

2nd Sunday in Lent
March 8, 2020
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Christ Gives Living Water

John 4:5-26 (NIV 84)

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Dear Friends in Christ,

Water has always been at the center of human civilizations. The Egyptians built their empire around the Nile River. The civilizations of the Middle East built around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. If there is no river or lake nearby people dig wells. Without a reliable source of water, people do not thrive in an area. Water is life for humans.

Many people in the world do not have access to safe and reliable water. But they still drink the water they find and this leads to disease and in far too many cases, death. The water carries diseases that especially affect children and the elderly. Two of our members have been part of teams that went to the refugee camps in Africa. WELS Kingdom Workers organized these trips and they hope to make one trip each year. The goal is to teach the refugees how to use sanitary water for their families. But as precious as clean water is, this water will only help with life in this world. Christ gives living water.

Jesus offers water to a woman today that gives eternal life. This living water is for all people. In order to get it to all people Jesus first overcomes cultural divisions. Then Jesus overcomes spiritual divisions. He gives living water to all people.

Christ Offers Living Water to All People

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

If this scene played out in Des Moines, Iowa in the year 2020, we would think nothing of it. A man asks a woman for a drink of water. There would be no shock, no surprise, no discussion. She would hand him a drink and that would be that.

But in the first century in Judea and Samaria, things were different. There were many reasons that someone watching Jesus ask this woman for a drink would be surprised. Let's start with the fact that Jesus is talking to a woman. This would surprise people because most teachers would pass their knowledge on to other men. Women had their defined role in society and it was not to learn from the great teachers. The disciples had this mistaken idea. When they came back from their grocery run into town they were surprised that Jesus was talking to a woman. However, they were afraid to ask him why.

Jesus values this Samaritan woman so much that he talks with her one on one. Jesus breaks the cultural norm of his day to talk with this woman because all people are important to Jesus. He did the same with Mary and Martha. He did the same as he appeared on Easter morning first to Mary Magdalene. Jesus came for men and women, for young and old, for all.

Jesus also surprised the people of his time by talking to a Samaritan. The Samaritans were people who lived in the northern part of what had been the kingdom of Israel. An enemy, the Assyrians, deported most of the Jews and brought in foreigners to live in the land. Therefore, Samaritans may have been partly Jewish by ancestry but mostly not. They also partly kept the Jewish religion but mixed in lots of paganism too. This is why 'true' Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Samaritans were mixed race and mixed religion. Eating, drinking, or talking with a Samaritan might contaminate you. Samaritans were not worthy of associating with Jews.

Jesus does not let cultural practices, prejudices and fear keep him from offering living water to this Samaritan woman. He, the holy Son of God, did not worry about being contaminated by a Samaritan. He did not consider Jews more worthy of his time than other people. Christ offers living water to all people.

Is there someone you know who needs the living water of the gospel but really wouldn't fit into our church? Maybe we think they wouldn't like the music or the type of service we have. Maybe we are afraid they would wear the wrong clothes or someone would see their tattoo. Maybe we don't want our church family to see us associated with someone who doesn't fit the church family mold.

This Samaritan woman does not fit the mold of a follower of Jesus, at least according to the disciples. But Jesus looks beyond all the outward differences and goes to the heart of the matter. This Samaritan woman needs the water of life. He offers her the water of life and tells her why she needs this living water.

Jesus Gives Living Water to Sinners

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Jesus offers this Samaritan woman living water. She is confused and thinks Jesus has some special source of water so she won't have to keep coming to the well every day. Jesus offers her eternal life and she immediately thinks of earthly life. It is only human nature to think of what we can see and experience before thinking of spiritual and eternal things. We often think of how God can make our life

better now instead of how God can make our life eternal.

Jesus comes to forgive this woman and give her eternal life and all she can think of is getting water freely without working for it. Jesus first has to break her worldly thinking and show why she needs the living water that he gives.

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

This woman had a problem. It is the same problem all of us have. It is sin. Her sin showed most obviously in her marriages. Married five times and divorced five times. This is not God's will for marriage. Divorce can be the other person's fault but five times is a pattern that Jesus points to. Combine this with the fact that the woman goes to the well alone and you get a picture of a woman who has a bad reputation in town. She is not welcome to be with the other women as they go to the well. Maybe she even broke up some of their marriages. Her pattern of sin has continued as she is now living with a man who is not married to her.

The law of God works when Jesus points out her continuing sinful lifestyle. Now she is ready to talk about spiritual things. She sees her sins and wants to talk about where to worship God. In her mind, that is how to deal with sin. You go to a certain place and do a certain thing. All she has to do to get rid of her sin and guilt is worship God in the right place in the right way. But Jesus tells her that believers do not need to go to a certain place and do a certain thing to worship the Lord. It is not what we do that forgives us. Instead it is the one who has come who will forgive sins. The woman knows something about the promise of the Savior too.

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

The Messiah is speaking to her. He forgives sin. He gives eternal life. And he is speaking to her, a sinful Samaritan woman, rejected by her people but chosen by the Lord. Jesus gives her the living water to quench her thirsty soul. Christ does the same for the world. He poured out his lifeblood on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. No sin is too great to be forgiven. No sinner is too deep into sin to be given the living water of the gospel. That is good news for you and for me. That is good news for everyone we know.

So keep holding out the living water of the gospel to people, even to those who are caught up in all kinds of sin. We may not see hope of them ever repenting. We may not be able to envision them ever coming to or returning to faith in Christ. But no one thought this Samaritan woman would either. Jesus changed her by showing her what she needed and giving her what she needed. She needed his forgiveness and he gives forgiveness to all who repent and believe in him. May the Lord bless us with an appreciation for the living water of the gospel given to us and a desire to share it with anyone and everyone.

Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Amen.