

## Morning Service Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March – led by Anne Walton



*We started the Service with a prayer, on a very sad note, having learnt that David Aplin's teenage granddaughter Emelia had suffered a cardiac arrest whilst playing in a football match, and died – an almost unimaginable tragedy for the family.*

*Anne had been “in the wars” as well, losing a front tooth and having been in considerable pain for most of the week - thankfully now abated.*

*The Bible reading from John 4 was to be about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, and Anne had brought the usual visual aid.*



Just who was this Samaritan woman, Anne asked. Well, certainly a woman with a past.

Her life seemed to have been marked by guilt and regrets, by wounds and sorrows, and perhaps even secrets that she'd kept close. A past often thought to have been one of promiscuity, because she had been married five times and now lived with a man who was not her husband. The timing of her visit to the well suggested she wished to avoid the eyes of the community. She was looked at but not truly seen - remaining nameless and unknown to all but Jesus.

It was easy to forget that women of her day had had little or no choice or control over their lives. If she was divorced, it was because the men had divorced her: she would have had no right to initiate divorce, as that right belonged only to men. If not divorce, perhaps she had suffered the loss of five husbands - five times left alone, nameless and of no value, forced to begin again and again. Either way, her story had been marked by tragedy.

For Anne it didn't matter that we didn't know the details of her past. What mattered was that, like her, we all had a past and a history, and aspects of our lives that we would rather keep hidden - perhaps living in fear of being found out. It wasn't simply the fear that others would know the truth about us. It was that they would do so without ever truly seeing us - observing only the surface, never digging deep. Deep down, we all thirsted to be seen and understood at a profound level, longing to pour out our lives to someone who really knew and cared for us.

And that, Anne thought, was precisely what Jesus had offered the Samaritan woman. When He had asked her for a drink, He was inviting her to let herself be known; for to be known was to be loved, and to be loved was to be known. To be found out, without being truly known, left us dry and desolate - living a dehydrated life, thirsting for something more. Yet time and again, we returned to the same old wells in our lives, hoping for satisfaction that never came.

We all returned to familiar wells—whether they were marriage, perfectionism, hiding, power, control, or even addiction and busyness. Each of us could name the wells from which we drank, hoping our thirst would be quenched, only to find ourselves just as thirsty as before - locked in a vicious circle. We needed to turn our footsteps in a new direction - towards the well of Jesus Christ, who would wash us clean of our past and offer new life and new possibilities.



The Samaritan woman had gone to the well as she had many times before, but this time was different. She'd encountered Jesus, who brought her past into the light - not to condemn, but simply to state what was. He knew everything she had done yet was more interested in her future than her past. He had seen not just her history, but her thirst to be loved, seen, accepted, included, forgiven, and truly known.

Jesus had said, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I give them will never be thirsty." The living water Christ that offered was new life, new possibilities, and freedom from the past. In the Samaritan woman, it became a spring gushing up to eternal life. She'd discovered an internal wellspring and had left her water jars behind, becoming a well from which Christ's life flowed.

But it was not enough merely to hear her story or even to believe it; until we ourselves came to the well of Christ's life within us, we would keep returning to the dry wells of our own making, continuing to thirst and live in fear of being found out but not known. We all knew the wells from which we drank, and if we were still carrying our water jars, we needed to come to the well of Christ's love and presence - a well already deep within us. We just needed to find it.