

Sermon - Mar 12 - Lent 3 Woman at the well 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. One day long ago I 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?

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, or at a homeless shelter like Nazareth House, 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 addicts, 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.