

## **“We All Need Water”**

March 19, 2017

### **Exodus 17:1-7**

17:1 From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 17:2 The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 17:3 But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" 17:4 So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 17:5 The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 17:6 I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 17:7 He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

### **Romans 5:1-11**

5:1 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 5:2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 5:3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 5:4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5:5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. 5:6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 5:7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 5:8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 5:9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. 5:10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 5:11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

## **John 4:5-30, 40-42**

4:5 So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 4:6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. 4:7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 4:8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 4:9 The 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.) 4:10 Jesus 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." 4:11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 4:12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" 4:13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 4:14 but 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." 4:15 The 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." 4:16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." 4:17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 4:18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" 4:19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 4:20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." 4:21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 4:22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 4:23 But 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. 4:24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 4:25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." 4:26 Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you." 4:27 Just 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?" 4:28 Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 4:29 "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" 4:30 They left the city and were on their way to him.

4:40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 4:41 And many more believed because of his word. 4:42 They 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."

You know when you have a low grade fever and you feel kind of rotten they tell you to drink lots of water. That feverish state is, strangely enough, fairly conducive to pondering over a story that takes place near a deep water well. Some of the medicine you take in these situation cries out for water. Lots of water. Water for the times you are tired and thirsty, like Jesus was tired and thirsty when he said, "Give me a drink." Taking a long drink of water I thought about a little video we have from Haiti and the absolute delight that a simple pump providing clear water brings. Then I was watching basketball and thought how thirsty those guys must get as the kids we used to call water boys make sure they are hydrated in order to keep playing and a commercial comes on and it's a rather somber faced matt damon along with beer Stella Artois glasses filled with water. He's introducing a program called 'buy a lady a drink – of water' which is underway to help solve the global water crisis. And as I took another drink of water I went back to the woman at the well and what part of her story needed to be shared here today.

Now the question could be asked, 'what was Jesus doing here anyway?' Maybe he always wanted to see his ancestor Jacob's well. But you see, Jews did not normally associate with Samaritans. They considered them, and all people outside of the faith to be -- unclean. When Jews were traveling from Jerusalem in Judea to Galilee, they would cross the Jordan River, travel north until they reached Galilee, and then cross back over the Jordan in order to

avoid passing through Samaria, which was a much more direct route. It's sort of like crossing the street to avoid someone you don't want to talk to. Only they crossed the river twice to avoid contact with Samaritans. But you know Jesus, this isn't the kind of thing that would deter him.

Then we need to know about the status of women in the first century of the Common Era. In those days women had little if any status. If a woman didn't have a man -- be it husband, father, brother, uncle, or some guy -- to take care of her, she was most likely destitute.

And yet here's Jesus, having the longest recorded conversation in the gospel with a woman of Samaria who by the way we discover had been married five times and was currently living with a man out of wedlock. No wonder she's alone at the well in the heat of the day -- no one wants anything to do with her.

But we know that this is precisely the kind of person Jesus chooses to talk to-- the outcast, the down-trodden, the lowest of the low. And as he quenches his thirst he tells this nameless woman about this new kind of water, water which quenches thirst permanently. Water that is not from the well, but from the heart. He then tells this stranger in a country looked down upon by his own people, that he is the Messiah, the Christ. The first time in John's gospel that's revealed to anyone!

Need is what this is all about and Jesus sees her need and in this moment that need is not a couple of full water jars. Jesus, because he knows her as he knows us, confronts her with who she is – a sinner. A sinner in need of wholeness and forgiveness and permission to go to the well. And this day, at this moment Jesus uses water, living water, to help her understand that she is not lost, she need not die in the wasteland of thirst, but she can have....freely have...what he offers using water as his example...water... renewal, life, salvation.

Isn't that exactly what people have always wanted? Isn't it what those wandering, squabbling, complaining children of Israel wanted there in the wilderness. Isn't water, that which would save them, what they wanted? But far more than that, weren't they clamoring for God's attention? Weren't they trying to establish God's care for them?

God does care for us. It's why in Lent we follow the one who promises living water. It's why we look to the one who can offer us some relief? Some assurance that God does indeed care? Just a sip....just a taste to wash down the disappointment ....just a sip to soothe the dryness of our sin....just a swallow of living water to assure us that God comes to us in our wilderness, that Jesus, who is the Messiah, the Christ, meets us in our moment of vulnerability next to the well where we are searching for a solution to our thirst....just a drink that promises us life...life forever...

But with Jesus, there is always more involved than simply what we gain, there is also what we are called, in his name, to give. In the story today, back at the beginning, before revealing who he was we have this exchange, Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Jesus 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."

We have experienced that living water. But let's ask this question this morning. Is Jesus standing here asking for a drink this morning? Is it Jesus face I saw in the unlikely visage of Matt Damon when curiosity or Holy Spirit invited a search for water.org to see how many people in the world still draw water from simple wells? Is it we, who are filled with living water in a place of water abundance, who are being asked to provide water for the women, like the samaritan woman, from places like Samaria of such little regard in the world that their needs are sublimated to the greater need of digging wells in places where oil, and not water, will be found.

Everyday women of the world spend collectively millions of hours of their lives collecting water for survival. That's a tough concept for us right now when we just turn on the tap or buy 40 bottles of water for a couple of bucks like we did for LOGOS this week. It's hard to think how disruptive to life as we know it this search for water is. Think about it. If in our culture, as in theirs, the

gathering of water is women's work and your country didn't have public education for girls and you had to leave home and walk for miles and miles to the nearest source of clean water in order to get enough water – for a day – and then had to do it again tomorrow? DO we see how the provision of wells for water makes water for living – living water? That providing water gives back life and all these hours can now be spent in the pursuit of a livelihood, of education, which is also a part of water.org and unicef's and World Vision and many other programs plan to not only supply water to survive – but living water to thrive. Providing access to clean water close to home can dramatically reduce a women's workload, and free up time for educating her children and increasing her economic opportunities. Rivers are polluted. Drought is a reality. A well, for so many would be a dream come true.

Maybe today Jesus is asking us to provide some water for the living of some village like a Samaritan village so that some women, who are there by no sin of their own except for the world's sin of so easily accepting abject poverty, might have a place to come and draw cool clean water. Water to help a mother save some of the 1,600 hundred children under 5 who die every day because of compromised water supplies. That's twice as many, every day, as are lost to Aids and Malaria combined. Water. Clean. Literally living water.

Jesus has called and created us to be his body in the world. We are called to be the church. We are called to be the face and person of Jesus to

people we meet along the way. People in need of the healing wholeness of living water who need to know that in Christ there is a source of love and grace and peace that flows with life changing vitality. And people who simply need a well to go to for water, real water, to simply live. But, friends, and here's the hard Lenten truth. We have to be like Jesus. We have to not see a foreigner, or an other gender person, or a person of low morality – or a refugee, or one of us – we have to see with Jesus eyes a person, a sinner, worthy of his love – his unconditional love and our unconditional love. Love that saves.

That's the hard part. Have a tall glass of ice cold living water and think about it.