

*Second Sunday in Lent (March 8, 2020)*

*Smith*

5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 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.) 10 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." 11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" 13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 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." 16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." 17 "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 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." 19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." 21 "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." 25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." 26 Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

He spoke from out of eternity, and where there had been nothing at all, nothing and darkness, there was light, and the world. He spoke over the world, and where there had been shapelessness, there was a form, and now sea and sky obeyed him, separated, and remained apart according to his word. He spoke over the sea and it receded to uncover land: continent, island, mountain, hill and valley. He spoke to the sky, and there were sun, moon and stars set into motion to do, at his bidding, what only he had done until then. He spoke again, the sea and skies were filled with the swimming and flying creatures, and he spoke again, and the land was filled with all of its creatures, until he formed the crown of his creation: man, and man's mate: woman, and he said: It is good.

After man and woman fell into sin, he promised he would come to save them. And here we meet him on a day late in winter, just a few months after he began his ministry of salvation. He had been walking a long while, and in the hot climate of Israel even March had its hot days, and he, even he, the creator of water itself, he needed a drink.

He asked her for a drink and she didn't think that was right. His answer brings us back to who is is: "If you knew who it was asking, you'd have asked me for a drink, and you'd have got "living water." She misunderstood "living water" for fresh water, running water, but he told her what he meant: Water that will cause you to never be thirsty again. Living water is another way of talking about Eternal Life. The Creator was reaching into his creation to offer life with him forever in heaven.

The woman challenged his authority. "Our father Jacob gave us this well. It goes back to him-- he drank from it himself." But Jesus told her: If you drink this water, YOU will become a well, a spring of living water welling up to eternal life.

Each time Jesus reached out to her with the Gospel, she countered his offer and tried to change the subject. This is something most of us are pretty good at. God offers to us such a variety of things: (1) Eternal life, (2) Opportunities to serve him, (3) A lifetime of humble service, (4) a moment to show the quality of our faith and the strength of our resolve, (5) a familiar temptation to finally turn away from -- but what do we do? No no, not me. Not today. I'd like to serve you, Jesus, to show how I love you, Jesus, but I just don't think that you know how to put opportunities in my path.

It's like a mother who's baking cookies for her family. She's running low on sugar so she sends her son down to the corner store to get sugar for the cookies. But he forgets why he went. And there are jawbreakers and M&Ms and Candy Bars and Twizzlers and Sourpatch Kids and a can of pop—and pretty soon he's spent all the money she gave him. And he comes home and she asks him why he didn't buy any sugar, he says, "I wanted a treat, and you never make cookies anymore."

Like the woman at the well, we make everything into God's fault.

After a few of the woman's sidetracking comments, Jesus decided to shoot right for the sin that was plaguing her life. "Go" he said, "**Call your husband and come back.**" "I don't have a husband," she said. In the dialect they were speaking as in many languages, "a husband" and "one husband" can be said the same way. Jesus doesn't bother with her grammar, he keeps zeroing in on her sin. She didn't have One husband. She'd had five husbands, and he had a man now she wasn't married to.

Now, there are reasons for getting a divorce that are permitted in the Bible: Infidelity and abuse or desertion. No man should cheat on his wife, and no wife should cheat on her husband. No man should hit or bully his wife, and no wife should strike or nag her husband. No man should desert his wife and family, and no wife should act as if her husband no longer exists.

God's plan for marriage is that husband and wife will treasure each other; cherish each other, and find the very best in one another. Tell your spouse "I love you" every day. Tell your spouse, "I like you" just as often. Let your passion also show itself as compassion. Let your desire also show itself as kindness and patience, and forgiveness.

This Samaritan woman had been married five times, and we understand from the way she and Jesus talk about them that there was unfaithfulness and desertion that ruined all of those marriages. There was plenty to go around, and she was just as guilty as her husbands. And now she had abandoned marriage altogether, which is not the will of God.

God's will is that we will marry, not try each other out for a while. And this woman knew she was in the wrong, and that's why she tried to change the subject again, and again after that. You're a prophet! We have different worship practiced. Messiah is coming-- she brought these things up one after another as if she were talking about the weather or a piece of juicy gossip.

But the One who had created the sky above and the earth below kept at her; he kept holding out the forgiveness of all of her sins, the living water that would never end. A place with him for all eternity in heaven. Don't ever forget, your whole life through, that God wants you to be with him in heaven. So what does he do? He sees to it that you will be baptized and be brought to the faith. He provides you with Christian parents and he offers a Christian education. He offers financial aid if your family needs it. He offers a Sunday School with an opportunity for you to get into the work of the church and teach little ones once a month, twice if you like, or full time if you're willing. And if Sunday's not a good day, he offers you the same opportunity on Wednesdays to try your hand at teaching if your able.

Before we go into all the hundreds of ways he gives us to serve him and learn about him, let's remember not to be like the woman at the well, constantly changing the subject and running off at the mouth about what isn't important.

He pricks my conscience, and I must confess, yes, I have sinned. What can be done about my sin? And this is when he offers to me the Living Water of his Divine Word. He offers grace, he offers blessing, he offers consolation, comfort, he offers to take sinner like you and me and strip away all of the guilt of our sin and shame and cover us with his righteousness, his holiness, his perfection.

Don't fight him. Don't change the subject when it's time to repent. Look into the Law of God and see the flaws. Think to yourself: God wants us to this, but I have not. God wants us never to do this, but I have done it. Don't redefine what sin is.

Understand what it was that Jesus was doing at the well. He didn't need to be given a drink. He didn't need her companionship in eternity. He didn't need anything from her. And yet he kept after her, kept holding out forgiveness and salvation. He all but begged her to turn away from her sin, and he comes begging us to turn away from our sins.

We are the beggars, poor beggars who come before him with nothing to offer, and yet he come begging us to be his. Take his hand, let yourself fall into his embrace. Stand still under the shower of the forgiveness of sins and let it wash you clean in Jesus.

And then, forgiven, free and full of faith, beg Jesus to let you show your love and your thanks. Love one another. Serve one another. Children, help your parents. Parents, be patient with your dear children and meet their needs, even if those were not your needs once upon a time. Wives

and husbands, love and adore your husbands and wives. Be a good neighbor, a faithful Christian. Don't sit there at the well changing the subject. Repent, and turn back to Jesus, and show him your love just as he has shown his. Amen.