

The Woman at the Well



John 4:5-42

Year A Lent 3

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

		1	2	3	4	5	6
▲	Jesus	■		▲			
■	Woman - a Samaritan woman who's an outcast among her own people, who themselves are looked down upon by the Israelis	▲		▲		▲	
▲	James - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)		▲		▲		▲
●	Butcher - a Samaritan merchant with a great dislike for Israelis and not much respect for women		●			●	
●	Shopkeeper - a Samaritan merchant with a great dislike for Israelis		●			●	
■	Matthew - a former tax collector (i.e. a agent of the Roman occupation of his own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples		▲		▲		■
▲	Phillip - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence				▲		▲
▲	Thomas - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts				▲		▲
●	Peter - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room						▲
●	Joanna - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus						●

Scene 1

Jesus , Woman

{Jesus rests by the well outside the gates of a Samaritan city. A woman enters, carrying a bucket.}

Jesus Good morning!

{She glances over at him, but ignores him.}

Jesus Hello?

Woman *[perfunctorily]* Good morning.

{She immediately turns away and begins drawing some water out of the well.}

Jesus *[making conversation]* The heat sure kicked in quickly this morning, didn't it?

{She continues to ignore him.}

Jesus I've been walking all morning, and boy am I beat.

{Continued silence.}

Jesus *[half to himself, but loud enough for her to hear]* I sure could use a refreshing drink of water.

{She continues to ignore him.}

Jesus *[finally asking her directly]* Excuse me, but could I have a drink?

Woman *[turning on him angrily]* Are you serious? Did those jerks from the marketplace send you out here?

Jesus *[innocently]* No! I have yet to set foot inside your gates.

Woman Then why are you asking me for water?

Jesus I'm thirsty.

Woman You're also an Israeli. Aren't you?

Jesus Well, yes, but what does that -

Woman *[interrupting]* Do you think we should be your servants as well? Is that it? Do you think you can sneer at us and refuse to do business with us and spit on us when we pass through your cities, and then come here and expect us to fetch your water?

Jesus *[still calmly]* No, I wouldn't *expect* that at all. I was hoping you would give me a drink of water as a gift.

Woman *[incredulously]* A gift? A gift? Why should I give you a gift?

Jesus Why should anybody give anybody a gift? But I'll tell you this: if you knew the gift from God I had to give, *you'd* be asking *me* for a drink, and the water I'd give you would satisfy you so completely you'd never thirst again.

Woman *[skeptically]* In the first place, you don't have a bucket for the well. In the second place: magic water? *[sarcastically]* Sure! Give me some of that. I'll never have to take another drink again, or break my back hauling buckets.

Jesus Not magic water. *Living* water. And if you'll bring your husband out here, I'll tell you both about it.

Woman *[flippantly]* Well, you're no seer, anyway, magic water notwithstanding. I don't have a husband.

Jesus And you're no liar, anyway, hostile attitude notwithstanding. For you speak the truth: you *don't* have a husband. Rather, you've had five, and the man you have now is not your husband.

Woman *[angrily]* You *are* in league with them. You tell those jerks they can go to hell with their jibes and their judgments!

Jesus *[calmly and earnestly]* I promise you I've never met the jerks. But I think that none of them know you've had *five* husbands, especially the one in xxx, and they don't yet know about the man you're with now. Isn't that true?

Woman *[in shock]* How could you possibly know about...but then who - but then how - *[a long shivering pause as she realizes that something magical is in fact happening]* What *are* you?

Scene 2

Butcher , James , Matthew , Shopkeeper

{The disciples are buying food in the marketplace of a Samaritan city.}

- James** Are you crazy? \$50 for a few loaves of bread and a bag of vegetables?
- Butcher** *[darkly]* And the meat.
- James** This is highway robbery!
- Shopkeeper** *[dismissively]* Maybe you're used to lower quality produce where you come from.
- James** Where *we* come from? I like hearing *that* from a couple of dirty -
- Matthew** *[interrupting]* James! *[privately to James]* I don't like them any more than you do, but it's the law of supply and demand. They know we just want to get out of this city as quickly as we can, so we don't have time to go elsewhere. And we probably couldn't find a better price if we tried. They're all in cahoots.
- James** But they're charging us more just because we're Israeli! That's...that's discrimination!
- Matthew** God will judge them for it on top of all their heresies and treasons. It's out of our hands.
- James** Why does the rabbi always insist on our passing through their cities? It's like he loves them!
- Shopkeeper** Well? Are you paying?
- Butcher** Or should I call for the police?
- Matthew** All right, here's your money. I was once as greedy and disdainful as you, but then I came to a higher truth that you'll never know!

