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3rd Sunday in Lent
March 14 & 15, 2020
Immanuel Lutheran, Michigan City
John 4:5-26

In John chapters three and four, Jesus has two one-on-one conversations concerning the new life He offers. The first conversation was with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and expert teacher about being born again. The second was with the Samaritan woman, a religious outsider and adulteress. The irony of the two stories is that the Samaritan woman seemed to have a better grasp on Jesus' teachings than Nicodemus. Nicodemus, who tried to reason with Jesus and argue against His logic, was clueless the entire time and provoked Jesus to respond, "You call yourself a teacher of the Jews?" On the other hand, the Samaritan woman who humbly listened to Jesus, although she was confused at first, came to a much better understanding. Neither one would probably fully understand Jesus until after His resurrection, but the Samaritan woman looked to be in a better position to believe in Him, despite her apostate upbringing and serious sins.

But this shouldn't be too surprising for us. Those who see themselves as more righteous than others and who have a lot of confidence in their intellect and reason are not so easily humbled to believe God's Word. Human reason can either be a gift or a curse. If reason submits to God and makes itself a servant of the Scriptures, it will help me in my knowledge of God and His creation and my ability to serve my neighbor, but if it makes itself god over the Scriptures and discounts anything that seems to contradict it, it becomes useless to me and ruins faith and love. Likewise, if I put my trust in my good works, I separate myself from Christ and His love, since I don't think I need Him. But if I realize my miserable condition and need for Christ, I will love Christ all the more for what He has done and put my trust in Him. As Jesus said in Luke chapter 7, "A

certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" The one for whom he cancelled the larger debt, of course. Just look at the reactions of the two. Nicodemus went back secretly and hid whatever thoughts he might have had about Jesus. The woman, on the other hand, rejoiced and told everyone in town about Jesus.

But now let us look a little at our text. Jesus, wearied from His journey, was sitting beside the well.... And a woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

Jesus, as true man, was very hungry and thirsty from his travels from Judea north to Samaria. Notice, though, how He even uses His weariness not for His own advantage but for hers. The normal Jewish practice would have been to go around Samaria rather than through it. But Jesus went into Samaria, stopped at the well, sent His disciples to go get food, and seemed to wait there for the woman to come, not in order to drink Himself, but in order to offer her a drink. Although He was thirsty, we never read that He drank, but instead He, our famished Lord, concentrated on quenching the woman's thirst.

Christ, in His sufferings, never seeks His own good, but does it all for us. He thirsts for our salvation and hungers that we would have the bread of life. He dies that we would live. That is our Christ, whose love is beyond measure for us. While we worry about our own health and comforts more than anyone else's, Christ nothing else in mind than our own salvation.

The Samaritan woman said, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

Notice that the woman did not call Jesus or Jews inferior, although Samaritans were also known for being hostile to Jews, even robbing them. She could have said, "I'm not going to give you 'holier than thou' Jews anything! Why should I associate with you?" Instead, the woman took the position of humility and said, "How can you, a Jew, ask me for a drink?" We also should have the same disposition toward others, however sinful or unbelieving or hostile they are. We should consider ourselves to be like the Apostle Paul, who said "I am the greatest of sinners." But how often do we change our treatment of others because we see them as inferior. In this regard the Samaritan woman is much saintlier than we are. In the entire conversation, she was humble, respectful, and listened intently to Jesus.

Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Jesus knew that the woman had a greater thirst than He. Jesus knew the Father and put all of His trust in Him. The woman had a spiritual thirst that had not been quenched. She had tried to quench her thirst in men, having five husbands and now living with her boyfriend. But anyone who has been there knows that this only makes you thirstier. There is nothing more dissatisfying and painful than failed marriages and broken families. Every time the woman thought she could have a satisfying, lasting love, but each one left her worse off than before. And the last one didn't even love her enough to marry her.

Every sin is a thirst for the wrong things, whether money and possessions, glory and praise, pleasure, or something else. But, while they bring a small pleasure, they leave us with discontent, shame, and a desire for something better.

Christ offers a love that is truly satisfying. He meets us by the well of our baptism and washes us clean of our unrighteousness and binds the wounds of those who have hurt us. His righteousness covers up our sins and we are brought under the constant, faithful, loving-kindness of our God, who forgives our loveless hearts and fills them with His loving Spirit, who mercifully attends to our needs for this life and for eternity, and who guards and protects us from evil and delivers us from trials and rescues us from death. Thus, if we only have Christ, we have all that we need. We have the perfect love of Christ and the kingdom of our Almighty God that we can be at peace and content, knowing the treasure we have in Him.

The woman said, “Lord, give me with water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

Like Nicodemus, the woman was still thinking from a worldly perspective about physical things. But her spiritual need was far greater. Therefore, Jesus will bring up what truly pained her the most and what she was most likely to cover up to avoid bringing up her shame. Likewise, preaching isn't about giving the best feel-good message. It's meant to hurt our pride and convict us, which our sinful flesh resists and reacts to. The law is a hammer that crushes us so that the gospel would remake us into God's image.

The woman answered Jesus, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Lord, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

Now, just so you know, the woman is not changing the subject. She didn't, on discovering that this man was an expert, ask some random question she had. She was at this point understanding that the water Jesus was offering was a spiritual gift, not simply water from a different well. This was the water of salvation. But Samaritans and Jews had completely different place from which they believed God's salvation came. The Samaritans worshiped at Mount Gerizim and the Jews at Mount Zion, in the Temple. The Samaritan woman was looking for instructions as to where she could find this living water.

Jesus answered, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for the father is seeking such people to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth."

I think, by the way, we should capitalize the "S" in Spirit. For example, I don't think this means that you can stay home from the Divine Service and say, "I'm worshipping God in *spirit*." You do not only worship with your spirit, but with your whole body as you receive His gifts. Instead, Christ spoke to Nicodemus about being born of the Holy Spirit and said things like, "That which

is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” Christ was pointing toward the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church, who comes to us in God’s Word and Sacraments. Thus, we won’t be tied to Jerusalem or Gerizim, but wherever the Gospel is proclaimed.

The woman said to Jesus, “I know that the Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will teach us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

The Christ, the Son of the living God, asks for a drink, when that is the question we should be asking! But we have trouble even understanding our need. For us, the bodily needs come first: food, drink, house and home, good health, and so forth. We are terrified when we don’t have them and seek them first. Yet we fail to realize the dire consequences of our own sin, more serious than any need, and the healing we receive in the sacrament.

Let us cast all fears, doubts, sins, and hindrances behind and acknowledge the gift of God. If you knew the gift of God than nothing else would really matter. Take they our life, goods, fame child and wife, though these all be gone our victory has been won. No virus, no evil of any kind would shake us. Let us take with confidence the cup of our Lord and drink to our salvation.

Christ is greater than Jacob. He dug the well with His own two hands, pierced and bloody. He did it all for His bride the church, a bunch of shameful sinners. Out of His pierced belly came streams of living water. He filled the well of our baptism and gives His life-blood for our drink. No virus has that much power, compared to the body and blood of the Lord. Let us drink deeply from the well of salvation. Amen.