



SHOW US LIVING WATER

John 4: 1-15

One day several years ago a young, undocumented immigrant couple with their 4 young children showed up on the doorstep of a church where Bob and I were pastors.

And to our surprise they announced that they were here to plant a church. They had connected with Mennonites elsewhere and now they wanted to meet in our building, and they wanted our conference to give them a salary.

All of this might have been really good, but this couple had no formal education, not even high school diplomas. How could they plant a church? How could they conceive of doing this without training for such a large undertaking?

I was full of questions, saw red flags and was not ready to quickly bless this undertaking, but others threw open their arms and the church plant got underway in our building with our conference supplying their salary.

I liked these people, but they lacked education. And their theology and worldview was not one I completely shared.

So I am confessing to you that there was a wall in my heart when it came to fully supporting this new church plant, and a deep concern about the LACK of training for the pastoral tasks.



But in relating to this couple, I was less than honest, *stewing inside while smiling friendliness*, unable to understand our conference in their quick embrace of this project.

And then months later, we invited this couple and their children over for dinner. They brought their homemade tamales and at the table Diego shared about the treacherous journey he had undertaken as a young teen to escape the poverty and violence in his homeland.

He talked about his teenage rebellion and a lifestyle that was less than healthy, and then about a young adult encounter with Jesus that completely turned his life around. His *sincerity, warmth and honest vulnerability* was like meeting Jesus right there at the dinner table.

And his wife Marta was *equally alive with a loving spirit* that was speaking to my prejudice, to the high regard for education and to how I held my perceptions over others like a measuring stick of their worthiness.

That dinner around the table was a NEW BEGINNING for our relationship with Diego and Marta who had so very much to teach us.

That night we became family, sisters and brothers walking on an equal plain offering respect and dignity



to one another. GOD's love in them was palpable and it overflowed to us, melting my heart of stone.

How humbling and how beautiful the transformation~ when our prejudice is owned and JESUS takes us to a new place of COMMON GROUND.

OUR story today in John's Gospel, chapter 4 begins with Jesus' popularity and notoriety spreading throughout Judea, and his realization that it is CRUCIAL for his spiritual journey to move away from the crowds...to go back to Galilee... and to go there via Samaria!

Going through Samaria was not the only way to get to Galilee. Most Jews would not have considered taking that route. But Jesus "HAD" to go this way...(the verb used here implies urgency).

THE enmity between Jews and Samaritans we know was long held. Let's just suffice it to say that for Samaritans:

*Jews were considered *misguided elitists, the politically correct intellectuals out of touch with the little people.**

And for Jews:

*Samaritans were the *half-breed untouchables*... uninformed people who worshiped differently and had a history of past violence that had built a thick wall of hostility and mistrust.*



HERE we have a great polarization ...a wide gap of pointed fingers at the "OTHER." (*SOUND FAMILIAR?*) Jesus "HAD" to go through Samaria where he could experience a transformative, HUMAN CONNECTION with the enemy.

And where he, the GREAT TEACHER would be the *Foreigner*, the *Stranger*, and the *Needy One*...

Jesus HAD to go through Samaria to learn what I learned at the table with Marta and Diego.

In our story JESUS comes to the edge of the town of Sychar, and sits down at Jacob's well.

(The disciples have gone into town for supplies, and they are hanging together in this enemy territory).

So JESUS is here ALONE at the well, where Samaritans and Jews share a common heritage, where both can celebrate the faithful walk of their COMMON ancestor.

JEUS is here SEEKING some COMMON GROUND, some common good .

Maybe that's descriptive of what WE are doing today as we refrain from gathering together with the people we love.

IT is LENT and none of us anticipated that we would be called to give up meeting together this season.



Here we are unable to join our voices in a common song and hear the harmony,
unable to share over coffee
and support our youth at lunch.

We feel the disconnect today, and
we realize how much we value the familiar routine that
we have taken for granted,

Many of us have experienced huge disappointments in
cancellations that have occurred just this week.

