

In 2004, a man named Frank Warren began a blog called PostSecret.com. Through his blog, he invited people to mail in postcards with one of their secrets on it. His rules were that the postcard had to be anonymous and that the secret had to be one that had never been told to anyone. The blog became a sensation.

PostSecret generated thousands of postcards, some store bought, some creatively decorated by the sender all written with a secret. The popularity has calmed down over the years and but Warren still posts secrets on his blog each week and has also published several books that are compilations of the postcards. The published secrets

range from inspiring to humorous to heartbreaking. Some examples include

\*I pretend to sneeze in public so strangers will bless me

\*I serve decaf coffee to people who are rude to me

\*I'm starting Rabbinical school and I love bacon

\*I'm not funny, I just steal my jokes from tv

\*I'm the type of person I complain about

\*Every time a racial slur pops into my head I get very sad that my dad taught them to me

\*I regret the answer I gave you the night you called to ask if the baby was yours

\*Being a firefighter helped me find God

Everybody has at least one secret that they do not want the people around them to know. All of the people whom Jesus encountered most likely had a secret that they thought he didn't already know. I'd like to imagine some of their PostSecrets:

For instance, in the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, Jesus and his disciples are surrounded by crowds of hungry people who have followed Jesus for healing. Jesus asks Philip "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip responded "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little".

I imagine Philip's PostSecret would have read "I am totally overwhelmed by the demands of the people in my life". The Pharisees and Scribes who dragged the adulterous woman to Jesus would have a PostSecret that would read: "We love the sound the stones make when they hit the sinner." When Jesus was brought to trial, Pontius Pilate's PostSecret would read "I am Rome's puppet. I am the real prisoner, not Jesus."

The Samaritan woman in our gospel had a secret that no one but the residents in her town would know. She was marginalized, not for one issue, but for three. The first being that she was a woman. Women were ranked low in the social scale. Men, especially those not in relation,

were not to speak to women in a public place. Second, the woman was a Samaritan. The Samaritans and the Jews had been involved in an intense rivalry at least 200 years before Jesus was born over the correct location of the temple. The Samaritans claimed the proper place to worship was at Mount Gerazim and built a temple there, which Jewish troops destroyed. Relations between the two nations continued to falter. Many Jewish travelers would voluntarily add many extra miles in their journey just so they could avoid traveling through Samaria. For a Jewish man, like Jesus, to be seen with a Samaritan was socially unacceptable.

The third reason that this woman was ostracized was that she had a shameful past; being married five times and currently living with a man she was not married to. Regardless of whether her husbands had died, or if she had been divorced or stranded, socially, she was branded a loose woman and full of sin.

This might explain why she came to draw water at the sixth hour, or about noon. During this time of the day, the temperatures have risen and not many people are out. The woman most likely went to the well at this time because she was least likely to encounter others. She could hide her secrets.

But here, she encounters Jesus who was tired from his journey. He ignored the social boundaries and risked the chance of ridicule by asking her for a drink of water. Here began the life changing moment for this woman. Jesus told her about living water. He says, "everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give will never be thirsty. The water that I will give them will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." Jesus has drawn her in. She wants this living water, she has let her guard down. Jesus tells her to call her husband and come back. Fearing if Jesus finds out her secret, she will not receive

this living water, she responds "I have no husband" ....which is half truth!

Much to the surprise of the woman, Jesus reveals that he knows that she has no husband, but he goes further to reveal that "That's nicely put; I have no husband. You've had five husbands, and the man you're living with now isn't even your husband!" The woman was most likely stunned, and based on her status in society, expected Jesus to judge her and comment negatively on her past, especially being that Jesus seemed to know her deep dark secret.

But Jesus did not chastise her or call her to account. He saw her as she was, compassionately understanding

her circumstances and willingly offering living water to her. This compassion and the knowledge of her secret were all the woman needed to know that Jesus was the Messiah. She left her water jar behind, a symbol of her secretive past, and ran from the well back to town proclaiming "Come and see a man who told me everything that I have ever done!" She did encounter living water and was freed by Jesus from her secrets and was encouraged to share with others what had happened to her.

So often we are like the woman at the well. We all have a secret or two that we would never risk sharing with anyone, even our spouse. Those secrets are hidden deep inside of us. We hope and pray that no one ever finds out

about them. But what we many times don't realize is that they are known. Jesus, who knows everything about us, knows all of our secrets and he doesn't hold them against us. He offers us this living water. He wants our thirst to be quenched. But unfortunately, it can hard for us to accept the living water, claiming we are unworthy, ashamed of our secrets. We may have the mindset of the Samaritan woman "if he finds out my secret, that could be a deal breaker."

But the great thing is- the thing that we constantly need to be reminded of is that Jesus came to us for the purpose of dealing with the woman's painful secrets and Jesus came to us for the purpose of dealing with all of our

secrets. And he came not to judge us because of our secrets, but he came to set us free from our secrets, because he is compassionate- because he loves us and through this, the offer is still out there for us to accept this living water. Once we accept and are freed from our secrets, a new life begins. Like the woman at the well, we must set down our water jars and spread the news to all people about this man. This man, the messiah, who knows all of our secrets, loves us and frees us. Don't let this be a secret. Tell everyone.