

Sunday, March 15, 2020

John 4:5-42

⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" ³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him. ³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" ³⁴Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." ³⁹Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

I am thirsty.

This morning I am going to talk to you about spiritual thirst; not only ours, but **God's** thirst for us.

The Gospel we just heard, Jesus and the woman at the well, is about relationship. Basically, it comes down to this. God is as necessary to us as water. God through Jesus is our living water. Just as water is essential to keep our bodies alive...so also God's love and grace are essential to keep us alive spiritually.

St Augustine wrote:

**“You have made us for yourself alone, O lord,
and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.”**

We all know how compelling it is to be thirsty. I remember long ago, when I was only 8 or 9, I was at summer camp in Quebec. One day we went on a hike. It was warm, the sun was hot and it was long before the days of trendy water bottles. I began to feel thirsty. Gradually, I became thirstier and thirstier until it was all I could think about. I had no water and had to wait til we got to the store. I still remember the urgency. I could hardly wait to get that bottle of liquid and guzzled it all down at once.

Today's story is about **God's** desire for us; **God's thirst**, more urgent even than our own, to be the living water to satisfy our restlessness.

Julian of Norwich, the medieval mystic wrote:

**This is his thirst:
His desire to love us.**

Jesus, who is the living water, thirsts for us. He goes against social convention when he talks to the Samaritan woman. He's not supposed to talk to her. He is a Rabbi, she is a woman. Not only that, but she is a **Samaritan** woman, and Jews and Samaritans were not friends. Due to her questionable moral character, she was a social outcast. So she came to the well in the heat of the day when no one else would be there. But notice **Jesus** makes the first move. He asks **her** for a drink. He is thirsty...but his is a different kind of thirst...just as urgent as my thirst at camp that day...His thirst is to connect, to give the woman spiritual water to satisfy her inner thirst, to change her life. Why does he want to do it? because she matters to him. Despite being a woman, despite being a Samaritan whom Jews despised, despite questions about her marital life, **she is worthy**. Our Lord finds no reason to despise her; quite the contrary. He engages in a conversation with her...and even tells her that he is 'the one' with the answers; he is the Messiah. Something clicks and she recognizes him. Off she rushes to tell the others in town. She becomes the heroine, an apostle whose unlikely testimony somehow rings true. She leaves her water jar...she doesn't need it today...for she has discovered Jesus' living water.

Here we see that God's desire for us is strong, even in our imperfection; more than strong... God's desire for us is passionate...and that is the Good News.

St Augustine said that Jesus loved everybody he ever met as if that one were the only person in all the world. He loved all as he loved each, passionately.

And God's thirst to love us is the mystery of Easter, the mystery of a love tested to the point of death...the proof of God's love...that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

One preacher put it this way: **"It is the business of the church to kiss frogs."**

God loves indiscriminately. Our story today shows us that divine love may surprise us. It turns up in unexpected places. It turned up in Samaria, a country that other Jews avoided. It turned up between Rabbi Jesus and a woman of questionable status.

A Christian scholar, **Dr. Dan Clendenin** writes that a few years ago, while he was in Addis Ababa, capitol of Ethiopia, he took a day trip to the mountains that circle the city of 4 million people. At the top they prayed over the city and enjoyed the panoramic views.

But on their way up they saw something disturbing. The higher they went in their minivan, the more women and girls they passed walking down carrying huge loads of firewood on their backs.



Bent over at the waist, often barefooted, these women carried 75 lb bundles of eucalyptus saplings, seven feet wide, down to the city center ten miles away, all for a few pennies. The women firewood carriers in Addis are a common sight. They sell the big bundle at the market for about \$2. This will feed their family for a couple of days

The writer, Dan Glendenin, remarked that if Jesus were alive today and the Gospels were written amongst these women, our New Testament would contain a story about the firewood carriers, marginalized as much as the Samaritan woman at the well.

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well reminds us of this. Jesus' passion to quench our deepest needs with the 'living water' of his Spirit has consequences and it's called 'the kingdom of God' or Shalom.

John Lennon wrote about Shalom in his song 'Imagine'

Imagine no possessions	I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger	A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people	Sharing all the world...
You may say I'm a dreamer	But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us	And the world will live as one

Jesus had the same imagination.

Jesus' living water saves us individually, but it is also meant to revive the world.

The world Jesus inaugurated is a world of inclusion not exclusion, dignity not put downs, empowerment rather than exploitation, and affirmation rather than marginalization.

Are we not called to share Jesus' vision of the world revived and to work with him to bring about the kingdom? What can we do?

In this Covid-19 virus pandemic, with lives turned topsy turvy, schools and universities closed, even Parliament on hold...what can we do to promote God's world of shalom? Maybe now is the time to invest in our friends, our family and our church family. Simple gestures can make a big difference in someone's day. A card, a call, an email...can reach into someone else's possibly lonely day and brighten it...can make them feel loved

So...what about today? Instead of at the well, would we find Jesus at midnight at Tim Horton's or at the local pub, asking a lonely women to buy him a drink? Would he offer her his living Spirit?

The truth...Jesus sits, tired from his journeys in each of our homes...waiting for us to notice him, thirsty for us as we seek to satisfy our thirsts and cravings in all sorts of unsatisfying ways. We are all Samaritans or we all regard certain others as Samaritans. Jesus' message is that there really are no Samaritans. No one is outside his circle of passionate grace...all...even the HIV positive people, the gamblers, the drinkers, the adulterers, the gossips, the bullies all of us, the men, the women, the old, the young, the angry, the critical, the petty, the earnest, the indifferent, we are all offered the living water.

So drink the pure living water, the water of the spirit that revives us and brings us back to life. Let that spiritual water transform you...let it transform you into an apostle like the Samaritan women...who says 'He knows me and loves me and I know him and love him - I will accept his offer of life.' Amen.



"My name, Amarech, means 'the beautiful one'. I am the youngest of four children in my family. Today, I spent from 0300 to 1500 collecting the branches of eucalyptus trees which people use as firewood. I will sell this big bundle at the market for about \$2. This will feed my family for a couple of days." Photo from BBC News.

Laura Bolan did something, she donated her kidney to someone she had never met; little 8 year old Sarah Dickman. Sarah was born with a genetic disease which slowly destroys the kidneys. She needed a kidney transplant to survive.

Neither of Sarah's parents, was a match to donate a kidney. As a last resort, they circulated a flier and were relieved when Laura responded because Sarah's condition was quickly deteriorating

Laura Bolan, 34, had never met Sarah when she agreed to donate the organ. Sarah's smile on a flier was more than Laura Bolan could take.

The pair underwent successful surgeries at hospitals across the street from each other in Atlanta, Georgia. They both recovered well afterwards.

Laura gave Sarah a new life. Free from a dialysis machine, she could spend the night at her best friend's house and take bubble baths again.

She would no longer have to leave school early because her failing kidneys made her exhausted and irritable.

In response to the generosity show his daughter, Sarah's Dad added his name to the living donor lists so that he could help someone else.

Sarah's mom said "We definitely need more people like Laura in the world".