

It takes a lot of work to be a Christian.
Just ask Jesus.

Now, he wasn't a Christian;
he was a Jew.
But you get the idea.

It took a lot of work to be Jesus,
to live how he did,
to hold on to hope,
to keep loving and healing and giving and living.
Takes a lot of work to do all that.

What's Jesus doing here,
sitting down at the well with this Samaritan woman?
What is he doing
except having a conversation?

It takes a lot of work to have a conversation.
We don't think about it often,
but it's true.

Most of the time,
we come home and and we say,
"I just had the best conversation!"
What we really mean is,
"I just got to talk to somebody
for 20 minutes,
uninterrupted."

Most of us love to talk;
few are really skilled at listening.

Fred Craddock says a conversation has three elements:
it happens between people who have differences,
it happens between people who have enough in common
that they can talk,
and it happens when both people
are open to the possibility
that they might be changed
by what they hear.

How many of us do that?

Jesus is having a conversation.

He's different from this woman:

he's a man, she's a woman;
he's a Jew, she's a Samaritan.

They have a little in common:

they both worship the same God.

It's that last piece,

that willingness to admit that you might be changed.

That's the hardest part of all.

If we can find ourselves in the room with somebody different from us;

if we can find ourselves chatting with someone we recognize,

at least a little bit,

if we've got all that,

we may still,

not be willing to change.

Because changing is hard.

Being changed takes a lot of work.

Just ask Jesus.

What if our whole life
were just one long chance
to have a real conversation,
to listen,
to speak,
to get at the truth that's all around us?
How much work would THAT take?
How much more like Jesus,
would we be?

About the time I got into middle school,
you know,
that awkward time when you start to realize
that you may not have all the answers,
and so you start to pretend like you do.
About the time that I got into all of that,
my friends started having all the answers when it came to Jesus.
They wore little bracelets: WWJD?
"What Would Jesus Do?"

It wasn't a question,
so much as a prelude to an answer.
Just ask them,
and they'd tell you.
They'd tell you like they knew.
Like they knew that Jesus loved who they loved
and hated who they hated.
Like they knew that Jesus was blessing them
for getting saved on Sunday
and ignoring the unpopular kid on Monday.

I didn't know how to say it at the time,
but it always struck me as a little perverse
that *believing the right things*
could ever somehow be more important
than ***doing the right things.***

But they were so sure,
and I was just trying to figure things out.
They were just pretending,
but I didn't know that at the time.

I didn't have any answers about God,
certainly not about Jesus.
All I had were a lot of questions.
Some of those questions,
I'm still unravelling today.
Some of them
just keep getting wrapped up tighter
in the mystery of God Almighty.

And maybe someday
I'll be alright with that.

What if our whole life were just one long chance
to have a real conversation?

THE real conversation.

The conversation with God,

where we tell the truth about who we are,

about what we're afraid of,

about how we don't always believe,

about how we rarely act like we believe.

How much work would that take?

I'm not sure;

just ask Jesus.

This woman kept coming up with reasons
why she couldn't have that conversation,
not with Jesus,
probably not with anybody.

Jesus got her interested.

Asked her for a drink.

All that talk about Living Water.

And she says to him,

"Sir, give me this water,

so that I may never be thirsty

or have to keep coming here to draw water."

She's interested alright.

Then come all the excuses:

You worship in the wrong place.

You THINK I worship in the wrong place.

I've been married too many times;

maybe you want to marry me too.

Reasons why not.

Reasons why she can't draw that living water,
why the well might be closed to her,
no matter what Jesus tells her.

What else did she need to hear,
in order that she might believe?

What else do you need to hear,
in order that you might believe,
in order that you will go to that well,
and draw the living water?

I can tell you what I need to hear.

Something about not trying to be so clever,
something about not doing so much,
to make it all happen.

Something about not having to pay for every speck of salvation.

Something about love being offered,
not earned.

I heard a poem the other day,
and it sums it up pretty well for me,
the things that I need to hear.

Things to Think
by Robert Bly

*Think in ways you've never thought before.
If the phone rings, think of it as carrying a message
Larger than anything you've ever heard,
Vaster than a hundred lines of Yeats.*

*Think that someone may bring a bear to your door,
Maybe wounded and deranged; or think that a
moose*

*Has risen out of the lake, and he's carrying on his
antlers*

*A child of your own whom you've never seen.
When someone knocks on the door, think that he's
about*

*To give you something large: tell you you're
forgiven,*

*Or that it's not necessary to work all the time, or that
it's*

Been decided that if you lie down no one will die.¹

¹ "Things to Think" by Robert Bly from *Eating the Honey of Words*. © Harper Collins, 1999.

Or this:

you were always more loved than you ever hoped,
and I'm sorry that sometimes,
it didn't feel that way.

What do you need to hear?

Do you need to hear God excuse you from your guilt,
from your shame,
from your lack of faith?

We are like that woman at the well.

We can keep coming up with excuses.

God will excuse us from every one.

God will take every excuse from us.

I don't know what you need to hear.

But there's a savior
sitting by the well,

and he's just dying to say it.