

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church
Imperfect Examples – The woman at the well

7/22/18

John 4:7-15, 25-26 (NIV)

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.^[a])

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

²⁵ The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

“I know that Messiah is coming.” “I am he.” What a revelation! This is the first person that Jesus reveals himself to. In other gospel accounts, when he has done miraculous healings, he tells the person not to tell what has happened. But here, he

is very open. What makes this so surprising is the person to whom he shares this news.

Today's imperfect example: a Samaritan woman.

Time for a short history lesson. (Map) Our Scripture today takes place in Samaria at a well near the town of Sychar. This is Jacob's well. Jacob had many sons, the most famous being Joseph. His name was later changed to Israel when he began a trusting relationship with God. It is from his descendants that we get the 12 tribes of Israel. So Jesus is in the heart of Samaria. The Jews and the Samaritans were considered enemies. Many of us are familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan because it was the Samaritan, the enemy of the Jews, who helped the robbed and beaten Jewish man on the side of the road. But what is the rift between them? There was a time when Assyria invaded Samaria and exiled the people. During the Assyrian occupation, they brought their own pagan gods and rituals. In time, the Assyrian King invited some Samaritans back into the land and they taught the people how to worship God. Eventually, Samaria worshipped only the one true God. They built a shrine on Mt. Gerizim to worship him. The scriptures for the Samaritans was the Pentateuch; the first 5 books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Jews considered the Samaritans "half-breeds" because of the influence of the worship of pagan gods and the Jews believed the only place to worship God was in the temple in

Jerusalem. This was the main conflict between them. This sounds like denominational and worship conflicts today. Over many years, the conflict grew and the Jews and Samaritans became enemies.

So from this history lesson, we understand why Samaritans and Jews did not interact with one another. This is the first boundary that Jesus crosses in engaging this Samaritan at the well.

The second boundary violation is that a Jewish man did not initiate a conversation with an unknown woman! In those days, women were not valued as equals. They were often considered property; sold as slaves. Women could not do anything without the permission of their fathers or husbands. And they were definitely not supposed to talk to strangers.

So this encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman violates the cultural rules; which Jesus was very good at doing. This woman was an imperfect example of who Jesus should be talking with and revealing himself as the Messiah!

In Chapter 3 of John, Jesus had the “perfect” person to reveal himself to in Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a righteous man. Jesus tells him *no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit*. (John 3:5). This is who God would use right? Well, by now through this series, you hopefully have seen that God doesn’t choose those who WE think he should.

Remember from David last week, people look on the outward appearance but God looks at the heart.

So let's get back to this exchange between Jesus and the woman at the well.

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Water is a powerful element. It is necessary for life. All living things need water to grow. Plants; animals; people. We all need water. We clean with warm water and relax in cool water. We find peace listening to the roar of the ocean or taking a stroll in the rain. Water refreshes us on a hot summer's day. Here is a picture of some folks during the recent heat wave trying to cool down. When we were on vacation, every stop our driver gave us a bottle of water. We were reminded constantly to drink, even when we weren't thirsty. In our tour book it said this:

"The best way to enjoy your vacation is to drink lots of water! At sea level, the human body loses about a quart of water a day through air expired from one's

lungs and through the skin. At flight levels and higher desert and mountain elevations, this loss can be up to 100% greater. This water has to be replaced. Therefore, to avoid dehydration and its symptoms, do as experienced flight crews and travelers do: drink lots of plain bottled water. Simple, and effective.” Caravan Tours Guidebook

Here are 5 benefits of drinking more water:

1. Increases energy and relieves fatigue – Our brain is mostly water so drinking helps you think, focus and concentrate better and be more alert. It also boosts our energy level.
2. Promotes weight loss – removes by products of fat, reduces hunger, raises our metabolism and has zero calories.
3. Balances bodily fluids and flushes out toxins
4. Improves Skin Complexion – moisturizes skin, gets rid of wrinkles; best anti-aging treatment around!
5. Prevents cramps and sprains – keeps muscles and joints lubricated

Benefits of “living water”

1. Quenches the thirst of our soul
 - a. Are you thirsty? Is there a longing in you that you just can't seem to meet? Do you hunger for something to fill some void, some emptiness you can't even explain? Look everywhere, try everything—you'll find nothing in this world that will satisfy. Only Jesus can provide the living water that will fill you to overflowing, that will satisfy your longing, that will soothe your thirst so completely you'll never be thirsty again. (Ann Spangler and Jean Syswerda)
2. Washes away our sin
3. Fills us with the Holy Spirit

- a. Today we celebrated a baptism. The water signifies the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing of our sins
- 4. Aids in our growth in Christ
- 5. Flows out of us

In John 7:38, we see this phrase “living water” again. Jesus is at the Feast of the Tabernacles. On the 7th day, the priests processed with water. As they did that, Jesus shouted to the crowd “³⁸ *Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.*”^[a] ³⁹ *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.*

Jesus’ conversation with the woman didn’t end with the water. After she asked for living water, Jesus told her to go get her husband. She shared that she didn’t have a husband. Jesus then proceeded to tell her that she is correct and told her the story of her life...that in fact she had 4 husbands and the man she now has is not her husband. This woman was broken inside. And when Jesus shared this with her, she was even more surprised that he would be talking to her! She was amazed and thought Jesus a prophet. Then she tried to get the focus off of her and focus on the religious differences. She spoke of how her people worship on Mt Gerizim and Jews worship in Jerusalem. Jesus tells her that a time is coming and is now here where it won’t matter where people will worship God. They will all worship God in spirit and in truth.

That's when she speaks of the Messiah. And Jesus reveals "I am he."

The woman leaves her jar at the well and goes back to her town. Remember that she is of lowly status in her community. She is a woman and by the fact that she comes to the well alone, she is an outcast by her own people. Yet she doesn't fear that. She goes back and tells anyone who will listen – come and see this man who knows everything about me. I think he might be the Messiah!" And people came!

Jesus filled her with the living water. It restored her and gave her confidence to go and share what she had heard and seen.

They too experience the "living water." They stay with Jesus for a couple of days; listening to him and learning from him. In the end the witness that leads to Jesus is replaced by their own experience of Jesus.

This story is so rich and filled with good messages. But I want to stay true to our series. This imperfect example – a Samaritan and a woman – is who Jesus chose to share who he was. He shared with her about this wonderful "living water" that is found in Jesus. What is the message for us here? I believe the message is that we must break through the boundaries that divide us. We are vessels of Christ's living water and we must allow Him to flow through us and out of us.

Take a look at this video. It shows the powerful flow of the “living water” flowing down from Jesus, into us. Refreshing us, sustaining us, nourishing us, healing us.

But it continues to flow out of us – through us – to others.

Come. Receive this living water. Let Jesus fill you to overflowing. And let His love, compassion, grace, and forgiveness flow through you to a thirsty world.