

The Lord Is among Us, Giving Living Water

3rd Sun. in Lent – 03/12/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 4:5-30, 39-42 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 25, **“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.’”**

v. 41-42, [Says of the Samaritans who heard Jesus,] **“And many more believed because of His word. They said..., ‘we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.’”**

Introduction

✘ “Is the Lord among us or not?” (Ex. 17:7) That was the question the people of Israel asked Moses at the end of our Old Testament Reading today. They were exhausted from running. The stress of not knowing whether or not some remnant of Pharaoh’s army might still be after them had them on edge. And above all else, they were thirsty. “Give us water to drink” (Ex. 17:2) seems like a reasonable request, doesn’t it? And yet beneath their request lies a complaint; a grumbling; a desire that they get everything just the way they wanted it, when they wanted it, and how they wanted it.

→ This same attitude was what the Samaritan woman at the well was used to seeing in her day. People came from all over to draw water from this one well.

→ It was Jacob’s well, after all. In that desert climate wells were not plentiful, so this was the place in the region to come to rest and be refreshed in the waters of Jacob.

✘ So, when Jesus comes and sits down by the well, this woman has no reason to think he is any different from all of the others; the other men who had treated her poorly and any of the other Jews that turned up their noses toward all Samaritans; considering them to be corruptors of the faith because they only accepted the first five books of the Bible and worshipped on Mt. Gerizim instead of Mt. Zion.

→ And to be fair, in one way, Jesus is like all the others. But as this woman is soon to learn, this man Jesus is ultimately like no other ever to exist, for He has come to offer her and all mankind the free gift of true living water.

I. Jesus seems like everyone else.

✘ Verse six tells us that Jesus was “wearied...from His journey”. You see, pressure from the Pharisees put Jesus’ safety at risk, and because it was not yet time for Him to go to the cross, He and His disciples were headed north on foot to Galilee. They had likely walked 10-15 miles by the time of this story, at noon, in a desert region.

→ This highlights Jesus’ human nature. He is certainly hot and sweaty, flushed from the heat and very thirsty. So, to this Samaritan woman, Jesus seems like everyone else; any other Jew and any other man at that time – which means she expected to be treated like a second-class member of society.

✘ But now Jesus actually acknowledges her presence; even more he actually speaks with her. “Give Me a drink” (v.9), He asks, because verse 11 says that He had no way of getting water from this very “deep” well.

→ She is surprised; taken aback at this. This man is treating her like another person! This Jew is not judging her and her people as being unclean!

II. We think Jesus is like everyone else.

✘ Let's be honest folks, there are times you and I also, in some ways, think of Jesus like we do everyone else. It's hard for us sin-filled humans to think of, or comprehend what a flesh-and-blood, sinless Son of God might actually be like.

→ So, deep down, we default into thinking that He must operate and think the same as we and everyone else does. "He knows what we want, and so surely He will give us what we want, as long as we do what He wants us to do, right?"

- That "tit for tat" approach is just how things work in the business and academic and societal realm in which we live. So surely it must be the same with Jesus. If I come to church weekly and place my offering in the plate on a regular basis, then Jesus will give me a happy marriage and a perfect family. Or if I'm younger the thinking goes like this: If I obey my parents and don't cause too much trouble in school, then Jesus will convince my parents to let me have that new phone or stay up late on a school night or Saturday night before church; then He'll make my teachers cut me a break on the amount of homework we have to do or give me a good grade on that paper that I just turned in. Yes, if we just live according to God's Commandments and don't hurt anyone, then Jesus is obligated, we think, to give us the great life that "we deserve"!

✘ Sooo many of us Christians fall into this false view of Jesus, so that He ends up as just another business client or an acquaintance that we check in with from time to time, but not a deep loving, intimate friend and brother as the Bible says He is.

III. Jesus reveals Himself as the Living Water

✘ But here in this story at Jacob's well today we are given much to learn about Jesus; from Jesus!

→ As He asks the woman for water, not only does Jesus acknowledge His humanity as a heat-and-travel-wearied man who needs earthly water to survive, but far more important, Jesus acknowledges this woman's humanity, as one who has great value as a beloved part of God's Creation. Jesus puts Himself at the same level as she is; even below her in the sense that His ability to relieve His physical thirst is all dependent upon her.

✘ But then Jesus' words go beyond what the eye can see or the parched tongue can taste. He shows Himself in the fullness of His humanity when He says to her, "Give Me a drink" (v.7). But then He reveals the fullness of His divinity when He freely offers her as a sinner, "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v.14).

