



Calvary Presbyterian Church
Sunday, October 15, 2023

"Christening Calvary: The Church's Mission"

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*"My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me,
and from finishing his work." (Jesus, John 4:34)*

INTRO TO SCRIPTURE

Joan Gray, In Chapter 5 of her book "Sailboat Church," emphasizes several areas of focus as part of the church's mission, one of those areas is simply to invite with a "come and see" kind of faith sharing...this is illustrated today by the woman at the well.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 4:1-41/New Living Translation

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

⁴Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ²(though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). ³So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.

⁴He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

⁶Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." ⁸He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

⁹The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

¹⁰Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

¹¹"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹²And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

¹³Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again.

¹⁴But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

¹⁵"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."

¹⁶"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.

¹⁷"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!"

¹⁹"Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. ²⁰So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?"

²¹Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem.

²²You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. ²³But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way.

²⁴For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

²⁵The woman said, "I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶Then Jesus told her, "I AM the Messiah!"

²⁷Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her?" ²⁸The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, ²⁹"Come and see a man who told

me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?" ³⁰So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

³¹Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, "Rabbi, eat something."

³²But Jesus replied, "I have a kind of food you know nothing about."

³³"Did someone bring him food while we were gone?" the disciples asked each other.

³⁴Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. ³⁵You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. ³⁶The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! ³⁷You know the saying, 'One plants and another harvests.' And it's true. ³⁸I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest."

Many Samaritans Believe

³⁹Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!" ⁴⁰When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, ⁴¹long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. ⁴²Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."

SERMON

INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF PERPETUAL SPRING with a story from the lake...when my kids were young, I took them to Devil's Lake on the Oregon Coast. We dug holes in the sand and created a small network of channels and pools for water to travel downhill. Many kids joined us in scooping up water from a pond-like water source to keep the water flowing. As I watched everyone run from the pond to the pools to keep them filled with water, it made me appreciate the perpetual spring that Jesus is for us.

In sermon writing 101, we learn to pay attention to the verbs...

EDEI (verse 4) in Greek means "has to"! The nuance is a holy necessity...

It is a geographic issue, and it is a theological issue for Jesus in the story.

There is a **Have-to-Ness** about God's heart and about his love and about his mission.

He had to go to Samaria.

He had to meet a woman.

And if we step back from that and understand that Jesus is love incarnate – then we can see this **Have-to-Ness** about God's love since creation!

Creation had to be birthed – it had to.

We wonder why we are all here...Because God had to create life, so he blew out his breath and you and I were born.

And then Christ had to become incarnate because our dark deeds had to be atoned for and redemption had to be claimed.

Christ had to come, as his Life had to be resurrected.

You and I have to be reborn.

We have to reach out...And we have to tell that resurrection story!

It is a **Have-to-Ness** love story!

There is a Have To Ness about God's mission, his heart, his love, his very person. He is constantly moving, dynamic, living, so his mission is compelling as it is perpetual.

There is a propensity to the Spirit, to Christ's love, to God's mission – an unstoppable perpetual spring, like living water that flows and flows and flows throughout time and in and through us.

It must keep moving.

His water is living.

Water streams downhill – like from these pools that I described – and so God's love also must stream out from his heart and out for you and me, and in today's story it flowed out to this woman, this outsider.

He had to meet her there.

She was a Samaritan, she was a woman, and he went looking for her.

He had to

AND today he is looking for you – to meet you here. Can't you see? He has to!

And so the church must reach out to outsiders.

And where do we find outsiders, but outside!

And then we have to ask ourselves outside what?

And we have to wrestle with the fact that it isn't just as simple as saying it is outside our church walls, but it is also outside of what you and I might understand in our own limitedness about spiritual things.

Is God calling us outside this morning? Outside what?

It might be outside our own cultural norms or outside our western thinking.

It might be outside ourselves.

That's where we find outsiders - it is outside all of these things.

So Jesus went to the well and he looked for this woman and I want to suggest to you as we come together in the sanctuary that this morning we also come to the well, the font. The fountain. And we come looking for Jesus - and we find, of course, that he is here - always - waiting for us, just as he was waiting for the woman.

And it is important for us to wrap our minds around that because I believe in many ways, the church is the woman at the well! Imagine Calvary coming to the well this morning, looking for guidance, looking for meaning, looking for answers...AND when we come seeking, we will always find Jesus waiting for us.

Today's passage is an account of a divine appointment and conversation with Jesus and a woman. It is not a parable, but if we are to fully understand or enter into the deeper understanding of this encounter, then we are invited to fully enter the story and see ourselves as the one Jesus seeks, knows and invites into a richer relationship with him with today.

I can identify with this woman - can't you?

She's confused. She's distracted. She's lost. She is fractured. She's tired. She's thirsty. She's forgotten who she is. And I think all those things describe many churches today. And it isn't a reach to look at this scene between Jesus and the woman within the courting rituals of that time and culture. The venue of the village well might be a place where a man might go to look for a woman or a bride.

