

Lent 3A, 2011

Text: John 4:4-26

Title: "Living Water"

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Come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, the pioneer who goes before and brings all things to perfection.

Jesus, the Son of God, who puts you in the family picture, and shows you how to live with God as your Father.

Jesus, the bread of life, who feeds you with His own body.

Jesus, the Savior, who comes to rescue you from imprisonment and set you free.

Jesus, the door, who provides a way into the Father's house, and who stands guard, keeping evil at bay.

Today, it's Jesus, the living water.

Water is life.

Your body is about 60% water. Without water, you'll be lucky to live a week.

Unfortunately, water is not something your body can produce. You can't make your own water. You need a source. You need to get your water from somewhere else.

Most of our cultures and cities are built near a source of water. The Nile, the Ganges, the Yangtze, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the Chicago River to name a few.

In Eden there were four rivers flowing into the garden.

This town of Sychar in Samaria was built around a well. A deep well, but a reliable well. An old well. A well dug back in the days of Jacob, about 2,000 years before.

The well was the center of town life. Every day folks would come early in the morning and draw water from the well. They would use it for their cooking, for their washing, for their bathing, or just to drink and refresh themselves during the day.

The well was a gathering point for the people of the town. They would come together in the morning to get their water and to share news and gossip and enjoy each other's company. Everyone came. Everyone except her.

She had stopped coming to the well in the morning years before. She couldn't stand the stares and the snickers any more. She was too ashamed.

So she came to the well at the one time that she knew she would be alone and could draw her water in peace. She came to the well at high noon, at the hottest time of the day. She came when everyone else in town would be resting, eating, or taking a nap in the shade. No one else would be at the well at noon. It was too much work to do in the heat of midday. But as she came to the well, she saw someone else already there. A Jewish man, in his early thirties was there by the well. What was He doing in their town, and why was He out at the well?

For a moment she toyed with the idea of going home and coming back later, but it was already noon, and she needed the water for the day. Maybe if she just ignored Him, everything would be okay. After all, this was her town, her well, Jacob had dug the well and given it to her people.

So she went to the well, and for some reason, this strange Jewish man asks her for a drink. Who does He think He is? She would never talk to a Jew, they thought they were too good for Samaritans like her.

So she told Him what she thought. She was always one to speak her mind. How dare you ask me to give you a drink? How dare you even talk to me? What kind of woman do you think I am?

And then the strange man says something even stranger. He must have been out in the sun a little too long. The strange man says that He has a special source of water, this "living water".

Living water means "flowing water", water not in a well or a jar or a pond, but a river, a stream, a spring. Living water is water that is alive and flowing.

This living water would be a wonderful blessing for her. She wouldn't have to keep coming to the well. She wouldn't have to avoid the crowds, she could just keep the water and stay home, and never be thirsty.

But then He speaks again. He knows everything about her. He knows that she has been married five times. He knows that she is living with a man who is not her husband. He knows everything about her.

Even though she is a woman, and a Samaritan, even though she has been married five times and is living in sin, Jesus still engages her. He still talks to her and tells her about Himself.

Now there's a lot more to this story. The rest of John 4 tells what happened to this woman. She went back to her town, to her neighbors that she had been too afraid to face, and she tells them to come and see Jesus for themselves.

Because of this woman's amazing story, the townspeople all come to see Jesus. In the end they urge Him to stay with them, and Jesus stays for two days in the town, and many of these Samaritans come to believe in Jesus.

Jesus' water is living water. It's flowing water. It flows into you, but it needs to flow through you. It can't get stuck with you.

If water doesn't flow, problems quickly appear.

In 2007, Amberleigh and I celebrated Thanksgiving together for the first time. We had been engaged since the summer. I was living in a house Wheaton, I had plenty of room, so Amberleigh's parents and her sister came and stayed with me for the weekend. That Thanksgiving did not go well. It was the first time I had done a turkey all by myself, and it didn't cook evenly. The stuffing didn't turn out. I forget to add eggs to the corn casserole. I was stressed out and upset about the meal, and after a long day, I went upstairs to lie down and rest. Shortly after I lay down, Amberleigh came up to tell me that there was something wrong in the basement. I went downstairs to find several inches of foul smelling water covering the basement floor.

The sewer had backed up, on Thanksgiving Day, and now there was raw sewage in the basement. Here's what had happened....

The house had been vacant for several years before I had moved in, and during that time, tree roots had grown into the sewer pipes. When I moved in, I wasn't using that much water, by myself and so the water was able to find its way through.

When three more people came to stay with me that weekend, we all used a lot more water, and eventually everything stopped flowing and backed up. We had a mess. A dirty, stinking mess.

That's what happens when water stops flowing. You get a mess.

The water that Jesus gives is living water. It's meant to flow through you to other people around you. You are like a pipe, a conduit, and God's Holy Spirit, that has been poured into your heart, is meant to flow through you.

After Jesus talked to the woman at the well, she went out and found her neighbors and told them about Jesus. Even though they had probably been mean to her and looked down on her, she sought them out and kept the water flowing.

Too often we don't let the water of God's Spirit flow through us. We're like clogged pipes, and for whatever reason, God's love stops with us. We come here, we receive Jesus' gifts, but then we go back to our lives without letting the water flow through us.

God doesn't give you these gifts just for you, for your own benefit. They are meant to flow through you, to circulate, to live on in the lives of those you see each day. It's living water.

Now you don't need to generate or create water on your own. We can't do that. We also can't generate things like love, forgiveness, and good works on our own. We simply receive them from Jesus and let them flow through us.

Lent is a good time to take a look at our lives, and see what's been getting in the way and clogging things up, whether it's our bitterness and anger, our greed, our laziness, our busyness, and clear these things out, so that Jesus' living water flows freely.

Jesus has water for you, fresh, flowing, refreshing, life-giving, living water.

Come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the living water.