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Diocese of Birmingham
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PREACHING ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS
When the Ordinary becomes Extraordinary
John 4:4-42

What does it take to transform the seemingly *ordinary* moment, experience, person or sermon into something *extraordinary*?

Photina aka, The Samaritan Woman/the Woman at the Well. Name means 'radiant' or 'shining one'. There are countless stories of Photina's amazing courage, miracles and activities. She paid the ultimate price of martyrdom. To the Greek Orthodox she is **St Photina "Great Martyr St. Photini, Equal to the Apostles."**

Yet her Biblical story begins without fanfare, without prestige and without reference to even a name...

The Power of Encounter

❖ **With Jesus**

For the Samaritan Woman her encounter with Jesus was foundational and formative. She ventures out at noon to avoid interaction with others (perhaps she was an outcast, of dubious morals and on the margins of her community). She then encounters Jesus, just as He encounters her (John 4:4). Up until this point, her entire identity and life possibilities have been constrained by the negative prevailing sentiments of the day regarding women and Samaritans (see **John 4:9**). E.g. One Rabbinical statement, "***The daughters of the Samaritans are [deemed unclean as] menstruants from their cradle.***" However, Jesus enables her to understand and appreciate her own value, what she has to offer and who she could become.

❖ **With Ourselves**

For the disciples this encounter revealed just how much *unlike* Jesus they were. For the Samaritan Woman it freed her up to be fully herself and to progress even beyond the pain and shame of her private life. As she comes face to face with God, Jesus brings her face to face with herself and with her most deeply held beliefs (**John 4:21**).

❖ **With Others**

Jesus spoke to the most unlikely individual, disclosing that He was the Messiah, and she became the one through whom God ignited the transformation of all Samaria! The people she wished to avoid, she now sought to bless.

The Samaritan Woman (Photina) reminds us that God invests in, engages with, affirms and commissions whom He will and that in God's economy, the *ordinary* becomes *extraordinary* as we encounter Jesus, ourselves and others.