

**Bible reading John 4:5-42**

**Come and see**

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE ASTONISHING ACCEPTANCE.

People take a variety of meanings from this Gospel passage. Everyone agrees that Jesus was breaking convention, speaking with a Samaritan woman. What does it mean to us today, to accept and be accepted and to drink from the well of living water?



## REFLECT

With permission, find some fruit or small vegetable (e.g. raisins or small potatoes – something with a bit of texture to it); you need two or three of the same thing. Take one piece and examine it carefully. Feel it. Smell it. Notice every shade, wrinkle or bump. Then place it together with the others into a bowl. Close your eyes and mix them up. Open your eyes. Do you think you could find your piece now – recognise it among the rest? The pieces of fruit/vegetable are somewhat like people. It is easy to get lost in a crowd, but when we take the time to get to know someone as an individual, we find that everyone is unique and special. Is there someone you could get to know better?

## Pray

Decorate a paper cup with pictures and symbols that represent who you are. On the bottom, write 'accepted and loved'. Fill the cup with water. Drink some water, praying as you do: Jesus, thank you that you are living water, filling us with love, helping us to grow and bloom and to know that we are completely and astonishingly accepted. As we understand this for ourselves, help us to share your love and acceptance with people we know. Amen.

## CREATE

Draw a large outline of a well on a sheet of paper. Fill the well with images (drawings or cut-out pictures) showing that everyone is welcome here: Jesus offers living water to everyone. Add a bucket to the collage, and write in it words that express healing and acceptance.

## Bible notes

On his way back from Jerusalem to Galilee, Jesus rests by Jacob's well. Jacob first met his wife Rachel at a well 'in broad daylight' and gave water to her sheep (Genesis 29:1-12). This earlier incident is recalled as we read about Jesus establishing a relationship with a Samaritan woman who had been abandoned by her husbands (plural) and shamed into fetching water on her own and in the heat of the day. This spiritual relationship will transform her and those to whom she speaks about him. He begins by saying, 'Give me a drink', echoing our Old Testament reading and the striking of water from the rock, identified by Paul as Christ himself (1 Corinthians 10.4). Already recognising his request – to someone doubly distanced by gender and race – as astonishing, the Samaritan woman is led to ask for what he offers her. 'Sir, give me this water.'

Living water is often used in the Jewish Scriptures as an image of salvation – for example, in Ezekiel's vision of the river flowing from the future Temple (47:1-12). Here the water is not only God's gift to the thirsty but also God's gift within the thirsty, 'gushing up to eternal life' (see also 7:38). Perhaps the young bride whose groom describes her as 'a garden fountain, a well of living water', is in mind (Song of Solomon 4:15). This Samaritan woman, abused by men, becomes herself 'a well of living water' as she invites others to meet Jesus – 'Come and see' – leading many of them to believe in him.

## First impressions

- When or where have you seen acceptance like this?
- What do you need to accept about yourself?
- What can you do to make sure everyone feels included?



## A prayer for refreshment

Lord God, sometimes we are so tired after a busy week. Our minds, bodies and souls aching for refreshment. Jesus came to the well tired from his journey. He sought not only to receive refreshment but to give spiritual comfort. Lord God, we too want to receive. And to give. We offer ourselves to you so you can do your mighty work in us. Amen.

## LISTEN



Listen to 'Unconditional', Rend Collective on *Choose to Worship* (youtube.com/watch?v=X2ttWw1q10Q). Think about what kinds of people often get excluded and why. What might you (and your family/friends) do to help people be more included – either in a specific situation you know about, or generally in daily life?