

Sermon Title: **A Samaritan Woman**

Bible: **John 4:7-26**

Where & When: 3rd Sunday in Lent at Gilroy UMC on March 15, 2020

Audience: about 35 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for this time with our congregation here and via YouTube. When we look into the Scripture, please help us to find your love, your peace, and your presence in this time of uncertainty. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. A Samaritan Woman at the Well

Today's Scripture comes from the lectionary, which is John 4:5-42. What we read is about the first half of the long story of a Samaritan woman at a well. Verses 5 & 6 tell us the place and the time. It was at Jacob's well and at about noon. From verse 7 to verse 26, a very interesting conversation takes place between Jesus and a Samaritan woman, about living water, five husbands, and worship. In verse 27, the disciples appear, and in verses 31 through 38, they talk with Jesus about food and the harvest. From verse 28 to verse 30, and from verse 39 to verse 42, we can see how the Samaritan woman shares the good news with her people.

2. My Original Plan - Sharing A Feminist Interpretation

After I looked up today's scripture and this story, I had hoped to share what I learned in Seminary. That's because there are many interpretations for a Samaritan woman with five husbands. What I wanted is to see this scripture from a feminist perspective: from the book of "The Revelatory Text" by professor Sandra M. Schneiders. How can I, as a man,

share the feminist interpretation? As you know, I married a beautiful woman. I cannot understand my wife's viewpoint, in my mind sometimes, but to my wife, many times. However, because I love my wife, I listen to her and follow her, even if I cannot understand her. Listening to her and following her leads me to widen and deepen my eyes. Likewise, I wanted to listen to a feminist theologian's study, and to discover God's message to our congregation. But I have decided I need to set this aside for the next time.

3. A Samaritan Woman At the Well At Noon

As we all experienced last week, the coronavirus became a hot potato. It is still hot. Unfortunately, we do not know when this hot potato will cool down. For the next few weeks, we might need to face a more serious situation. The Samaritan woman went to the well at noon, the hottest time of the day, in order to draw water. That's because at noon nobody else was at the well. She had to keep her distance from others. It was more than six feet of space between her and each person. She had to live isolated from others, regardless of her wants or needs, because she was a foreign female, and because she had no husband. In that desperate situation, Jesus met this Samaritan woman. However, Jesus was not that gentle nor kind, but somewhat rude and aggressive. He could have gotten the water by himself or could have helped her to get the water, but instead he asked her to give him a drink. He was not supposed to ask her a personal question. But he did ask her about her marriage and her husband.

4. Jesus Reveals Himself When We Reveal Ourselves

On the other hand, the attitude of the woman was open and genuine. At first, she misunderstood what the living water was. She wondered where she could get that living water. She did not stop asking questions. Furthermore, she did not hide her personal life from Jesus. She has had five husbands, and the current man she was with was not her husband. When she opened herself to Jesus, Jesus revealed Himself to the woman. In verse 26, he says, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." In the Gospel of John, there are many of Jesus' revelations with "I am" sentences: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), "I am the gate for the sheep" (John 10:7), "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), "I am the true vine" (John 15:1), and so on. John 4:26 is the first time in the Gospel of John that Jesus shows who He is. And this first revelation made by Jesus was to a foreign woman who has a long story. If you read the second half of this Samaritan woman's story, the disciples did not understand yet who Jesus was. So then, who is the first real disciple of Jesus?

5. Wilderness, Well, and Home in Lent

Today is the 3rd Sunday in Lent. Lent is 40 days to remember Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. Interestingly, the word "quarantine" originally comes from the Italian, *quaranta giorni*, which means "forty days." During the Black Death plague epidemic, all ships were required to stay isolated for forty days, before passengers and crew could land and disembark. Now we know about the well in the story of the Samaritan woman. The

wilderness and the well are places of isolation. Nobody was there. In the time of the spread of the coronavirus, staying home as much as possible is the first guideline.

Somehow, our home becomes like the wilderness or the well. It feels like there is nobody. Home could become another place of isolation in this situation. However, let us remember Jesus in the wilderness and the foreign woman at the well. In the wilderness, Jesus was there. At the well, Jesus met the woman, and revealed himself. Like the woman, we might need to keep asking many questions; we could misunderstand, and we might face our personal issues. We do not know how long we will need to stay home. I wish for it not to be more than 40 days. At the end of this unknown, I hope for us to see who Jesus is, and for Jesus to reveal Himself to us: I am he the one... I am...

Closing Prayer

In a time of uncertainty, in a time of the unknown, oh, Lord, please be with us. In the place of the wilderness, in the place of the well, Jesus was there. In our homes, in the places wherever we go, please be there with us. Please guide us to your peace, and your presence. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions.

1. Where are you: in the wilderness, at the well, or at home? How is it?
2. Who is Jesus to you in this situation?