

***Return to the Lord your God. For God is gracious and Merciful  
Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.***

It's noon, Jesus tired from his journey is resting at the well, and Jesus is thirsty. *At this point, the Samaritan woman* comes to get water. *Fetching water during the heat of the day* was not ideal; it's likely that *she has been ostracized* for her lifestyle, the facts of which we discover later. That Jesus asks this person, a Samaritan and a solitary woman, to draw him water makes his behavior highly unorthodox – a fact that is not lost on the woman. Jesus breaks through three levels of social convention to speak to this woman: *(1) Jew & Samaritan*, a barrier that has stood for 700 years – Samaritans and Jews shared nothing in common. *(2) male & female*, men did not speak to women outside their families alone, *(3) rabbi & social outcast* – for fear of becoming unclean.

When *the Samaritan woman questions His request* of her, being a Samaritan and a woman, *Jesus tells her that He has living water; water that He can give to her.* Clearly, Jesus speaks of a *superior water*, welling up to eternal life. When she says she desires this water Jesus makes it clear that *He knows all about her scandalous life*, her *shame*, and *why she is drawing water at noon* rather than when most women draw, morning and evening. She is an outcast. Her five marriages and her present circumstance of living with a man outside of marriage have made her a person to be avoided. *Still, Jesus doesn't avoid her.*

*He addresses her directly and matter-of-factly with the sin that defines her sad life* on the edge of society. He's *not afraid* of her shame, *nor does*

*He judge* it; He knows it already. Yet, still He offers her the living water.

*Jesus knows that the water of her life is dead, lifeless.*

*She leaves her water jar behind*, and tells everyone that she has found messiah, that he has *told her everything she ever did*. Clearly, that is not the case, but *Jesus has named that which defines her existence. The sin of her life has become everything she ever did that causes her life to be lifeless.*

*Jesus minces no words. He simply uncovers the shame of her life.*

*Jesus opens to the light of day the things that make her life empty, solitary, and lifeless. Jesus offers her something new and alive.*

Although He certainly understands her life, and can condemn her sinfulness, *Jesus does not do so. Instead, He offers another life, a new life.*

*Jesus speaks to us also this morning, plumbing the depths of our existence. How's the water in your life? Dead or living? Stagnant or flowing?*

*In Lent God calls us away from the sinful, inferior water of our lives to His majestic and glorious desire for us all – that we should have living water. Jesus knows the sources of our shame and isolation just as well as hers, and offers us living water instead.*

*But to drink the living water we must empty the water from our jars – the stagnant, brackish, deadly water of our own lives. Confession and repentance open us to drink from God's deep well. A contrite heart that acknowledges the deadness of the water of our lives opens our hands to receive the water of life. Like the Samaritan woman, we must look in need to Jesus Christ to fill us, and leave our water jars – our agendas – behind.*

Ironically, when Jesus tells the woman “*all that she has ever done*”, He frees her from its power over her, and *her life no longer revolves around avoiding others*. Instead, set free to live the new life God offers, *she seeks out others to tell, not about her shame, but about Jesus who has come to set her free*.

*We can only believe in Jesus when we stop believing in ourselves:*

Either, believing that we’re *good enough, wealthy enough*, powerful enough, *in control enough* to manage life – ours and the world’s **OR** alternatively, believing that we’re *so bad* or worthless or *stupid* or dirty or *broken* or too far gone – that we are *beyond even God’s ability to redeem*.

*Once we recognize that we are not capable of making living water – or even storing it, but that we pollute it instead, we are freed to abandon our own efforts and seek the one who gives living water. Living water is that which flows not only into us, but through us as well.* We can share it because we need only look back to the source to know the living water will always flow for us. We may seek to accumulate Christ’s living water for ourselves, but left to stagnate that living water becomes dead and brackish. *Like Lake Chelan which looks beautiful with its blue green color on the surface, but the very things that produced its distinct color – the copper, lead, zinc and cyanide from mine tailing run off – poison the water, slowly destroying its ability to sustain life.* Just so, our lives may look scenic and vital on the surface, but *beneath the surface the refuse of our selfishness accumulates, poisoning the very life we live.*

Providing a source of fresh, living water to carry away the toxins is the only solution that will restore life. *In Holy Baptism God opens for us a*

*well of living water that flows to eternal life.* God gives us *the Word, the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, prayer, and His promise to be with us when we serve those in need – all so that living water of eternal life will fill us and flow through us to the world.* God invites each and every one of us to come to God's well of living water, but *do we?* Do we visit it often, or at all to draw the living water from it? Or are we *too busy* or *proud* or *ashamed* in the stagnant water of our lives to stop and ask and draw deeply? *Do we respond to the One who offers us living water?* God's well of living water **IS** where it is; it will not come to us. **We must go to it to draw that living water.**

*For the coming weeks our lives will take on a different rhythm,* certainly not one we would have chosen for ourselves. **We will find ourselves isolated intentionally.** We will have more time, more solitude, more silence than we are accustomed to. We can resent this time, be frustrated by this time, fret about all that we are not able to do during this time. But that does not need to be the case.

Instead, *we can take this extra time, precious solitude, holy silence to go to the well that springs up to eternal life.* We can take this opportunity to read God's Word, to pray, to sit in the silence with God pondering the questions of our lives. We can *rest, be restored, and regain our balance.* **We can set a new rhythm for our lives, which habitually goes to that well and draws life giving water.**

I was talking to my barber yesterday, a very devout Korean Presbyterian, I commended her saying that pastors can always use more people like her – people whose lives are steeped in prayer, excited about

the gospel and willing to serve, living lives of trust – and she said, “*It’s hard to find in America.*”

“*Why?*” I asked.

She responded, “*Americans are too independent. They trust themselves. You can’t trust God if you trust yourself.*”

**What a profoundly opportune time to learn to trust something, Someone else.**

*In 25 days our own desire to trust only ourselves – to be our own masters, to decide everything for ourselves, to draw water as we see fit and pollute the water of our lives and other as we see fit – our desire to trust ourselves will be the cause that bring this one who offers living water to be arrested, tried, beaten, crucified and murdered – simply for telling us that God has something better in mind for us? Who is He to tell us that He knows better how our lives should be lived? Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*

*He will thirst on that day, but no one will draw water for Him. He will die without a friend. When He is dead they will pierce His side with a spear, just to make sure we’ve killed Him..... and out of His side will flow blood ..... and water.*

His water flows for us still.... Living and pure, flowing to eternal life. That is a certainty.

***Will we drink Living water? That is all that remains to be seen.***

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***Amen !!!***