

Daily Devotional, December 3, 2020 Being Different—What a Blessing!

“When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)” John 4: 7-9 (NIV)

There are so many reasons we divide ourselves as a people. Oftentimes, we choose only to see our differences. At times, we only see our explicit differences: racial differences, our cultural differences, our religious differences, or our economic differences. Unfortunately, we allow them to define who we associate with. Sadly, when we define ourselves by our differences, we miss or avoid so many special connections such as, friendships, and blessings from the rich diversity of people in God’s great kingdom.

John’s story of the woman at the well demonstrates the importance of being willing to encounter others who are different from ourselves. John tells us that Jesus is resting from his travels at Jacob’s well. While he was there, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. Jesus asked her for a drink. Her reply shows the great division between the Jews and Samaritans. She did not offer him a drink, instead she replies, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?” In that moment, where so many possibilities existed, the woman only saw their differences.

Thankfully, the story does not end with her question. Jesus continues to converse with the woman and she quickly finds that he is much more than what she originally thought of Him. Her time with Jesus becomes a life-giving and life-defining moment for her. Her life was blessed because they did not allow their differences to define their interaction and end their relationship before it even began.

I wonder how often we miss out on special moments in our lives because we don’t engage with other people who are different from us. When we are willing to see past our differences, we open our lives up to wonderful possibilities. That day at Jacob’s well, two people found a great blessing in a relationship not defined by differences, but by the love and grace of God. There is great joy in getting to know *all* of God’s wonderful people.

Being restricted by our current state, I admit it can be more difficult to reach out to others outside our normal boundaries. However, opportunities do exist for some contact outside of our restrictions. For those of us who can, there is the occasion to make deliveries of food from food pantries to those who are homebound. Or, although it does not put us in immediate contact, gifts purchased for those families in danger of having no Christmas without the intervention of outside contributors can make a huge difference to their joy or sadness in this season of joy. Meeting Friday’s deadline of contributing to our Operation Christmas gift program can connect us in some ways to those who can use a huge lift in their lives. Bringing the gift of joy is no small favor, especially to those whom we would normally make no contact with.

This is a season to remember the gift we all have been given through Jesus Christ—the gift of salvation and everlasting life. Dwelling in that thought, why would we deprive others of that same joy? Maybe bringing that message alone to others we have had little or no relationship with is enough to reconcile our differences and to help us break through barriers that have separated us. Although forced to be separated, let us make this the season of discovery and union. In whatever form that takes, let us be reconciled to others and to our neighbors—to *all* of our potential neighbors.

Prayer: Almighty God, through your Holy Spirit you created unity in the midst of diversity; We acknowledge that our human diversity is an expression of your diverse love for your creation; We confess that in our brokenness as human beings we turn diversity into a source of alienation, injustice, oppression, and wounding. Empower us to recognize and celebrate differences as your great gift to all humanity. Enable us to be the creators of understanding, of respect and love; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, the anchor of all unity, we pray. Amen.