**3/12/23**

**Living Water**

**John 4:5-42**

This past week was an interesting one for sure. It started out with me finishing out my vacation in Pittsburgh. I was blessed with the opportunity to attend my former Lutheran Church, and spend some time with my former church family. It was nice to be back home, and remember where this journey in ministry started some 12 years ago. I also had the opportunity to reconnect with several family and friends in person. What a blessing to see people, and be able to reconnect in a way that modern technology sometimes just really does not allow for. I also know you all will be shocked by this when I tell you, of course I am using a bit of sarcasm here, I also had a few church meetings on the phone and on the computer. As some of you shake you heads I must inform you all that those meetings were vital to my growth and development. Just as vital as it was to be blessed with the opportunity to check in with some of you during the good and the bad times while I was away as well. My vacation wrapped up as I bid farewell to my Mother and Aunt at Eat’n Park during an early morning breakfast. I then took my buddy back to Pittsburgh International Airport so that he could fly back to Georgia. Next, I began my own travels back to New Jersey. When I arrived back home I got to see my mother in-law and wife again, and I was able to reconnect.

I then quickly began my efforts of getting back into the so-called normal daily grind. It started with working in the Church Office and leading Bible Study. Then, the very next day I had to head back to work at AtlantiCare Behavioral Health to help out my individuals I serve and the Team that I work with. I also had to say good bye to two co-workers that were moving on to new opportunities at new jobs. I rounded out the week with spending time with my wife and mother in-law enjoying breakfast and some shopping yesterday in Ocean City.

Now, you may say to yourselves, that does not sound like too bad of a week at all, and I happen to agree. What a blessing to be able to do all of those things and go all of those places, to be able to see all those people, to be able to learn, and to be able to have the opportunity to share my skills and talents along the way. Vacation afforded me the time away to rest a bit and refocus. However, it did not mean that I avoided everything, or that everything stopped. I am forever reminded that ministry, learning, and life are ever flowing just like the Living Water we hear about today.

Alright, enough of my recap. Let’s get into the real meat and potatoes of things here today. In doing so, and sharing some of my research and the insight of others, I would like to particularly share a good portion of a particular sermon that I read. It really summarized things in a way that I could not manage to do myself. We are going to use this next few minutes, and this opportunity we have together to explore a bit of “Jesus Reaches Out, Beyond Human Boundaries” contributed by Ronald Harbaugh.

“Our Gospel lesson for this morning is quite a story, and not just because of its length. At first glance, the story seems so simple, an easy story to grasp. Jesus is traveling through the heat of the day, when he tires and decides to rest by Jacob’s well. Being the noon hour, his disciples decide to go off to town to purchase some food and beverage.” (3)

“Then comes this woman from town to draw water to carry back to her home. Jesus, being thirsty, asks her for a drink. It sounds like such a simple request, and serves to break the ice. As they talk, Jesus seizes the opportunity for ministry, to tell her about this spiritual sustenance called “living water,” which he can give to her.” (3)

“The conversation continues, as they discuss religious topics, such as worship and the coming of God’s promised Messiah. They talk about her life, and the problems that she has faced over the years, including her present situation. And as a result of her encounter with Jesus, the woman’s faith is awakened. She begins to question whether Jesus might just be the Messiah, and goes off to tell others about her encounter with him, encouraging them to “come and see.”” (3)

“As a result of the woman’s witness, many of the people in her community come to meet Jesus, and they, too, come to faith, believing that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Upon their urging, Jesus remained in their town for two days, where he continued to minister to the people, where even more come to faith in him.” (3)

“At first glance, our lesson seems to be just a simple story about faith and witness. And, of course, on one level, it is. But when we look at the historical context in which this story was written, we find that it has a deeper, more profound dimension to it, a dimension that is easily missed by those of us who live in today’s culture.” (3)

“The fact that Jesus initiated a conversation with this woman at the well was quite an unprecedented action. In those days, men did not speak with women in public, especially men who were rabbis or religious leaders. In that society, women did not have equal rights, were not afforded the opportunity to engage in religious or theological debate, not permitted to speak during worship, nor even enter the inner court of the temple.” (3)