Everyone is making unanticipated decisions and
learning new practices related to understanding a
pandemic. And we are reminded that no matter how
much we like to be in control, none of us are in control.

BUT here we are trying to do our small part in halting the
spread of dread, having to go through FOREIGN
territory today.

Jesus is in STRANGE TERRITORY, too...
on enemy turf realizing afresh his deep
longing and THIRST, when *SHE* appears...this woman,
who is an outsider even in her own community.

She arrives at the well at the noon hour,
when she knows no one else will be there.
(All those prickly gossips come early in the day).

This woman of questionable character
both carries the vessel and becomes the vessel
that can meet the need of Jesus.



Here Jesus, the needy beggar, approaches the woman, asking for a drink to quench his THIRST, asking for HER to HOST him, even though his preconceptions would tell him that drinking from HER vessel will CONTAMINATE HIS BODY and talking with her will Sully his SOUL.

Still, Jesus reaches out his beggar's hand, across the great divide, valuing what SHE may have to offer HIM!

He does not approach this obviously broken woman, (the enemy of his people) from a position of privilege or superiority, but from a position of LACK and NEED.

Here is Jesus, *the THIRSTY ONE* ...
Who HAD to go through Samaria...
not just as giver, but also as GUEST!

Henri Nouwen writes about his move from being a teacher at Harvard to living with the poor in spirit at L'Arche community.

He says:

"I am no longer able to do or prove or build anything from my suitcase of skills from academia.

It is here, stripped of all that I once leaned on for my validation,

here in this nakedness before GOD,

that I have truly learned that I am NOT embraced



for what I do, but simply because God has chosen to love me. And the people I live with care only about how I am passing on that love.

It is here that I have tasted Living Water."

The story today begins with Jesus as the GUEST...
the popular teacher who has journeyed away from all that he has *been leaning on for his validation*,
except that God has chosen to love him...
and the person before him is as *worthy of love as he*.

So Jesus does not HESITATE in asking
this SAMARITAN WOMAN for a drink of water.

Jesus is THIRSTY
and during his execution on the cross, we will again
hear his heart cry: "*I THIRST!*"
JESUS IS still THIRSTY.
And so are we.

WHAT ARE YOU THIRSTING FOR TODAY...

What is YOUR THIRST? ~ YOUR deepest longing...
How would you describe your heart's craving?

Today I have asked 4 people in our congregation from
4 different generations and different life situations to
share with us about a current THIRST.

Dave Weinschrott
Anita Das



Alisha Amazon
Georgia Lichti

1st from DAVE, a senior among us~

"My thirst derives from my long career in policy analysis. It pains me, causes a dry, aching thirst, when I read or hear policy arguments that are outside of the bounds of normal professional discussion - when they are laced with conspiracy elements or framed in terms of blaming or excluding some groups of persons when there is no warrant.

Its hard enough to sort out good evidence from bad or good logic from faulty - but to deal with outright misinformation or "zombie" arguments~

THAT dries up one's spirit.

("Zombie" arguments are those which have been debunked years ago but still shamble into current discussions)"

DAVE IS THIRSTY FOR TRUTH AND RESPECT in policy making

From Anita Das- our beloved sister who is currently undergoing chemotherapy treatments:

Anita says:

"I thirst and long for PEACE...

Peace amidst chaos and catastrophe,

Peace from anxieties, conflicts, & coronavirus



Peace that transcends my fear of the unknown and finds me in a space of silence and stillness, having surrendered the notion of being in CONTROL and allowing God's presence to fill me."

Anita thirsts for PEACE within and Peace out there.

From Alicia Amazon- a young mother

"In this stage of parenting a young child, I am thirsty for PEACE, TRUTH, INSIGHT, ENVIRONMENTS, and CONNECTIONS.

I hope for PEACE within ourselves, with each other, and around us... Peace that Olivia will know that she is God's beloved child. Peace during tantrums and power struggles...Peace and reconciliation that will overcome differences-- with ourselves, with each other, at FMC and around the world... internal peace and calmness despite uncertain times within our society and our world.

