

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



A vital witness for all of us

The Woman at the Well has become one of my scriptural heroes. I used to see her as the problem; a woman who seems to have been in many relationships, some of them irregular.

Someone with what today we might call an 'alternative lifestyle' and a Samaritan at that. How wrong I was - conditioned by upbringing and prejudice.

This woman engages in a remarkable theological exchange with Jesus. She is not deterred by the fact the conversation should not, by convention, be happening.

No doubt she has seen enough of the male of the species to not feel deterred. Yet, she also seems to realise that this person is different. Initially she doesn't fully understand what he is saying and in fairness, who would?

At face value, a simple request for water leads into a conversation of real depth and spiritual insight.

The woman asserts her own position, recognising that she is speaking to a Jew. Yet something in her exchange and encounter with Jesus makes her realise something is different. This is not just an exchange of views. It is not even an interfaith dialogue. She comes to realise that this is an encounter with the one around whom everything pivots in earth and heaven.

Passing from one relationship to another because of societal conventions, this woman has now encountered the most important relationship she will ever know. She doesn't just recognise this but acts on it by becoming an evangelist.

The woman, whose name we never discover, is a vital witness to us. It simply will not do for those of us who have encountered the truth of who Jesus is to keep it to ourselves. Whilst we may recognise our own personal salvation, Christ came for all. Therefore, like the woman, it is our responsibility to pass on this good news to those around us. That can be challenging and may feel increasingly difficult to do.

Yet imagine the experience of this woman going to her people who knew themselves to be so at odds with the Jews? Yet she does and bears witness to who she has encountered.

By comparison, we are simply asserting what many in our society have already been told. It is our task to reaffirm and help them to recall the truth that the country which has a Christian heritage is both blessed and shaped by the reality of the person of Jesus.

The Ven David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES