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The Journey Jn 4:1-30



An important detail to pay attention to in the opening verses of John 4 is the time of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. It was the sixth hour – 12 noon. Traditionally this was an odd hour. So we could suppose that the Samaritan woman was avoiding other women and their gossips probably due to her way of life. Her thirst for water which drew her to the well could be a symbol of her woundedness and her inner thirst for God that will draw her to Jesus. Her experience of satiation comes in stages.

Jesus as a stranger: When Jesus initiated a dialogue with her, her immediate reaction was, "You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me..." (Jn 4:9). A blatant refusal to relate! This refusal comes from her wounded self. She has a very dubious way of relating to men that makes her suspect Jesus' intentions. She is too physically oriented in her outlook of events and persons. She looks at Jesus as a man – a Jew. And when Jesus talks about water, she is thinking of H₂O. But Jesus has a plan for her. He would not give up.

Jesus as a man of abilities: This gratuitous way of relating to the woman begins to touch her. This is not perhaps how her previous six men had related to her. She responds. She gets interested. "Sir," said the woman, "give me some of that water..." (v.15). Her respect for Jesus increases. She addresses Him, "Sir!" A step further from verse nine where she wanted to have nothing to do with that Jew! But still she is physically oriented: she is focused on the water from the well. When Jesus speaks of 'the living water' she thinks in the Semitic sense of 'water from the spring' (V.11)?

Jesus as the Prophet: Further on, when Jesus challenges her at a personal level and to invite her to get deeper, she begins to discover Jesus more, "I see you are a prophet, sir" (v.19).

Jesus as the Messiah: Nearing the climax of the journey, she comes up with a sense of expectation, "I know that Messiah - that is, Christ - is coming; and when he comes he will explain everything" (v.25). This was her time.

Jesus as the HE: This is the moment of Jesus' self revelation to her: "That is who I am, I who speak to you" (v.26). Surely, this statement has allusions to Exodus 3:14: "God said to Moses, 'I am he who is.'" This is the peak of the encounter between the woman and Jesus. The story takes a 'U' turn. She seems to have found the answer to all her questions. No more questions. No more words. What we hear next is that the woman is already on her way back to the people (v.28).

Conversion and Mission: When she experienced Jesus as the I AM, the Samaritan woman's thirst was fulfilled. The "seventh man" that she met had perfected everything. She did not need the empty water jar anymore: "The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town..." (Jn 4:28). This was her point of conversion.

Then the mission: her encounter with Jesus heals her of the wounds, and "the woman ... hurried back to the town to tell the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I have done; could this be the Christ?' (Jn 4:28-29). Her encounter made her free of her addiction, and as a result she returned to people; returned to the people as a herald of "Good News."