

He Saw Me! He Knew Me!
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Lent 3: John 4:5-42
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
King of Glory Lutheran Church

Jesus saw the unnamed woman. In His seeing, she was accepted fully for who she was and who she could become. God's grace comes to us when we are fully seen for who we are and who we can be – a new creation in Christ. Oh that God might see us today and we might truly see others as well.

John 4:5-42⁵[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A 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.) ⁹The 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.) ¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but 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." ¹⁵The 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."

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

²⁷Just 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.

³¹Meanwhile 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."

³⁹Many 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 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."

God's grace and peace to you this day, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Did any of you ever grow up in or live in a small town? In rural places, or small towns, everyone seems to know everybody else's business.

"Hey did you hear about Louisa? She's gonna' have to close the business. There's not enough money to pay the bills. Heard it just now from Freddie at the station."

"Yeah, I heard. And I also heard her old man, ain't helping her either! That marriage has been bad from day one."

Or if the locals aren't talking about people, they talk about the history of a place as if you should already know that too!

"Just turn left down at the old Johnson place. You know, the red house down by the railroad tracks."

(You're thinking to yourself.... 'I don't know the Johnson's old house, and there's two red homes by the tracks.')

Small towns are often the best at doing community. Everyone pitches in when the 7 year old gets cancer. Yet they can be the worst at being community, because it's sure easier to gossip than see people beyond their labels. Maybe everyone did know about Freddie and Louisa's bad marriage. Did anyone try to come alongside to try to support them? Did anyone really see them?

No wonder she came at noon. No one else would be there. Perhaps for one solitary hour, the unnamed woman in John's Gospel could escape the gossip, the looks from the other side of the street....

Why did everyone have to talk about her, and no one talked to her? Her life circumstances weren't her fault. Five husbands, all dead, and the last living brother refused to marry her. "I

had to find some way to support myself. None of them would want to live through all of this,” she thought.

We can only imagine her surprise, when a Jewish male rabbi of much higher standing, speaks to her. Yes! Jesus actually spoke to her. Perhaps He’d already heard the rumors as well. Because you know... her reputation preceded her. Jesus wouldn’t have had to return to Galilee through Sychar, yet He chose to. He needed this one on one with our unnamed woman. She needed to be seen.

Being seen is what we all need at one point or another. As Anna Carter Florence says, “Being seen. It’s a powerful thing. To know that another human being has truly seen you, understood you, received you for who you really are: That is pure grace. It is being seen. Most of us would do anything for it.” (Preaching Year A with Anna Carter Florence. Reflections on the Gospel Readings (2016-2017)). Published by Luther Seminary. 2016. Pg 45)

Being seen is what a senior citizen needs when she begins yelling in the hallway of the nursing home. Being seen is what person in a dead marriage needs when they begin looking at pornography sites. Being seen is what a teenager wants when he starts doing drugs on the weekend to forget his week. Being seen is what an infant needs when she’s crying in her crib after a nap.

We all need to be seen. Desperately.

So it wasn’t only that Jesus talked to her. He listened to her, even debated theological points with her. Unheard of! Scandalous! Jesus saw her and knew her.

It was what she needed. She became a new creation in God’s sight.

This week a video on the BBC showed a reunion of an Indonesian migrant worker and his mother. The last time Iwan saw his mother, he was six years old. He went to live with his father in Malaysia and then ran away from there due to conflict at home. For 15 years he worked with no identification, no phone contact, no way to even know where his mother was or how to look for her. He missed her terribly and cried because he had no way to find her. He was the unnamed son seemingly lost forever.

Iwan’s step-father saw a report that BBC Indonesia produced about migrant workers. He went to his wife and asked, “Is this your son?” She began weeping and said, “yes!” BBC Indonesia got them reunited at Iwan’s home. His mother ran to him and said, “You are my son. I am your mother. Hug me, my son!”

At first Iwan was simply in shock that his mother was there. Then when he truly saw it was her, he too broke down in tears and hugged his mother. Finally, after 15 years of not knowing, this son had been seen. He was known. He became a new son in the arms of his mother.

(https://www.bbc.com/news/video_and_audio/must_see/51806822/meeting-the-son-i-thought-was-dead)

No matter our past, where we've been, what we've done, who we've been, Jesus sees us – God sees us and knows us for who we are. He doesn't run away, but instead comes towards us. We are made new.

When Jesus described her life to the unnamed woman – 'You've had five husbands and the one you have now is your live-in.' Then suddenly she saw Jesus. She knew Jesus because He had known her first.

Picture in your mind meeting Jesus. Maybe it's at your favorite restaurant or in your living room. With you saying a word, He begins to recount your life story. It's incredible that He knows where you've come from, what you do, who your family is, what your dreams are.

Because Jesus knows you, it may make you want to know Him. You've been seen and it is pure grace; the grace to be fully known and recognized and accepted. We are made new.

God knows each one of us. Where we are and what is happening in the very minute details of our lives. Today we are hearing about more and more Coronavirus cancellations. As I write, I'm not certain we'll be able to gather as a faith community for worship.

If that is the case, I want you to remember this day and each day, that God knows what is happening. God comes towards us and doesn't leave us in fear. God loves each and every one of us. God sees us. God also asks us to see one another fully...as children of God. No matter what the next days or weeks bring in terms of this virus, we are called to see one another with love and grace. Not as numbers or statistics, but as human beings: God's beloved ones.

We may think there is undue caution or we may agree we need social distancing. No matter how we're feeling, God calls us to see one another in Christian love. God calls us to protect one another and defend one another in word, deed and action.

Call each other. Check on each other. Be gracious and kind and loving. Jesus didn't harbor any restraints with this unnamed woman whom everyone gossiped about. Neither shall we.

For we have been seen by God, known by God's grace, and we shall do unto others the same. Amen.