

**The Third Sunday in Lent, March 15, 2020**

Pastor Peter Gregory, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Westminister, Massachusetts

## **The Thirsty Soul Restored**

John 4:5–30, 39–42

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Eph 1:2*

---

**Jesus said to her**, the Samaritan woman at the well, **“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”** (vv 13–14).

---

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Lent began with that reminder of death’s curse. Ashes on the forehead, dry and dusty ashes. But now, especially now, the reminders are everywhere. It might as well be written on every bottle of hand sanitizer and every pack of Clorox wipes: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. And on every square of toilet paper, and every hard surface, and every outstretched hand. Indeed, every person now seems like a potential threat.

The truth is, in fact, far worse. Sin has already returned humanity to the dry dust of death. Bodily death is just the final blow. The Holy Spirit says that fallen sinners are already **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (Eph 2:1). Dry and dusty, like husks that the wind could blow away.

3.

Like the **woman of Samaria**. She **came to draw water** from Jacob’s well where **Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting** (v 6, 7).

Do you see her here, going through the motions like this each day, each week, trudging with her water jar to Jacob’s well? It was work. Hard work. You might not know what lies beneath the surface just by looking, but there’s a lot there. They say that still waters run deep. Start an honest conversation with her, and you’ll find out just how deep. And that’s what Jesus does. To this woman, He says, **“Give Me a drink”** (v 7).

Why does she come at noon, when all the rest of the women come in the morning or the evening? Maybe she's afraid of what they'll say, or think, or about the looks they'll give her. Why is she so ungracious when Jesus asks her for a drink? Is it because He's a Jew? Because He's a man? Maybe her experience with Jews, or with men, has made her wary of what they want. What scars does she have? Behind that exterior, that business-as-usual, what is she thinking? Maybe a list of things she has done wrong swirls in her head—all those marriages, being used by men, perhaps using them too, cast off with certificates of divorce, the man she's now with who won't even give her the honor of being called her husband. Her hard work is made harder by the burdens she carries. That water jar is nothing. Try hauling around her sin and her shame.

Come to think of it, you probably do—not *her* sin and *her* shame, but *your* sin, and *your* shame, and *your* sorrow. All the burdens that make the hard work of your life even harder.

Where do we turn when the soul lies in dust and ashes? This woman came to the well wanting water, but what she needed was a word that gave life. What she needed was someone to restore her soul.

And though she's tried lots of things, she hadn't yet found anything yet that could quench this thirst, this soul-thirst.

## 2.

And then the conversation starts. The one at the well. Unexpected, shocking. Words that will change her life. **"Give Me a drink"** (v 7).

She glances up. She looks at Him as if to say, "You can't be serious? You're kidding, right? **How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?**" (v 9). As if being Jewish or male fully captured His identity. That's all she sees.

But that's not *all* He is. **"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would've asked Him, and He would've given you living water"** (v 10). He asks for a drink, but He has far more to give. She sees things that divide her from Him, but He crosses the divide. The gift of God isn't only for Jews, or for men. It's for this Samaritan woman. It's for you.

Living water. Living water is way different than cistern water or stagnant water. It suggests flowing water, fresh water, water that's connected to its source. Water from an eternal spring. Living and life-giving. It's what those who are dust and ashes need.

But the woman doesn't get it. From what source will this guy get water? What is the origin of this living water? Where does it come from? **"Sir, You have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do You get the living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock"** (vv 11, 12).

Well, yes, He is greater, because He is Jacob's Lord. The water He offers doesn't come from any well. He needs no bucket to retrieve it. It comes from Him.

**"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,"** Jesus says. **"But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"** (vv 13, 14),

Jesus is the source of all living water. His life, His death, and His resurrection are a life-giving stream. The water she came for quenches thirst, but only for a time. But this water, His water, is needed only once and is enough forever.

As a spring came up from the land and watered the whole face of the dry ground in Eden (Gen 2:6), so Jesus is Himself a source of water. He, too, is a well, a spring, a fountain from whom life-giving waters flow and create a new humanity. New life for those who remember that they are dust and to dust they shall return.

### 1.

**"Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water"** (v 15). She still doesn't get it. She thinks that the water Jesus gives is better than Jacob's well, but only in the sense that it will offer more than what Jacob's well offers. She doesn't yet see that it's of an entirely different kind. She doesn't yet recognize *who* He is.

Jesus is the gift of God. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The One who must be lifted up. She says, **"I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called the Christ"** (v 25). Jesus says, **"I AM—the one who is speaking to you"** (v 26). He is not a man of dust and ashes, but the Man of heaven. His source is the Father. His origin is from above.

And the thirst she feels, the thirst you feel, that dryness, the still waters that run so deep, He will feel it, too. He becomes the thirsty one, longing for life. Remember His words from the cross in John's Gospel: **"I thirst"** (John 19:28). "Give Me a drink." Parched. Dead in your trespasses and sins. Hard work made harder by the burdens

we've laid on Him. But He knew what He was doing when He asked the Samaritan woman for a drink. It would be the cup of dust and ashes. The cup of suffering and shame. He enters the depths of hell itself and dies in our place, to rise and offer us His eternal, life-giving stream.

This water poured from His pierced side after His death (John 19:34). Out of His heart come streams of living water, and through that water the Holy Spirit is given, and with the Spirit there's given the life of the Spirit. That's what we children of God have! Our life comes from the water!

The life of the Spirit given and received in Baptism is a *life*, true life in thought, word, and deed. The gushing water within your life as the baptized is the life of Christ Himself. It's the work of His Spirit. You may be dust, but you are not only dust. You have the life of the Spirit. You are alive in Christ. You walk in newness of life. It's written on every absolution you hear and traced on you with the sign of the cross, morning and evening, invocation and benediction.

For once in her life, this woman finally meets a man who is not a threat, a man who gives rather than takes and what He gives . . . oh, what He gives makes her a child of God. The honor she finds in Jesus frees her to speak in hope of the Messiah. The life she finds in Jesus is a gift that will never go away.

Still waters run deep. Yet deeper still run words of our Lord, deeper than any of your troubles, deeper than the threats of our day, deep enough to conquer hell itself. He rose from the depths with life for you. **"Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden,"** Jesus cries. **"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!"** (Isa 55:1). Today, Jesus comes and restores your soul.

---

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

*Phil 4:7*

---