

God of love, through these words, may you offer us living water to sustain us in these challenging times. Amen

What do you thirst for? Probably not a happenstance meeting with someone who can tell you everything you've ever done! I mean, at least one or two of those things we might rather forget, right?!

I'm sure the Samaritan woman didn't want to be reminded of her misfortune with husbands – whether they had died or just up and left her, it would be something she'd likely prefer to move on from. Something that the community, perhaps, has not forgotten though, since she comes to the well alone, in the heat of the day, rather than in the cool of the early morning with the other women.

Although the reason for this is never clearly stated, it is surmised that she is a bit of an outcast in her own community, since marital status and stability for women are honoured and respected as the norm.

So she comes to the well alone, lost in her own thoughts, only to be confronted with her whole life, which, rather than making her run and hide, inspires her to run and proclaim "Come and see a man who has told me everything I've ever done!"

Somehow, I don't think it was the naming of her challenges that won her over to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, I suspect, instead, that it was the fact that he does not reprimand her, look down on her, or even say "Go and sin no more!" Rather, he holds her in conversation, respectfully responding to her questions and satisfying her curiosity.

Jesus doesn't avoid her because she is Samaritan and he doesn't reject her because she has experienced some challenges in the journey that is her life. Rather he accepts her, exactly as she is. And through accepting her, Jesus allows her to accept and love herself.

She develops an almost instantaneous self-confidence. It isn't cocky, simply humble and true. It is a confidence that inspires her to shift from being the lowly, lonely woman coming to the well, to a strong, confident one who brazenly races into town proclaiming to everyone, "Come and see! Come and see! Could this be the Messiah?!"

It's a gift I suspect we all long for. I mean, don't we all have things we don't like about ourselves; issues we are struggling with, something we, purposely or subconsciously try to hide from others?

Perhaps it's a hurt we've inflicted on someone; an unhealthy habit we can't kick; an addiction that keeps its grip on us; a mental health issue; a physical health concern, the list is endless.

Some of these things we can take responsibility for, some are out of our control, and yet they all make us feel less than, and lead us to wear a variety of masks, as we hide our true selves, living in a mode of defensiveness, afraid of what others might think or say; afraid of being ostracized from our friends, family, and community.

Now imagine being able to set aside all those masks. Imagine being able to just be who we are – our truest best selves. Imagine being able to acknowledge our weaknesses, our strengths and our challenges. Imagine accepting and loving ourselves for who we are, knowing that others will do the same.

Can you feel the tension start to leave your body?

Love can do this. Love for self and for others. It can shift our brain functioning, our perspective and actually improve our quality of life.

In the challenging times we are currently facing, loving ourselves is key to staying healthy, both physically and mentally.

So today, I would like to offer you a bit of living water, in the form of a guided meditation of love.

I invite you to make yourself comfortable. Feet on the floor, hands relaxed in your lap, palms facing up if you are able.

Let the pew hold the weight of your body as you relax into it.

Close your eyes, if you are comfortable doing so.

If you prefer to keep them open, then simply soften your gaze.

Pay attention to the rhythm of your natural breathing, allowing your muscles to relax a little more with each exhale. ...

Now bring your focus to your heart.

Imagine that your heart has a door.

What kind of door is it?

- Is it large or small?
- What colour is it?
- Touch the door and feel its surface, is it smooth or rough? What's it made of?
- Which way does it open, from the left, from the right, is it double doors that open from the center, or maybe it opens from the bottom, rolling up like a garage door
- Place your hand on the door handle and open the door
- Now feel your heart being filled with love. Perhaps you can even see the love flowing from God into your heart.

- What sensations do you feel? Is it warm, cold, tingly perhaps
- As your heart becomes full, let that love overflow into the rest of your body.
- Let it flow freely through your chest, ... your abdomen ... let it flow down your arms... up into your neck and head ... down through your hips and into your legs and feet.
- Allow this holy love to fill every crevice of your being ... reminding you that you are fearfully and wonderfully made ... every part of you.
- When you are completely filled and can no longer contain it, let the love overflow out of your body, through your hands and finger tips, ... through the top of your head ... through your feet.
- See it flowing in and through you, out into this room, ...imagine all of our love energies intermingling, ...surrounding us all, ...filling this room, ...moving into the rest of the building, ...out the doors and windows and into the world.
- Let this love continue to flow into you, through you and out of you, filling the world with God's unconditional love. ...
- As you are ready, I invite you to come back to this space and time, knowing that this love will continue to flow, like living waters. ...

Amen