

“Water Is the Means for True Worship” (Text: John 4:5-26)
March 12, 2023 – 3rd Sunday in Lent

I remember when I was little, I would watch a commercial where athletes drank this green glowing drink. Can you guess the drink? The answer is Gatorade. I remember Gatorade’s slogan at one point in time. It went something like this, “Gatorade is thirst aide. For that deep down body thirst.” I can still hear that jingle in my head after all these years. Gatorade apparently quenched the body down deep and all you had to do was drink some of this stuff and your thirst that’s so strong will be quenched. But even Gatorade can’t quench that deep down thirst by drinking it once. You must drink it over and over again. As popular as Gatorade was and still is, it can only temporarily quench your thirsty body.

Jesus has a conversation with an unlikely person at a water well. He asks for a drink of water and that question led into a conversation about a type of water that will quench your thirst once and for all. After the woman at the well asks for this water, Jesus reveals to her that he is a prophet who draws everyone to the one and only God who will give water that is the means for true worship.

Near the beginning of our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus asked this woman for a drink. They were at the community well that has been there for a long time. Beginning with Jacob, the well was relied upon for water. Each day the community would have to come to the well. But why did they have to come each day? Well, because water can only quench your thirst temporarily. You have to drink it over and over.

But Jesus, because he emptied himself of his divinity, came to a well, wearied from his journeying, and asks her for a drink. He asks the most unlikely character to draw some water for him. Jesus shows his divinity in this interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well. God, as Peter says in the book of Acts, shows no partiality. So, by showing no partiality to this Samaritan woman who he shouldn’t be talking to, he shows that he is God in the flesh who draws all people to himself.

Are you thirsty? Have you drunk some kind of liquid today? I’m sure you have. We all must drink. We can’t go too long without feeling thirsty. It’s inevitable. Where do you get

your drink? Starbucks? The faucet? Coffee pot? Dunkin Donuts? The refrigerator? Another question. Can God, in these places, draw you to himself? Can God, by simply saying a few words, interrupt your routine? Can we say that it's quite possible that Jesus is interrupting your routine – a routine that you do without thinking – by asking you for a drink?

And is it quite possible that we would react like the Samaritan woman? The Samaritan woman is taken aback and asks Jesus why he, a Jew, would be talking to her. But Jesus ignores the question and talks about more important things. He lets the woman know that if she knew that God is right in front of her, she would be asking him for a drink instead.

Still not understanding, the woman thinks that this “sir” can't possibly give her water because the water is so far down in the ground, and he doesn't have anything to fetch for it. She continues in her unbelief by saying that he's not even better than the one who provided this well for them.

But Jesus doesn't get bent out of shape in the least. He tells her that this water that “Jacob” provides isn't enough to quench her thirst once and for all. Only the water that he, Jesus, gives, will quench her thirst. Jesus says that the water he gives will sustain and spring forth eternal life out of the one who drinks.

Still calling Jesus, sir, she asks for this water. She still doesn't get it. And who can blame her. Who can blame us? We, who in our own thinking, can't see and understand how God provides for us. We're so wrapped up in taking care of our physical, temporary needs, that we forget that our Father wants to be the provider. He wants us to rely upon him for all things in this life, including spiritual life. Our Father loves us so much that he makes it clear on where to go in order to receive his living water that will quench our thirst once and for all. But, in our natural thinking we can't understand. We still focus on temporary satisfaction and ignore true life that comes from our heavenly Father.

But our heavenly Father is patient. His Son is loving and kind. He calls us to repentance and faith in the one true Father who provides true life which is found in his Son. By Jesus asking the woman to call her husband so that they both can receive this living water, she realizes that he is more than just a “sir.” She adds the title prophet. But she doesn't put herself under Jesus' prophetic authority just yet. Jesus has exposed her sin, but she's

unwilling at this point, to receive by faith the forgiveness of her sins from God's called prophet. She says that her fathers call her to go to the mountain she's standing on for forgiveness and provision from God, and not in Jerusalem.

But Jesus proclaims to her that true worshipers, true children of the Father, will worship in spirit and truth. He explains to her that the Father is spirit and his children will be of the spirit as well. There's no other way to worship the Father unless one is of the Spirit. Jesus says that those who are spirit are the only ones who worship the truth. The truth is revealed to the Father's children. The truth that there is one Father who provides as a husband for his wife. The wife, unlike the Samaritan woman, has one provider. Her provider is the one True Groom.

The Samaritan woman responds to all that Jesus says by confessing that she believes in the Messiah – the provider and author of the truth about who God is and where he provides his gifts. But since Jesus wants her to put her trust and faith in the one true God, he proclaims to her that he is the Messiah who has come and who has just told her all things.

And since Jesus wants you to put your trust and faith in the one true God, he proclaims to you that he is the Messiah who comes to you now to tell you all things. Jesus wants you to turn your heart back to the Father, the one who loves you. He calls you back to worship him in Spirit and Truth. He calls you back to your baptism where water and the Spirit begets new life. This is the means by which you worship in Spirit and Truth. The Holy Spirit is given through the water and you now worship in spirit because the Spirit is in you. You worship one Father and in the Truth, who is Jesus Christ; for he is the way, the Truth, and the life.

He calls you back to the place where he will provide for you. By worship I mean a focus on the Truth, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God's Son, who was sent by the Father and has been revealed to you by the Spirit. Don't go to a well to quench your thirst. Come to the place where the gift of God, the living water, is freely given. Come to the place where Jesus gives you the life giving Word. For out of his Word comes life giving water that will quench your thirst for righteousness. Out of his Word comes life giving water that washes away all your sins and iniquities.

And not only does the gift of God, the living water, come from the Word, it also comes from the author of Life, Jesus Christ himself. Later in John's gospel, he bears witness to the Truth. He tells us, on the Cross, water poured out of Jesus' side. This water that poured out of Jesus side is the life giving Spirit; for in the Creed we confess that the Holy Spirit, proceeds from not only the Father, but from the Son as well. This is the place where you come and drink from the One gives the eternal living water.

And not only did water pour out of Christ's side, but also his blood. Come to the place where you can drink freely, the gift of forgiveness, life and eternal salvation. Don't go to Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, the faucet, and drink – partake of his life-giving blood under the wine. For unlike Gatorade, only the righteous blood of Christ can quench your thirst for righteousness. And don't forget that in the Lord's Supper, his true body under the bread is freely given. It's the free gift that also gives you eternal life; for his body is now risen and lives eternally, just like yours will on the last day.

Water is the means for true worship. In baptism, the water and Spirit beget children who call upon their heavenly Father and his Son. They worship the Father and his Son who has been revealed by the Spirit of Truth. This gift of life that's given by the Father, through the Son, is the life of the Spirit. It's a life-giving water of the Spirit that wells up to eternal life.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pastor Jon Carpenter