



## Thursday in Lent

*When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and baptising more disciples than John – though in fact it was his disciples who baptised, not Jesus himself – he left Judaea and went back to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria. On the way he came to the Samaritan town called Sychar near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me something to drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?' – Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied to her: If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me something to drink,' you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water. 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered, 'and the well is deep: how do you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied:*

*Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again;*

*but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again:*

*the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life.*

*'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never be thirsty or come here again to draw water.' 'Go and call your husband,' said Jesus to her, 'and come back here.'*

*The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you now have is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.' 'I see you are a prophet, sir,' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, though you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said: Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming – indeed is already here – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming and when he comes he will explain everything.' Jesus said, 'That is who I am, I who speak to you.'*

### John 4:1-26

*Transcending the barriers*

John's community may have comprised a number of Samaritans. The story spoke to them about how Jesus reached out across the cultural barrier that separated Jew and Samaritan. This relationship illustrates the dangerous power of myth in human affairs. The Samaritans in historical reality were the people of northern Palestine who most likely had lived there from time immemorial. Hebrew myth, however, had created a scenario in which they were an alien people imported by the Assyrian empire in the eighth century BC to displace the previous Hebrew, Yahweh-worshipping, inhabitants. The myth created a climate of hostility and a barrier to communal relationship. It is a pattern that has often been repeated in history. The story communicates the essence of grace as revealed in Jesus: grace overcomes the barriers that separate human from human. It creates a new community that transcends those barriers. Myths have a vital place in all dimensions of human life. It is through myth that we perceive all meaning and identity. This story alerts us to how destructive myths can be when they work against the rights and dignity of other people and destroy relationships. It could be one of the most important reflections we make during Lent that we look at the myths that we live by and see them in the light of grace as revealed in Jesus.