I seek TRUTH, because the world around us is full of so many sources of information. Sometimes we don't know what to believe or who to listen to. I thirst for knowing God's TRUTH and knowing how to evaluate different sources of information and then how to use it for God's glory & to better understand the world around us.



I thirst for WISDOM & INSIGHT to nurture Olivia in a way that exemplifies WHO God has created her to be, rather than who we (as her parents) want her to be. I thirst for Wisdom & Guidance in raising Olivia and loving her as God loves us, knowing that we are broken human parents.

I thirst for Insight to know how to be present & work in healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic with the fear that many are experiencing.

I hope for ENVIRONMENTS and situations in which I can share my passions for maternal and infant health, and let mothers know that they are not alone on this parenting journey, which looks different to each of us. I thirst for Environments that are full of energy and hope for a better future, environments that are creating change, rather than being drained and led by fear.

AND I thirst for CONNECTION with others who can share their wisdom and life experiences, while also connecting with people in a similar life stage... Connections that build our family up and help us to see who GOD has created us to be...Connections that show me God is here among us, working through each of God's children."

ALICIA is thirsting for RELATIONSHIPS of wisdom & support, searching for how to uncover GOD'S TRUTH, for Guidance from God's Spirit in parenting, and for wisdom in her work with new mothers.



From Georgia Lichti-

"As a junior high student I thirst for many things, such as passing, keeping my friends close, and my enemies farther than the sun. As a person I dream for peace. I mean I also wish and thirst for a well-paying job and other fantasies like finding a 100 dollars on the ground."

Well said, Georgia! We thirst for many things and we all want to pass!

Jesus is thirsty here in the land of enemies and strangers, thirsty for DIVIDING WALLS TO COME DOWN, for people to *LET The love of GOD rule in their hearts* and learn to *love one's neighbor as oneself*.

Last Sunday when we were asked to not shake hands and spread germs through touch,
Some of us bowed and some said "NAMASTE"
which means,
"May the God in me greet the God in you."

This is what JESUS learns when he takes a drink from this woman's jug- that all people, even our enemies, have been created in the image of GOD, and that we are called to wish each other WELL.

Here at the WELL, Jesus' small request of a drink of water is a *jarring bolt of lightning -utterly shocking* for this woman who immediately questions him:

Do you know what you are asking?
Are you forgetting WHO we are?



*“You...an obviously Jewish MAN... asking ME...
a Samaritan WOMAN...for a drink?”*
How many lines are being ignored?
How many boxes are being ripped open here?

This request for water is the beginning of transformation for the woman (as well as for JESUS).

Her world view is jolted.
Her self-concept is reshaped.
Her soul feels its worth!

She comes to the WELL
with past experiences of rejection & SHAME,
and she finds in this exchange with Jesus
a new dignity and respect without conditions,
a respect that is so foreign in her world (and ours).
And Jesus discovers that ministry is not only about what
he has to GIVE, but even more about what he has to
receive!

Here, JESUS is the student,
and he learns from one he might otherwise have
dismissed.

Here, Jesus tastes what living water is and offers that
water of respect and dignity to a woman who has
never known it.

LIVING WATER...CAN WE TASTE IT?

It is the larger love...



Larger than all our fears...

Larger than our prejudice...

Larger than all the props we have leaned on for our validation.

IT is the flood of TRUTH and GRACE that breaks down dividing walls that we build between each other.

AND it is a PEACE that is larger than a pandemic!

And now pray with me a prayer that was written by William Miller...A PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC:

May we who are merely inconvenienced

Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors

Remember the most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home

Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close

Remember those who have no options.

May we who cancel our trips

Remember those who have no safe place to go.



**May we who are losing our margin money in the
tumult of the economic market.
Remember those who have no margin at all.**

**May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.**

**As fear grips our country,
let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically
wrap our arms around each other,
Let us find ways to BE the loving embrace to our
neighbors.**

Amen!