



He Speaks: Finding Christ in the Days of Lent

Third Sunday of Lent

Readings: Exodus 17:3-7, Psalm 95:102, 6-7, 8-9, Romans 5:1-2, 5-8, John 4:5-42

"I am he, the one speaking with you."

The third Sunday of Lent is a familiar story of what seems to be a chance meeting between Jesus and "the woman at the well." It's a surprising moment in many ways: Jesus spoke at length with a Samaritan, held a deep conversation with a woman, and conversed with a Gentile about salvation. But leave it to Jesus to cross boundaries and raise eyebrows (looking at you, disciples).

Jesus and the disciples had been walking all morning, and around noon, they stopped at a popular well to regroup. The disciples headed into town for supplies, and Jesus, worn out and thirsty, sat down at the well. Enter the Samaritan woman, coming to draw water. The Gospel doesn't mention a crowd, or even another person, so we read that it's just the two of them. "Give me a drink," Jesus said. This woman would not have been expecting that, given the fact that Jesus was a Jewish man, so she shot back something along the lines of, "Really? Don't you see who I am?"

The fact that she engaged with Jesus opened the door to a more extended conversation. Living water? That sounded far better than a jar dragged up from seventy-five feet below. No more repeated trips in the heat, that sounds good, too. "Go call your husband and come back." That stopped her cold.

Jesus then shocked the woman by telling her her life. And she recognized him then as a prophet. But he revealed himself as much more. "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes he will tell us everything."

Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one speaking with you."

And she went and told everybody.

This is another Scripture story that we might skim over, attaching to it some valuable but surface meaning. Often, the Samaritan woman is seen as a model of someone who has led a scandalous life. After all, five husbands. So we might wag our heads and think: *It's a good thing Jesus came along when he did, to save her and get her on the right track. But that's not me.*

But the story is far more layered than the reputation that's often attached to her. Like our own

stories, it's rarely cut and dried.

So notice what Jesus did *not* do. He didn't interrogate her about her past. He didn't guilt-trip her. He didn't pull the superior card. He saw her. And her eyes were opened. And her life was changed.

The woman's transformation didn't begin with her confession — it began with His revelation. Jesus didn't say, *try harder*. He said, *I am he*. He entered the quiet truth of her story, addressed it with clarity and mercy, and offered her living water. Lent is our invitation to stand at that same well, to hear Him say to us, in whatever our own truth is, "I am he, the one speaking with you."

Consider:

Being seen — acknowledged, understood, and known — is something we all long for. It goes far beyond being noticed; it's about real connection. Do you believe this kind of connection is possible with Jesus? Why or why not? What might change if you allowed yourself to be truly "seen" by Him?

Whisper Prayer:

Jesus, speak to my heart.

Listening with the Church — Third Sunday of Lent

Christ Speaks to Women

It can be difficult for modern readers to grasp the role of women in biblical times. Many were dependent on male relatives for their livelihood. A few notable exceptions show remarkable independence and skill—like Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth in Acts 16, who supported her household and welcomed Paul into her home. Women also experienced vulnerability in deeply personal ways. Consider the woman with the hemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34), who suffered physically, socially, and economically for years before Jesus healed her. Even in these circumstances, women often had limited access to teaching or leadership roles.

Into this world stepped Jesus, who spoke and acted in ways that always affirmed and defended the dignity of women. He spoke with them, healed them, and counted them among his disciples. Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, and the woman with the hemorrhage are just a few examples of women who shared in his teaching and ministry, often in ways that broke cultural expectations.

The Samaritan woman at the well illustrates this most profoundly. As John Paul II observes in *Mulieris Dignitatem*: "Christ's way of acting, the Gospel of his words and deeds, is a consistent protest against whatever offends the dignity of women...Even when this truth concerns their 'sinfulness,' they feel liberated...restored to themselves...with a love which finds direct expression in Christ himself." In speaking with her, Jesus reveals the mysteries of God, offers her living water, and discloses that he is the Messiah.

As John Paul II emphasizes: “‘If you knew the gift of God,’ Jesus says, showing his great esteem for the dignity of women and for the vocation which enables them to share in his messianic mission.” The woman at the well becomes, for us, a model of openness, attentiveness, and courage in encountering Christ. Jesus’ actions invite us not only to see and honor the dignity of women, but also to stand against whatever diminishes the humanity of any person.