

At the Well

William Loader

I wasn't thirsty. I was getting water for the day, in the middle of the day. The others don't want me around – had too many men. Afraid. Scared I'll go off with one of theirs. I don't expect them to understand and I don't expect sympathy. It's been hard. I've been desperate. I'm no saint. And now here's another man, wanting a drink. His accent gives him away. He's a Jew from up north, Galilee. Seems a very confident fella, asks me for a drink. Does he think he's above the rules? Doesn't he realise that talking with me out in the open will earn him a reputation? Especially with someone like me. I challenge him, because I also think as a Jew he's not supposed to share food and drink with us Samaritans. He goes on about his special water, fresh, living water. Great. If he can get me some I won't have to come out here in the heat of the day. But he didn't listen. Instead he asked me about my relationships. How did he know? Who's been talking? It feels like their frowns will last for a thousand years or two before they will know what's like. So I changed the subject: who's got the right place to worship us or them? Us, obviously, but I wanted to get him off track. Neither, he said. God is Spirit so you don't need temples. I like it. This guy seems to be a teacher of some sort. Interesting. I'll go and tell the village folk. They've been dreaming of getting someone who can make better sense of God than the locals, a messiah they call him. Funny if he's it. I don't expect to be listened to by them. Their expectations of me are very different, especially the men. I see he's got a group of supporters. They arrived as I left. I bet they're worried. Well, he'll have to explain himself. To cut a long story short, the village guys came out out of curiosity. There were really taken by this fellow, enthusiastic enough to find me and tell me, though it was a bit of a put down: we believe in him not because of what you said but because we heard him with our own ears. OK. They put me in my place. Better go back and fetch the water, but you know, if he is speaking for God, then I reckon God's pretty good. I could do with a drink right now but, funny, meeting him, that was a refreshing change. Living water? Yes, that's what it was. Living water – he gave me. Great guy.