Scene 3

Jesus , Woman

{Meanwhile, the woman at the well is having an earnest theological discussion with Jesus.}

Woman You Israelis say that the only valid place to worship God is Jerusalem, but how can that be, when there are people all over the world? My people say that the one holy place is the mountain, and you say it's Jerusalem, but I'm not allowed to worship at either place. Yet, when I pray to God on my own, I do feel like my prayers are heard, though I wish they were answered more often.

Jesus You worship a God you don't know - indeed, for many, the very definition of God is that which cannot be known - but we know who *we* worship, for salvation comes through the house of David. But you're right in this: that the hour is coming, and now is, when all who worship God will do so not in any particular place or any particular way, but in spirit and in truth.

Woman You're talking about the Messiah, aren't you? We believe in him, too, you know. We also acknowledge he'll come from the house of David, and that when he comes, God will live in people's hearts, and everyone will be a Temple. But when is that going to happen, if ever?

Jesus *[solemnly]* The hour is now. I who speak to you am He.

Scene 4

James , Matthew , Phillip , Thomas

{As James and Matthew walk back to the well with the provisions they've purchased, the woman runs by them heading back into the city.}

James Hey! Watch where you're going!

Matthew These people have no manners whatsoever!

{Phillip and Thomas enter.}

Phillip Hey, guys. I'm so glad you're back with the food. I'm starving!

James Is everybody back?

Thomas Yeah, we all just arrived. Except for Peter and Joanna, but they're not expected until late, so we don't need to wait for them.

Matthew Good, I'm starving, too. It was torture walking by all those food stalls knowing we shouldn't buy anything because they'd charge us double!

Phillip What? Why would they charge double?

James Because we're Israelis.

Thomas *[sympathetically]* Ah!

James What do you mean, "Ah"? You say that like you approve.

Thomas No, no! I can just understand how they might feel.

James *[confrontationally]* And how's that?

Thomas Well, we don't really treat them that great. We don't do business with them, or include them in our worship, or even let them into our houses. We tell Samaritan jokes. You can see how that might upset them.

Matthew They have nobody to blame but themselves. They're the ones who tried to steal our land, and who compromised our worship. They're the ones cozying up to the Romans.

James We're technically unclean just because we entered their city! Can you believe that? And we got fleeced for our trouble.

Matthew We shouldn't even be talking with them, much less doing business with them.

Phillip Uh, if we're not supposed to be talking to them, then I'm afraid there's one more unclean person among us.

James *[exasperatedly]* What did you do, Phillip?

Phillip Oh, no, it wasn't me. It was the rabbi.

Thomas He was pretty deep in conversation with a Samaritan when we arrived.

Matthew What were they talking about?

Phillip I don't know. We were afraid to interrupt, and kept our distance.

James *[with disgust]* I *hope* it wasn't with one of their "religious" leaders. That's just the kind of thing the rabbi would do: book himself to "reach out" to a bunch of heretics!

Thomas No, we're pretty sure it wasn't one of their leaders.

Phillip It was a woman.

Matthew A Samaritan *woman*?

Thomas Yeah, you even saw her. She ran back up the road right past you.

Matthew Her?

James *[sarcastically]* Perfect.

Scene 5

Butcher , Shopkeeper , Woman

{The woman tries to get people of the city to go out to meet Jesus.}

Woman Please, you have to meet this man! I think he's the Messiah!

Shopkeeper Yeah, right. Because everybody knows how religious you are.

Woman *Nobody* knows how religious I am! And why wouldn't the Messiah appear to me or anyone else? Do you think the Anointed One of God would care whether you're on the top or the bottom of the little ladder of worldly society? He's going to dismantle the ladder!

Butcher All right, all right, but how do you know he's who he says he is?

