

HEALING ENCOUNTERS

Healing Deep Hurts

John 4:4-26

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I was really depressed, but I'm getting better now. I went hunting and got separated from my party. I fired shot after shot, but no one ever came to find me. I really felt bad. I felt really rejected and low. Hours passed, and I finally spotted a ranger. I called to him, figuring it was his duty to help. Besides, there was no other way to get his attention. I had used all my *arrows*!

I'm teasing you. I know that no one hears an arrow, but we all feel rejection. I'll never forget the story I was told when a young lady cracked open the door to her private pain and let me peer in. For years she felt worthless, unlovable and guilt-ridden. Her mother and father married to avoid the disgrace of having her as an out-of-wedlock child. Her mother resented both her father and her. All the care was thrust on her father. The father would dress her, the father would feed her, he would hold her, play with her, take her to work; and then when he was drunk, he would beat her. Oh, he would beat her. She suffered deep bruises and lived in terror. At times when he came after her, she thought she'd die. As this little girl grew up, she was afraid to let anybody get close. Yet, she hoped some valiant knight would rescue her. She'd take any knight, any man, and she did. After being with many men, she felt no better. Her fear was just as vivid when she shared this with me as it was when she was flying through the air, launched by her father into a wall. As a 25 year old woman, her psyche was still mired in guilt and anger and fear. The years did not dull the pain or satisfy her hunger to be valued by somebody.

I suspect that woman's story has many similarities, many points of convergence with the background of the Samaritan woman who met Jesus while drawing water. A woman doesn't have five husbands because she appreciates men. The Samaritan woman's string of 5 marriages and divorces, not to mention her cohabiting with a sixth, reveals a very needy and hurting person. Most likely in her own home, she grew to believe that she was tainted goods. Possibly, an uncle, a brother or her own father abused her physically and sexually. If that was not the case, she at the least felt of little value to her father. She felt of little value, period. The Samaritan woman and the young lady in my office are not that

unique. I can't begin to tell you how many, many of my parishioners over the years have endured nightmares like this growing up. In addition, everyone I know has come out of childhood scarred by something. We are broken. We all have been assaulted by Satan on this earth. He has poisoned our relationships, and skewed the vision we have of God and ourselves so that we don't recognize our value and God's love for us. That's part of his assault on our faith.

These next few weeks I'll identify what Jesus did that healed this Samaritan woman's deep hurts. I'll also share how today you can experience the power of what he did. Some of you may find these three weeks to be pivotal in your life. You'll experience powerful healing that will address physical pain, emotional hurt and spiritual estrangement. You'll discover a healing love that has eluded you, and you'll find your attitude changing.

Let's consider the first thing Jesus did to heal this woman. To understand what it was, you'll need to know something about *Samaritans*, *wells* and *Jesus*.

The Samaritans were hated by the Jews. They were seen as chameleons who would change their colors to save their skins. Their ancestors had compromised their faith to ease their situation. For that the Samaritans were hated. Our best guess is that only 200 descendants of the Samaritans are alive today. Only 200 Samaritans have survived all the persecution over the years. Jewish people were offended and fearful of the corrupting religious practices of the Samaritans

The Samaritan woman, that Jesus met, would be seen as the lowest of the lowly and immoral. You see if you were prosperous, your servants would draw the water. If you were respected and influential, your children or maybe your nieces and nephews would draw the water. But this woman came herself. Furthermore, most people would come in the cool of the day. They would come and enjoy the fellowship of others in the early morning or late evening. They'd chat with each other as they waited in line to draw water. This woman, however, came in the midday heat when she thought no one would be around. This woman was isolated and hurting.

Jesus was tired. He had sent his disciples on ahead into the village and sat down to rest by Jacob's well which was outside the village. Jesus understood that God wanted him to focus his preaching and healing ministry on the Israelites. He was to work within those borders and address those people. He was in Samaria only because he was following the shortest route to get to other Israelite communities. Jesus did not expect to minister to anybody at that well, and when he talked to the Samaritan woman, it was because she was the first person to come along and he was thirsty. Yet as he began to talk with her, the Holy Spirit started showing Jesus things about her deep wounds, and Jesus's heart filled with compassion.

The woman was shocked and impressed that a Jew would even speak to her. But what she didn't realize was the extent of the honor that was accorded her that day. The God of the universe had guided his own Son to meet with her at that well. God saw her torment and was attending to her need.

Jesus recognized that. He didn't just focus on his need for water. He understood that his Father wanted him to meet that wounded, troubled, immoral woman. God had diverted him from his mission field to meet with and minister to this hurting woman. Jesus later says in John, chapter 5 that he can only do what he sees his father doing. He claims that his words are not his own. In saying these things, He shows us that his Father loves and cares about this woman. He was sent to attend to her need.

The woman didn't exercise any faith to get that attention. She passed no moral test to receive God's attention. She was not a key player in advancing Jesus's mission. She was not even a part of Jesus's mission. Others would take the gospel to the Samaritans. God had a different target group for Jesus. **This woman's only qualification to be privileged with this encounter was that she was hurting and she was human.** Don't we all fit that qualification?

This woman's joy and amazement grew when she began to realize that the Messiah of Israel was tending her need. She cried and shared her joy with others when she understood that God visited her at the well. She brought all who would listen to meet Jesus, and Jesus departed from his mission two days to serve this woman's neighbors, relatives and friends.

An important key to the woman's healing was her realization that God was visiting her in Jesus. Did you know God still does that? He comes to you in people who are led by Jesus. When I think of all the times God has visited me in the messengers he has sent, I'm stunned! God has sent me Christian brothers and sisters who listen to my hurt and pray with me and actually speak for God as they are prompted by His Spirit. God has sent me teachers and encouragers and all kinds of ministers of his. When I reflect on it, God has visited me every day through someone. God pays amazing attention to me, and most times I don't get it, I don't recognize the encounter. How about you?

God valued that woman and God values me. God values us, even when we don't value ourselves. I use to put myself down. I use to belittle myself. I use to dislike who I am. It never occurred to me that I was mocking my maker, that I was mistreating a creation of God and maligning a child of God. I was assaulting God's reputation. Furthermore, it never struck me how I was dismissing what God valued with the suffering of his own son Jesus. Jesus considered me worth his own blood. He considered you worth that too! We are of such worth that He bled and died for us while we were still rebelling. Oh, we're valued! We're important. We're loved!

Are you missing your healing encounter? Look around you right now. God has sent some of them to you. God is in them ready to speak to you. Do you realize I was sent to you for your freedom and healing? You are not to live in torment or guilt or bitterness? God's paying you attention. God's visiting you.

When a woman who felt untouchable was touched by Jesus, when a woman to be shunned was visited by Jesus, when a woman who was hurting was tended to by Jesus, that woman came alive. It began as she recognized who was visiting her.

Are you shutting Jesus out of your life right now? Are you keeping his ambassadors and priests at a distance? Do you realize that He already knows your pain and has prepared His ambassadors to meet with you? God is reaching out to you today.