Was Jesus looking for a bride that day? Perhaps not that day, but today? Today, he is looking for a bride - he is looking for his church. He is looking for you and for me. And we are the bride of Christ. He is looking to bid us to be with him, love

him, and serve his father—to do the Father's will – the one who sent him. The one who loves us (see verse 34).

Jesus confronts this woman about her own heart. Doesn't he? She openly confesses to Jesus that she has more than one husband and I ask myself – and so I ask you -- does the church have more than one husband? Are we distracted? Do we have other exploits, are there things, concerns and cares, issues that keep us from being the bride of Christ? Have we forgotten our first love? Do we need to come to the well this morning and confess face to face that we have allowed other gods/relationships to come before him?

Friends, it would not take us very long in this room to identify "other husbands" for the church—our need to be recognized, to be appreciated, or to be successful as a church or church member. Our despair or our hopelessness can distract us from Christ. Our indulgence, our selfishness, our fear—all these things distract us from our first love.

I think today if we truly came to the well and looked in his eyes, we'd recognize truly who he is! He says **I am the Messiah. I am the one who can give you living water**. And then recognizing truly who he is, we would recognize our true selves and all we were ever meant to be as a church—that is a witness to the living water and God's amazing love for us.

The baptismal font belongs in the middle of our worship every Sunday to remind us of our baptismal vows and it looks very much like a well. And I trust any time you enter this space or any sanctuary with a baptismal font that you will pause for a moment and acknowledge that Jesus will always be waiting here for you to re-introduce himself to you as your first love, and he wants you to become a perpetual spring of his own living water.

You and I—and all creation—was made **ex nihilo**, which means out of nothing. There was nothing. Only God. And the Lord breathed and spoke creation into existence. He breathed and gave all of humanity his own breath. But before that there was nothing. So, without God—and many times we choose to be or do or think or behave without God—we return to nothing. Isn't that why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 that without love we are nothing?! This is also what the "Sailboat Church" says as well—without God's holy wind, we are nothing.

Perhaps the woman at the well was confronted by her nothingness, and she realized without Christ she would remain nothing. And the church certainly without Christ would return to absolute nothingness. Jesus alone gives us our identity. And that's what we find at the baptismal font is our identity! And we know who we are and whose we are.

Jesus had to go to the well. You and I come to the well today. And Jesus meets us there, but there is better news is that Jesus didn't just see the woman. Jesus sat at the well and looked into her face, but he also looked beyond her because standing and living behind her in the distance was this crowd or village that we hear about just a moment later. He saw her, but he also saw them. Jesus sees us and he sees those in our crowd too! It was her friends, it was her family, her coworkers, fellow God seekers that she knew, and it was her husbands.

And Jesus stands at the baptismal font and he sees you, but not just you. He looks beyond-he always looks beyond his church and he sees those who are outside-of his church. He sees our crowds, our villages, our neighborhoods, our coworkers, our families, our fellow God seekers, and our husbands and our wives.

The reason why he looks at her is because he had to—and the reason why he looks beyond her is because he had to; just as living water flows and streams from one pool to another through gracious conduits of connectedness, so God's love must stream out and far and beyond forever and ever—even as it has flowed and strained until today when you had to go to church and I had to bring this message for you.

This is what I believe God means when Christ says he is the living water. It is the father's heart having to reach out-and God's mission is testifying to the living water flowing in our own lives.

So how do we respond to the God that loves us and reaches out to us and saves us from our sins? The story today tells us that the woman responded by running to her friends. She had to!

How about our response? I want to encourage us to think about and pray about the **have-to-ness** of our own discipleship and/or spiritual journey/participation...

And maybe you haven't asked Jesus to give you this living water-he told the woman **if you knew who I was, you'd ask, and I would give it to you.** Maybe you have never asked him to give you his living water, his love, his life, his grace, his very self.

I beg you-from the bottom of my heart and on behalf of our loving Savior who gave me that heart...to ask for Jesus to give you his living water today! And after we have received his living water what do we do? We run! We run out and away and to others. This is the **have-to-ness** response that is essential to our calling as Christians.

Isn't there a conversation today that you have to initiate?

Isn't there an apology that you have to make?

Isn't there a card you have to right?

Isn't there a promise you have to keep?

Isn't there a wrong or two you need to write?

Isn't there a child you have to hold?

Isn't there a prayer you have to whisper?

A cause you have to support?

A nonprofit you have to start?

A ministry you have to revive?

An other, any other, outsider that you have to meet at a well?

Or a crowd you have to invite to come and see a man who told you everything about yourself. And our story today ends, according to the new living translation, that the people came streaming!

Calvary, as we rely on the powerful movement of God's wind and trust in the perpetual spring of God's mission, let us become sailors for the holy purposes of God. Let us become perpetual springs of living water, flowing out and reaching beyond the baptismal font-reaching past the church to those who are outside the church, inviting people to be a part of this living faith in Christ because we have to!

... and people came streaming.

May it be so,