Woman He told me things, things about my life that nobody else knows.

Shopkeeper It's not that hard to imagine things *you've* done in your life.

Woman He was specific! He named cities and people and dates.

Butcher He's probably a con man. They have ways of making you think they're reading your mind.

Shopkeeper He was probably just trying to get you into bed.

Butcher *[sniggering]* Someone should tell him he doesn't have to work so hard at it!

Woman *[rising to a height of dignity]* Fine! If you won't believe me, you won't believe me. I'm going back out to the well now, with anyone who'll join me, anyone willing to risk a few hours of their precious time on the chance that the Savior of the world stands at our gates, and if you miss it, if the great Day of the Lord has come indeed and you're caught sleeping on your watch...well, you can just explain at the Judgment that you were too busy being cruel to a powerless woman instead.

Scene 6

James , Joanna , Matthew , Peter , Phillip , Thomas

{Late that night, Peter and Joanna return to the camp.}

Phillip Welcome back!

Peter Wow, we weren't expecting you guys to still be up. What's going on?

Joanna It looks like you had some kind of party. Did we miss a party?

Thomas You basically did, yeah.

Joanna What were you celebrating?

Matthew *[solemnly]* A miracle. One I would never have guessed could happen, I must admit.

Thomas A bunch of people from the city have become believers.

Phillip Samaritans! All of them.

Peter That *is* a miracle. How'd it happen?

Matthew It was all because of the Woman at the Well.

James *[argumentatively]* Not exactly. She just told the others about him, and it could have been anybody who ran into him at the well. Once they met the rabbi, they listened for themselves and made their

own decisions.

- Thomas** Maybe so, but you must admit, it was more than just the random meeting. Most Samaritans would have just ignored him, and the whole conversation only started because she gave him a drink of water.
- James** You're making her out to be some kind of hero just because she obeyed the law of hospitality! She was just a woman who happened to go out to the well at just that time. And I heard some things about her from the men who came later: if the rabbi had known what kind of woman she was, he would never have spoken with her in the first place.
- Peter** Whoa! Now this is getting interesting. But tell us the whole story from the start.
- Matthew** It started when James and I went into town to buy some food.
- Phillip** And the rabbi sent the rest of us to find a place to camp for the night.
- Thomas** When we got back, he was talking to this woman.
- Joanna** The Samaritan woman you mentioned?
- Phillip** Yeah. We were so shocked we didn't try joining them.
- Thomas** Just as James and Matthew were returning with the food, she jumped up and ran back to the city.
- Phillip** We assumed she'd gotten upset over something the rabbi said, but it turned out different.
- Matthew** We still had no idea, though, and nobody dared to ask him about her.
- James** Instead, we spent the next hour trying to get him to eat!
- Thomas** None of us had eaten yet, and now we had our food, but he kept putting us off. I guess he knew what the woman had gone to do.
- Phillip** I wonder if she gave him some food, too. That would explain why he wasn't hungry.

James But he *was* hungry! Didn't you see how he tucked into it at the party?

Matthew And didn't you hear what he said about the harvest?

Phillip I didn't really understand that part.

Matthew He said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do 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. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'™ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Peter Okay, I have no idea what that means, either.

Joanna He was anticipating the coming of the crowd from the city. That's what sustained him. He probably didn't feel his hunger at all.

James It's like it used to be for me and John on the boat sometimes. We could labor all day and into the night without a bite sometimes, we were just so invested in the work.

Peter Okay, I understand that.

Thomas But what about that bit about reaping where others have sown?

Matthew That plainly refers to the Samaritans. It's certain that none of us ever sowed any seeds there. I myself was sure that field was barren, salted ground. But someone did. The rabbi this morning, and maybe even the woman in her own way, and maybe others before we even arrived, and this afternoon, we all reaped the harvest.

Peter Do you think it's for real? I mean, they *are* Samaritans.

Phillip If you had been there, you'd believe it was real.

Matthew I ran into two men who treated us terribly when we were in the city, and they were as humble and contrite as they could be.

- James** Wait. Are you talking about that shopkeeper and that butcher?
Why didn't you tell me!
- Matthew** I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking! You could have reconciled with them
as well.
- James** Reconcile nothing! I could have gotten some of our money back!
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