

With Thirst for New

[John 4:5–42](#)

The Woman at the Well

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A Water Fountain

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Today's Bible Reading

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Additional Bible Readings

[Exodus 17:1–7](#)

[Psalm 95](#)

[Romans 5:1–11](#)

God of all life, sometimes we think our voices don't matter. We have important things to say and wonder if anyone will listen. We offer a different perspective from the world and it is rejected. Give us big voices, Holy One. Give us voices that are loud enough to claim that you are the one who provided water in the desert, living water at a well, and that in you we find resurrection and claim it for ourselves. Amen.

This long reading is dominated by the conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman he meets at the well. The comparison with last week's gospel story is striking. Both readings depict a character struggling to understand Jesus' talk about spiritual things. But this woman is everything Nicodemus was not – a woman with no voice or standing, a despised Samaritan, morally suspect, and isolated from her community. Why else would she be alone at a well at the hottest time of the day? This is a story about how her voice changed a community. Yet her community has shunned her. She is alone rather than with the safety of others, seeking water in the most dangerous part of the day. She is in the wilderness even though she is familiar with the terrain.

Jesus broke Jewish custom to engage her in conversation. The woman was interested, initially confused and defensive, but, unlike Nicodemus, she felt she had nothing to lose by engaging with Jesus. Perhaps it was this fact that allowed her finally to “see” past her physical needs to the spiritual truths that Jesus was teaching her. While the woman needs physical water for her body, it is the spiritual water, the living water of Jesus, that gives her a voice others will hear.

In verse 49, the woman asks a bold question of her community, “He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” She testifies to her community that “he told me everything I have ever done” and uses her voice to tell the truth about her encounter. There is a realization that her voice can affect change. The candour with which this woman had an open and honest conversation with Jesus leads to change. We may imagine her ostracized and invisible as she approaches the well alone. Her assertions in verse 29 led her community to believe her about Jesus, enough that they dropped what they were doing to go find him. Her voice was the impetus for their invitation for Jesus to stay in town and reach more people. The woman asked big and hard questions and spoke about what mattered most, and it made a difference in her community.