“Secondly, notice that this woman was a Samaritan. For the Jews of that day, the Samaritans, although not as “foreign” as the Gentiles, because of their intermarriage with the Assyrians, they were not considered “full-fledged members of the household of Israel,” either. Thus, they were religious and cultural outsiders whom the Jews regarded with a fair measure of suspicion and distrust.” (3)

“As a result, the Jews of that day would not share meals, or utilize the same utensils that the Samaritan’s used. They were considered ritually impure. This distrust of the Samaritans was so widespread that the woman in the story is herself startled by Jesus’ initiative. She says to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”” (3)

“And finally, notice the time of the day that this woman came to the well. Typically, people went to the well in the morning and the evening to avoid the heat of the noon day sun. Why, then, did this woman go at noon?” (3)

“Perhaps she was trying to avoid something worse than the noontime heat. Perhaps she wanted to avoid the burning glances of those from the town who had shunned her, because she had had five husbands, and was now living in adultery. Although men could have as many wives as they could afford, women were only permitted to have one husband at a time, and only be married three times.” (3)

“Since this woman had been married five times and was now living with a man to whom she was not married, did more than provide grist for the gossip mill. She would have been marked as immoral, and shunned. So she went to the well at noon, to avoid the townspeople and their burning stares, who were scandalized by her lifestyle.” (3)

“We are given a new look at this “simple story,” and discover that there is a lot more going on than first meets the eye. Here, at Jacob’s well, we meet this Samaritan woman and this Jewish rabbi, as culturally separated from each other as night and day. And by his simple request for a drink of water, Jesus breaks down the barriers of gender and race and moral superiority.” (3)

“Of course, at first the woman protests. “You want me to give you a drink? Do you know what you are asking? How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink from me, a woman of Samaria? It’s against the rules. It goes against the grain of our society. Do you know what you are asking?”” (3)

“Of course, Jesus did know what he was asking. He knew precisely what he was doing. By reaching out to this woman, this foreign woman of questionable morality, this outsider in her own world, Jesus extended the amazing grace of God to her, and through her witness, to those in her community. He was breaking down the barriers that serve to isolate and separate us from one another, as people whom God loves.” (3)

“In fact, Jesus did this often in his ministry. By eating and drinking with outcasts, by forgiving sinners and calling all to repent and believe the Gospel, Jesus extended the kingdom of God beyond the boundaries that we human beings often create to separate us from one another. By breaking down the barriers of hatred and prejudice, Jesus shows us just how broad and deep and profound the grace of God truly is.” (3)

“While Jesus shatters the boundaries of prejudice and comes to all sinners alike. Notice what the poor Samaritan woman did. She became the first evangelist in the gospel of John. Get that folks! Tell me the Bible isn’t full of unexpected twists and turns—like life. Your very first non-Jew disciple/pastor was a shady, sinful woman despised by the religious leaders of the day. Sort of ridiculous huh?” (4) Now, I want to remind you that all of a sudden, “She wasn’t now perfect, her past still lingered in her memories, but for the first time this woman was accepted for who she was.” (4) “Jesus saw the worth of that lady at the well when everyone else did not. He sees our worth and reaches out to redeem us through his body and blood.” (5)

“Jesus is reaching out to us with His living water to redeem our lives, to ease the burdens we carry, to heal the hurts, to mend the bruises, to bring a measure of His grace into our lives. He comes to those who mourn and gives them comfort. He comes with the living water to those who are ill and gives them a measure of his peace and courage.” (5)

“Desperation for water can be a distant concept.” (2) in our daily lives. As we realize that “Many of us have lived lives of extravagant privilege, where every tap produces something safe to drink.” (2) We are forever reminded that “The living water is flowing through the faucets of the Word and Sacraments into our lives from the reservoir of Christ.” (5) So, it is our duty and our call to go out and share it!

Amen!

**References**

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 History Needs Some Changing

 Contributed by David Trexler on Apr 10, 2011

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 An Encounter With The Messiah

 Contributed by Tim Zingale on Feb 21, 2005

 Scripture: John 4:5-42

 Denomination: Lutheran

**John 4:5-42**

Jesus defies convention to engage a Samaritan woman in conversation. Her testimony, in turn, leads many others to faith.

5[Jesus] 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.”