

*CRIBB<S>NOTE – February 24, 2008*

Sometimes we feel like nobody knows our names. The weight of the world burdens our hearts and there is no relief. It is difficult to go on; we get hungry, thirsty, and tired. We want to give up and just rest. That is why we have coaches and friends to cheer us on when everything within us is exhausted. We really do need each other. We need somebody who has our backs and encourages us ‘to keep on keeping on.’

When Jesus stopped at the well in Samaria, he had no way to refresh himself with a cool cup of water. He was just there waiting and hoping. In Hebrew, the word for ‘wait’ is very closely related to the word for ‘hope.’ Wait is “qwh” and hope is “yhl” and both mean exactly the same thing; they are interchangeable. So, we find Jesus waiting and hoping as he rests by the well.

Think about that for a moment. In the busyness of our lives, how many times do we wait for something? How often do we hope for a particular result? Jesus was tired and thirsty but didn’t have a dipper to reach into the well and pull out water to quench him. He was left to wait and hope.

In the meantime, his disciples had gone to town to make purchases and pick up some food. While Jesus was at the well a woman came along carrying a bucket and dipper to fetch water. Although she didn’t know it, she, too, was waiting and hoping for something to happen. What an encounter!

She had what Jesus needed to get water. Jesus had what she needed to experience real life. There is no substitute for water to live. Their meeting at the well became more than a refreshment station. It led to a moment of self realization and salvation. They witnessed to each other. Through their distinct differences, they discovered something beyond their separateness and traditions. A casual conversation turned into a theological discourse that broke open the future.

By the time Jesus’ disciples returned, they found their leader talking to a Samaritan woman in broad daylight. It was not a chance or casual encounter. Social norms were violated. A Jewish man was not supposed to be in the company of a Samaritan woman in public. Yet, it happened. Because they talked openly and she revealed her true identity, everybody in the town came out to meet Jesus. They urged him to stick around and be their guests. For two extra days, Jesus and his followers remained in Samaria. They became teachers and cheerleaders for people who had known the plight of discrimination and broken dreams.

Although we do not learn the name of the woman, we are given the name of her little town, Sychar. Identity and location are helpful in making sense out of life experiences that sting and overwhelm us.

What are you waiting for? What do you hope will happen?