearly scandalous.

She was shocked by his boldness as well. She recognized the boundaries he crossed to ask for a drink. And although Jesus was hot and physically exhausted and really needed a drink, the ensuing conversation is packed with meaning about the water which quenches a thirst that isn't physical, but is spiritual.

Which brings us to the first takeaway from today's lesson: We are spiritual beings with needs that cannot be quenched outside of God. There's this fun, ironic conversation between Jesus and woman. She thinks he is speaking of physical water, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." And, surely we need water to quench our thirst and for our physical health. But don't we also need to feed our spirits? Don't we try to do so with all sorts of false food and drink? We try to quench our spirits with things: money, substances, sex, careers, private envies and aspirations. But none of these things satisfy; they leave us thirsting for more. Jesus promises to quench our thirst with spiritual water that satisfies.

Next, Jesus asks after her husband. This brings us to an important point of what is and what isn't said here. Many preachers have classically made much over this question and its response - that she has had 5 husbands and the man she is with is not her husband. They say that her presence at the well at noon alone is evidence of her shame, that she dared not to come in the morning or evening with the other women because she was a harlot or loose woman. They assert that she has a debt of sin and shame to overcome and the text points towards this. But the text does not go there; there are other explanations which are far more likely. We need to remember that in Jesus' day women had no rights in marriage. They could be divorced or abandoned at their husband's whim. Life was brutal and short, men died young from famine, warfare, injury, or disease. It's quite possible the man she was with was because she was in a Levirate marriage, where the Torah commands that a widow is taken in by her deceased husband's brother. The fact that the text doesn't name any sin, doesn't speak of forgiveness, and that these aren't features of the conversation are quite telling. It's probable that what Jesus has done when he speaks about her husbands is that he is seeing her situation. He is seeing that she has been a victim of circumstances - that she has been abandoned and bereft through no cause of her own. That she deserves love and respect, not scorn or shame over her situation. He has truly seen her. He has looked upon her with compassion and this sparks a conversation that leads to faith.

This brings us back to that scared, shy, little boy huddled behind his parent's legs. Why do all of us have a bit of shy little boy inside? I think it's because we're afraid of being seen. And when seen, then summarily shamed and excluded because of it. We're worried that if people saw who we truly are, they would recoil in revulsion and run away. We're afraid if they saw all of our private inadequacies, and shortcomings, warts and all, that we'd be rejected and excluded. So, we protect ourselves. We guard our private innermost selves from the world. We erect shields about us, both physical and mental, in order to keep people away from those protected areas.

So, what happens here is truly wonderful, considering all of this. Jesus *sees* the Samaritan woman. He reveals from his comments that he truly *knows* her. And rather than shaming her or judging her. He treats her with dignity and respect. They have a conversation which is truly remarkable. They discuss worship of God, she recognizes he is a prophet, and then asks, "is this perhaps the Messiah!?" This remarkable conversation spurs her to action, she runs off to tell

her village. Jesus stays an extra two days with her people. Her actions result in numerous people believing in Jesus.

Here is the good news from all of this. Just like Jesus saw the woman at the well, he sees us too. And instead of judging us, shaming us, and pushing us away. He comes to us in love and treats us with dignity and respect, just like the woman at the well. He offers us water which quenches our spiritual thirst for all time. He includes us in the family of God, as children of God, despite the fact that we may come from different people and different backgrounds, be we Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, Americans, or whatever. This is the beauty of God's grace. We are welcomed into God's families despite any shortcomings we feel we might have. Before we can run and hide behind our parent's legs, God has already anticipated us, known us, and loved us. Before we can even respond in faith, God's faithfulness has been extended to us. As the scripture says, "8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). This is grace, this is God's love moving first, this is the message of Christ.

Jesus sat at the well and met a strange woman from a foreign culture, and by the end of their time together she had become part of the family of God. We meet Jesus here in this place, each week, and we sometimes feel like that strange woman from a foreign culture, but the invitation is there for us, just like it was for her. You're invited to be seen, to be known. And in that seeing and knowing to not be cast away, but rather, to be loved. We are called to be loved and to take a long deep drink of grace – the grace of God which we see and touch in the waters of our baptisms and in the bread and cup we're going to share today. In the seeing and tasting of these things, know that you are included. You are loved. You are seen and known. And may your thirst be quenched, like it was for the woman at the well that day. And may you rejoice for you will never be thirsty again.

Alleluia and Amen.