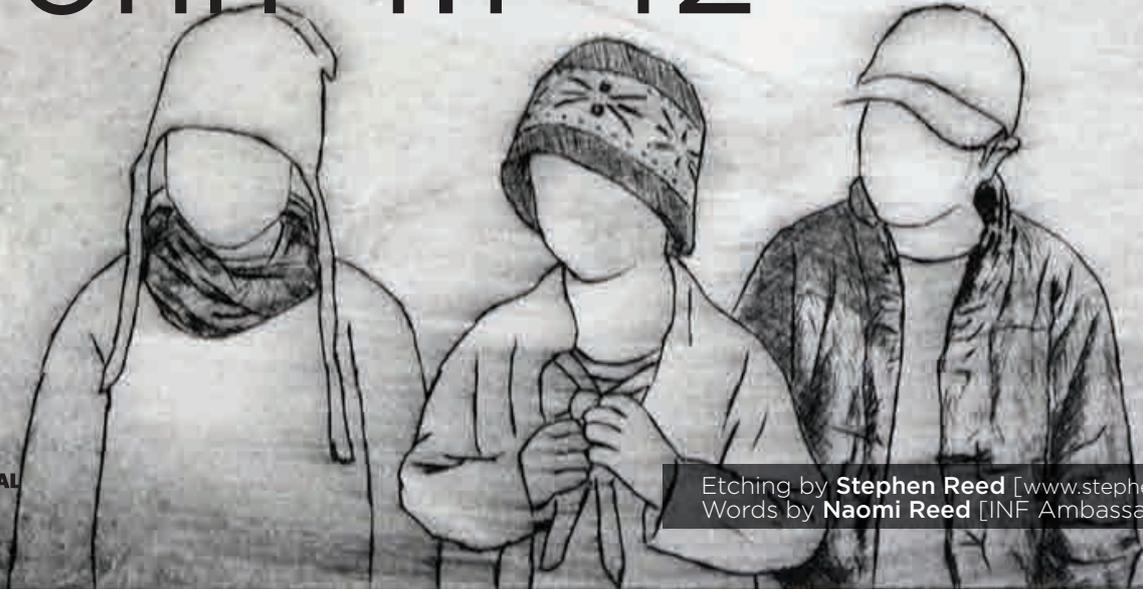


Living water - John 4:1-42



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The story is so familiar to us. Jesus was on his way north to Galilee, and he happened to stop at Jacob's well, in Sychar. He was tired from the journey, so he sat down... and at that moment, a Samaritan woman happened to arrive at the well... except there was nothing happenstance about any of it. John records that Jesus 'had to go through Samaria' [John 4:4]. In reality, Jesus could have chosen the other route, heading north from Judea to Galilee, on the eastern side of the Jordan – the route that everybody else was taking. But no, if Jesus 'had' to go through Samaria, it was because it was deliberate. He had to meet someone.

And then the woman appeared, and Jesus asked her for water. Everyone knew he shouldn't have done that... and she knew he shouldn't have done that... because back then, Jewish rabbis didn't even speak to their wives in public, let alone Samaritan women – and in her case, a woman who was so unclean, and so outcast, that she was at the well alone, in the heat of the day.

And then Jesus spoke to her – and the truth undid her. "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." [John 4:10]

She didn't immediately understand it, and they talked some more... and then she wanted it – she wanted it more than anything – this water that would cause her to never thirst again, for anything. Imagine that.

Wherever we are in the world, whether it's the hot, terai region of Nepal, or the lush coastline of Australia, we thirst for things – things that will make us feel better, or wanted, or good enough, or safe, or secure, or noticed, or loved. If only.

Jesus offered the water, and she wanted it. But then, there was something else. Go and call your husband, he said. There was something else getting in the way of her believing, something

else that only Jesus knew... as he always knows.

... as there is something getting in the way for all of us, something we're filling up on, or using to cover up with, or hide, or escape, or to feel more loved – and maybe that thing is really good, in God's good created order, but we're using it to replace what we find in him. And Jesus said to the woman, go and get.

He already knew her. He knows us. He made us for relationship with him, and sometimes we fill up in other places.

But the conversation didn't stay there. They went on to talk about worship. Jesus said there would be a time to come when the people would worship the Father in Spirit and in truth! And she said she understood that, she was waiting for the Messiah.

And that's when he told her. It's me, he said. I'm the Messiah [John 4:26].

It was the only time Jesus told anyone, prior to the trial. And he told it to her – the unclean, unwanted, outcast woman.

The woman ran, in response. She believed him. She left her pot by the well and she ran into town, and she told everyone. This woman, who had been hiding for years, came out in full view of everyone, and she told them that she'd found the Messiah. And the people believed her story, they believed in him too, for themselves [John 4:39-42].

Wherever we are in the world [in the hot dry towns of the Nepali terai, or the lush, green coastlines of Australia], when we really understand who Jesus is, we also go running – to the ends of the bazaar, and our street, and the next town, in order to share the good news about Jesus... because the ends of our street, and the ends of the earth, are filled with people... who are just as thirsty as we are.