

John 4:5-26

This woman's life is a mess. Is this her own fault? Well, she has made some poor choices in life. But we do not know what led to those choices. We do know that she has a problem with men in general; six men, to be more specific. Five marriages have all ended in failure. What is it with men? Perhaps she blamed husband number one for that failed marriage. Perhaps even husbands number two and three. But after four, and then five divorces, she is surely thinking the problem is not men, but her. So husband number six is another woman's husband. She's done with marriage. She'll live with this man, the husband of some other woman, but she won't marry him.

The last thing she expects is for some Jewish man to speak to her. Yet, not only does He speak, He asks her for a drink of water. What He says intrigues her. He speaks of living water. He speaks of God and of eternal life. And He says something that amazes her. He tells her of her past. He knows all about the men in her life. How could He know? He must be a prophet.

If we want a manual on how to do mission work, here it is. The way Jesus brings in this woman is simply beautiful. He knows of her past, her glaring sins, and He points this out, but He does not accuse her. Would not that have closed any door into her heart? He is no teddy bear toward her. He speaks the truth. Yet, He does so in love.

Jesus knows she has failed with every man in her life. He is not about to have her fail with Him. He does something no man has ever done to her. He loves her unconditionally. He loves her not because of what she can do for Him and give to Him, but because of what He has to give to her.

Where have you failed in life? We all have. Maybe not in the same way as this woman has failed. But then, in other ways. But there's a stigma attached to the word *failure*, isn't there? And so we try to hide our failures. From others, even from ourselves. And when we can't hide our failures, we blame others for them.

Right now the leader of China is blaming everyone but himself for the virus. He's even saying that a U.S. serviceman brought the virus to China. But why blame anyone? Why not just work together to bring this virus to an end?

You and I carry a lot of guilt around because of glaring failures in our past. It doesn't help to place blame for these. Why can't we simply confess the truth that you and I are poor, wretched sinners so, of course, we have failed countless times. If we refuse to admit our failures, we are deceiving ourselves and *the truth is not in us*.

Jesus knows where we have failed, be it with our spouse, our children, our parents, or anywhere else in life. I have failed as a pastor so many times I've lost count. In fact, I've come to the realization that everything I touch flops and fails. Yet, because God is gracious, what He touches through me succeeds.

Jesus is not ashamed of you no matter how often you have failed in life. He knows all about this woman's failures, yet He seeks her in love. It was time for this woman to be loved by the one man who is not a failure; the one man who can pull her out of her failed life and give her a new life. Jesus reaches out to the woman of Samaria because He is the husband she never had. Her

true Husband. The Husband who sacrifices Himself for her; who makes her His beloved bride in Holy Baptism.

Jesus never failed in anything. Yet, He takes our failures and makes them His own. Jesus doesn't just embrace you. He embraces your failures. He embraces your sinful life and makes it His own. He does not simply point out your sinful failures and tell you to do better. He goes to the cross and dies for you. He becomes sin, your sin, on the cross. He becomes the failure that you were so that you become God's blessed and forgiven sons and daughters.

Jesus is not about to have you fail with Him. He loves you also unconditionally. It's so tempting for us to run away when we are opened up and exposed. But how else can healing take place? This is why Jesus does not merely gloss over this woman's past. He opens it up to bring healing to her. And that's the living water He speaks of. The Holy Spirit. She is drinking this water with her ears as Jesus speaks to her.

And so are you...right now. This is why you believe the words you are hearing. It's not me. It's the Holy Spirit, the living water. He is the one who creates faith where there was unbelief; who gives hope in the face of despair. He is why you will leave here today refreshed and satisfied; and knowing and believing that you leave as God's forgiven child in Jesus.

Failures? Yeah sure, I'm a failure...you're a failure. Who cares? You are forgiven. Everyone of you is forgiven. Not for some of your past. All of it. You are forgiven for all your sins, for every failure in your life. It's because of Jesus. He takes your sins and failures. He takes all the blame for everything. And He gives you living water, pardon, hope, and eternal life. Amen.