

“Drink This Living Water”

Sermon by Lisa Crismore

July 18, 2020 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

John 4:5-30; 40-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob'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.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 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.) 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.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 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.” 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.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 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. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 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.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

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?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. 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.”

In 1982, I was spending my junior year in England at Harlaxton Manor, which was a part of Evansville University. I had wanted to study abroad for an entire year but Hanover didn't offer it so they let me transfer for one year.

It was second semester and we had spring break. A friend of mine and myself decided to get a eur-rail pass and go exploring. This adventure took us to Yugoslavia (which is now divided into Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia), Italy, Greece, Hungary, Austria and Germany. It was quite the trip!

I will never forget my first night in Hungary. It was a communist country at the time and we had the needed special visa to get into the country. My friend and I being young, dumb and naïve though arrived in Budapest by train at 10pm at night. We didn't speak their language. We didn't have any Hungarian money because we could only get it once we entered the country. We didn't have American money only British pounds! We didn't have hotel reservations. It was clear that we

were the Americans without dollar bills! We looked pretty-bad after traveling on trains and backpacking for a week and a half. After the fourth hotel turned us down, we decided that one of us would stay outside with our backpacks and the other would go in. That was the trick! We promised them that we would get Hungarian forints the next day at the bank and we got a room.

It was clear that we had crossed cultural boundaries. We were different and we were the outsiders. Because of this, we were not always welcome. We never felt in danger and it was a fascinating city with beautiful architecture.

In the Gospel of John today, we find Jesus traveling on his way to Galilee. He takes a bit of a detour to go through Samaria. Now, this was quite unusual because it was well known that Jews and Samaritans did not get along. They despised each other. Jesus would be the outsider. He would not be welcomed in this town! But, Jesus chooses to decide to cross cultural lines and begins to talk to a Samaritan woman. He simply asks her for a drink of water from the well.

Now, it is not only surprising that Jesus, a Jew, is talking to a Samaritan but that he is a Jewish man talking to a woman. It is even more shocking that she responds. It is in this vulnerable moment when all boundaries are erased. It is in that vulnerable moment that this rich conversation begins.

When Jesus asks about her husband, the woman freely and honestly tells Jesus that she has no husband. He confirms that she has told the truth and that she has had five husbands and the man she is now living with is not her husband. She is surprised that he knows so much about her. What does Jesus think about her past and present life style?

One commentator gives some interesting insight to this question. She says, *"For many years, mostly beginning with the Puritans, this has been understood to mean that she has a scandalous past - and maybe she does. But this five-husbands business is likely not pointing to a sexually provocative past. What is more socially probable is that she was barren. Women who didn't bear children were divorced, cast aside, abandoned. Maybe she is a widow as well. We don't know exactly, but what we do know, is that never in this story does Jesus give her a lesson in morality or even offer her his forgiveness for her past - she does not need it. He does see her need, and that need is belonging."* (Sermon by Rev. Ingrid Brown; July 24, 2019; St. George's United Church; <http://www.stgeorgesunited.com/blog/2019/7/14/-red-a-crayons-story->)

Jesus moves from the basic need of water to the life giving water that he can give her. This amazing water will quench her thirst forever! The woman's interest is peaked and Jesus has her full attention. She begins to ask about where she can get this "Living Water". How can she receive it? Who is this man who knows so much about me? Could this be the Messiah? The one who will save us?

As Jesus welcomes her questions and he answers them, there is this moment where Jesus tells her who he is. Are you the Messiah? He says, "I am he." This is the first time in the Gospel of John that Jesus tells anyone who he is. Not his disciples or the religious leaders in the synagogue, he tells a woman, who is from a different culture and race than he is.

He makes it clear that soon the people who will worship God will not only be the Jewish people. Those who will worship God the Father will be open to all people as long as they worship the Father in spirit and truth.

It is no wonder that the woman is so excited about her conversation with Jesus that she wants to run back to town and tell everyone about him. As she goes to return to town, she leaves her water

jar behind. It is though she is leaving her old self behind. This conversation has changed her life forever and she has a new identity.

She urges the town people to come and see Jesus. As the people arrive to hear him, he decides to stay for 2 days. Have you ever visited a place and you fell in love with it so much so that you extend your trip? Jesus is not eager to leave this place that was so different than him. During this time with the people of Samaria, Jesus' love for them is revealed and they can see that he is the Savior of the world.

How does our conversations with Jesus go? Do we ask difficult questions of God? Are we vulnerable to show our true self? Are we prepared to lay our water jars down and be transformed? Are we boldly willing to cross those boundaries and drink the living water of Christ? Are we willing to share Christ's living water with others?

Yesterday, we had twenty John Knox members welcoming our neighbors in to try a different kind of VBS. We had fourteen children, youth and adults come to participate. I realize that our numbers were small because of Covid-19 and the risks involved. Yes, I would have loved to have seen more people. Yes, it was simple. But, I thoroughly enjoyed watching people visit and have fellowship with each other. It had been months since I had seen some of our members and over a year since we had seen some of our neighbors. The children had grown and it was great to get caught up with each other.

This year since we are doing something different and we are having it in hot, steamy, mid-July, the Education Team decided that our "Living Water" old VBS curriculum could be resurrected. All the stories tell us how God teaches us with water. I remember when we used this curriculum back in 2007. Felipe Martinez boys, Montez and Michael, would ask if they were going to visit the "Aqua Viva" church or "Living Water" church when he told them they were going to visit a church in our Presbytery. That was John Knox!

Thirteen years later, I believe we are still sharing the "Living Water" of Christ with our each other and our neighbors. May we never stop striving to cross those boundaries! May we never stop being transformed! Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ who truly knows us and truly loves us. Amen.