



A few years ago, I was fortunate to spend the weekend in the home of a pastor and his wife who had spent twenty-five years as missionaries in Japan. Their home reflected the order, serenity, and simplicity of a richly-lived life, and their walls were adorned with Sadao Watanabe originals that they had been collecting for over four decades! It was a surreal and unexpected introduction to an artist who would soon become my favorite.

A small Sadao piece hung at the foot of my guest bed, and I remember thinking, “I want to know everything about this man!” His art made me thirsty to know more and more about *him*. Imagine my astonishment when I walked into the All Saints Gallery! I was undone. What a joy to see Sadao Watanabe’s work adorning the walls of my own church home.

I cannot pick a favorite Watanabe piece, but of the twelve currently on display, I have a special affection for the *Well in Samaria*. One of the many reasons is that throughout Israel’s history, many significant

relationships were forged at wells: Moses and Zipporah; Isaac and Rebecca, and most significantly, Jacob and Rachel.

Genesis 29 tells how a young Rachel came out to the well in Haran to water her father’s sheep “while the sun was still high”. Why did Rachel go out at noon and not in the evening with the other women? The text does not say. But we are to understand that this was a divine appointment. The descendants of Jacob and Rachel’s union would enter and fill the land God had promised Abraham and Isaac. The twelve tribes of Israel would (for a short while at least) be *one* nation with Yahweh as King.

In John’s gospel account (Chapter 4), a much older and more broken woman also comes to draw water from a well at noon. Why? John does not say, but we are to understand that this encounter is also a divine appointment fraught with significance for Israel’s future. God is forging a new relationship at a familiar and significant place - Jacob’s well. By the end of the afternoon, the testimony of the Samaritan woman would be reason enough for many in her town to “make their way towards” Jesus and come to believe that he was indeed “the Savior of the world”. Like Rahab (a Gentile woman in ancient Jericho) the Samaritan woman’s faith paved the way for many sons and daughters to enter the kingdom-rest of God.

One of my favorite parts of the *Well in Samaria* is the lush Edenic plants, flowers, and exotic birds springing up around Jesus, the woman, and the well. It’s a beautiful depiction of how the River of Life gushes from the throne of Jesus and provides abundant life - true rest - for all who are thirsty to know him, believe him, and make their home with him.

I’m so thankful for Sadao Watanabe and how his art continually compels me to “make my way towards Jesus” and drink. May his work bear good fruit in God’s kingdom and his life ever be a blessing.

- Kim Hall