

Scripture for today: [John 4:4-42](#)

A foreign male traveler meets a woman at a well. He asks, and she draws water for him. They talk, and one of the topics is marriage.

The story is a familiar tale in the Biblical narrative; this is how Jacob and Moses found their wives and how Isaac had his wife found for him.

In the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, the traveler is Jesus. He is in the city of Sychar in Samaria. Although it is between Judea and Galilee, Samaria is a place many other Jews would walk around, not because it is dangerous but because the people are – Samaritans.

Are there parallels in disregarding people today? Fill in the blank. Time and again – the collective mind chooses a people who do not matter, a people in the way. Historically when there have been plagues or other disruptions of life, there emerges, sometimes by design, a people to blame – a race, a culture, a type. The philosophers of the age find a way to "justify" this thinking.

There are ancestral Samaritans today – some are a remnant in their homeland, part of the West Bank. In Biblical times the relationship with the Jews was icy, despite the fact both had Moses and the Torah. In Old Testament times, the Assyrian rulers had left lavish homes in Samaria, so the place was derided for having loot and ivory houses ([Amos 3:15](#)).

In New Testament times, Jews and Samaritans still disagreed on where one must worship God, on Mount Gerizim (Samaria), or Mount Zion (Jerusalem)? In modern terms, the argument centers on who may represent God, a point of great importance, an issue the woman at the well brings up (verse 20) in a challenging tone. Jesus instead announces that a new age is coming, and neither mountain is necessary; God is to be worshiped "in the Spirit and in truth" (verse 24).

Other divisions fall. The woman states the divisions of gender and ancestry, he is a Jew, and she is a Samaritan woman (verse 9). Further, as Jesus perceives, she had had five husbands, and the man she has now is not her husband (verse 18). We don't know the details, but ancient women were governed by the rules of fathers and husbands. Divorce was easy – for the man. She may have been repeatedly used and set aside.

In this passage, Jesus reveals much about himself and his mission. He announces he brings living water. Near the end, when his disciples return to him,

he tells them, "open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (verse 35). We are not told what these Jewish men thought of such a pronouncement in Samaria, but we are told that many believed and that Jesus lingered and taught (verse 41).

The story of the woman of Sychar in John 4 is often cited as a "type scene" since it bears similarities with other "woman at the well" stories. Yet this passage also serves as a prime example of another often repeated idea. Jesus in parable and action repeatedly went to and advocated for the people who do not matter, the people in the way, the sort of people that others might want to say "NOT THEM!"

A representative list should include those who were infirm, often believed to deserve their malady. These include lepers ([Mark 1: 40-45](#)), a woman with a bleeding disorder ([Luke 8: 48](#)), a possessed woman ([Luke 13: 16](#)), and in one parable, the poor, crippled, lame, and blind ([Luke 14: 13-14](#)). Then there are the "undesirables," sinners and tax collectors ([Luke 15: 1-7](#)), Samaritans ([Luke 10: 25-37](#)), and a Roman Centurion ([Luke 7: 1-10](#)).

Add to this list. See for yourself. Those seeking to follow after Christ may wish to study his words and deeds on this point at this time. Finding people to blame and blaming the misfortunate for their misfortune is not a relic of history. It is present reality.