→ And let's be very clear, Jesus is not just the provider of the water of life. He is the very Living Water, who has come so that she might have life in abundance, now and forever! In fact the construction of verse 10 in the original Greek makes it possible to be translated like this: "if you knew the gift of God, namely, He who is speaking to you, 'Give Me a drink', you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

→ To the ears of a person in that day, the term "living water" suggested fresh, running water as in a river or a fountain – not the kind of water found collected deep in a well like the one before them. That kind of "living water" just plain didn't exist out in the desert. So it makes sense that she asks, "Where do you get that living water?" (v.11)

✘ And that becomes the perfect opportunity for Jesus to take the conversation away from physical thirst and water into the much needed and more important area of a person's eternal relationship with God.

→ Jesus describes the contrast between the two waters, "Everyone who drinks of this (earthly) water (for the body) will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (vv.13-14).

- She still didn't understand, until Jesus addressed her multiple husbands and her current life of sin, living with a man outside of marriage. Then things began to click, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (v.19). And the topic goes deeper into the discussion about how a person can actually enter spiritually into the very presence of God – is salvation found by worshipping on Mt. Gerizim or on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem; by being a Samaritan or a Jew, or something altogether different?
- Jesus says, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.... God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (vv.23-24).
- ⊗ "The hour is now here," meaning "right now in this person standing before you and talking to you, ma'am".
- Oh, now she is so close. She gets that Jesus is talking about the promised Messiah at least, "I know that Messiah is coming. When He comes He will tell us all things" (v.25).
- And now comes the big mic drop. "Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He!'" (v.26) This is the most important verse in this text; perhaps in all of Scripture! Jesus declares Himself to be the promised Messiah; God Himself in human flesh – the physical manifestation of living water and therefore the source and the way to salvation and eternal life. With this declaration, Jesus says that He is the only way that a sin-parched soul can receive and partake of the River/Spring of Life that John describes before the throne of God in heaven.
- In Revelation 21:6, God promises, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." And in Revelation 22:(1, 17) we hear of "the river of the water of life...flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb." And the Holy Spirit gives the invitation, "'Come.' ...let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."
- ⊗ After that the woman runs back to town in shock and overcome with joy, telling all the people that it appears the Messiah is right outside of town. Then we hear how powerful the Word of Christ is. No more is it a question, but a certainty as the people proclaim, "...we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world" (v.42).

IV. We know Jesus is the Living Water

- ⊗ Now what about you and me today, right here in Ft. Lupton, CO, in the year 2023? Are we still wondering as the Israelites did, "Is the LORD among us or not?" What about all of the troubles we face; the stresses we're enduring; the countless times things haven't gone the way we wanted, when we wanted them?
- Where's Jesus at to address our sin-parched, spiritually thirsty lives and souls? He's in the same place that He was for that woman at the well; for all of the people of Sychar.
- He is with us in the flesh, right here on the altar, ready and eager to feed us with His Spirit and truth as He places the same body and blood that He gave and shed on the cross into our hands and upon our tongues for the very forgiveness of all of our sins. He is with us as we hear His Word proclaimed from Scripture and the truth of His Law and Gospel passes through our ears and into our hearts and minds so that we too can proclaim with all confidence, "we know that this is the Savior of the world" (v.42).
- ⊗ Yes, we know that He is like us in His flesh and blood. But we know that He is not at all like us, because He lived this earthly life without committing even one sin. And that means only Jesus was worthy to be crucified as the spotless Lamb of God in our place.

→ So gone are the ideas that we can “do business” with Jesus to get what we want. Now, we know that our salvation is not dependent upon whether we worship on this mountain or in that particular temple.

→ Now, we come with thirsty souls. Now we stream into His sanctuary here for worship with eager hearts and ready minds, because we know that Jesus is here, in the living waters of our baptism; “as a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (v.14); flowing as a never ending river of love and grace; of strength and confidence to fill us for whatever this earthly life may throw at us out there in our day to day walk through the wilderness of this world.

Conclusion

✘ It is not the woman who is running back into town with such joy today, but friends, it is you and me! We have something flowing inside of us now that cannot be contained; that all of our friends and neighbors and co-workers and family...yes, that even our adversaries and enemies cannot survive without.

→ We have Jesus; we have Him as the Living Water coursing through our souls. And since we “know that [He] is the Savior of the World” (v.42), than we can’t wait to pour out His love and grace; to worship Him in Spirit and truth for the entire world to see and hear and receive for their salvation as well!

→ May it be so, in Jesus’ name. Amen.