

**Come Meet the Man**  
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**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church**

**Pastor Dave Labuhn**

There are a lot of stories in the Bible about water. Some involve a lot of water, and some only involve a little water. Almost all the stories are redemption stories. Some are both judgment and redemption stories like the Flood in Genesis 7 and 8. Other water stories are redemption stories like the story of the parting of the Red Sea where God's people were saved from destruction by the army of the Pharaoh in Exodus 14. Jesus turned a little water into fine wine and saved a family from embarrassment. He ordered the waters to calm in a storm on the Sea of Galilee and saved his disciples from a shipwreck. Only a little water was used at each of our baptisms in which we received grace in act of salvation. Yesterday only a little water was used to baptize Sean Francois and Clara Elizabeth at the baptismal font here in the sanctuary.

In the Old Testament reading we heard how the ungrateful people of God nearly attacked and nearly killed Moses because they were thirsty and without water. A merciful God provided water from a rock and saved them. The rock was at Horeb (another name for Mount Saini) and when Moses struck it with the same staff He used to touch the waters of the Nile in the first plague, water gushed out of the rock for the people to drink. They were thirsty and God slaked their thirst. God gave his people water but what they really needed was some spiritual water for their faith so they would trust in Him and not grumble and complain or take out their anger on their leader Moses. People do not change much, do they?

St. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:4 that Jesus was like that rock. He gave water too, but it was spiritual water. And that brings us to our Gospel reading, water is the subject, too. The Pharisees were plotting against Jesus. Jesus had gotten their attention by attracting a large following of people and disciples and his disciples were baptizing more people than John the Baptist.

Jesus was posing a threat to their religious authority and power. The hour of Jesus' death was determined by God the Father and not the Pharisees. To prevent the Pharisees from killing him prematurely, Jesus decided to leave Judea and return to Galilee. The shortest way from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north was through Samaria. Samaria was the Northern Kingdom of the Old Testament. It had been formed by 10 of the Old Testament tribes and was also called Israel. The Southern Kingdom, called Judah, was formed by only 2 tribes—Benjamin and Judah. The two kingdoms split apart and most of the rulers of the Northern Kingdom were disobedient to God and led their people into idolatry, mainly to Canaanite gods. In judgment, God allowed the Assyrians to conquer them in 721 B.C. Most of the people of Israel were taken as captives to Assyria. A few were left behind in the land but then, the Assyrians brought in other people, Gentiles, non-Jews, to live there. This was intentional on the part of the Assyrians because it would have the effect of breaking down the national identity of any of the people left behind in the land that they had conquered. Over time, the people of conquered Israel began to intermarry, and so the ethnic identity and solidarity of the nation were weakened. The same thing happened to their religious identity. It was eroded away too. The influence of the pagans

who were resettled in their land had a negative effect on the beliefs and practices of the people. The result was that these half-Jewish, half-Gentile people became known as the Samaritans, named after their capital city, Samaria.

Jews hated the Samaritans because they were not pure. No self-respecting Jew would have anything to do with a Samaritan. Most Jews would not even set foot in Samaria and would travel around the land rather than set foot in it. Samaritans made Jews unclean. They refused to recognize the Temple and Mount Zion, Jerusalem, as the seat of worship. They built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. They only accepted the first 5 Books of the Bible although they believed in the Messiah. In all other regards, they were religious and social outcasts and treated as badly as lepers by most other Jews.

Today, Jesus showed us that He was truly human. After walking through Samaria, he was hot, tired, and thirsty as He arrived at the Samaritan town of Sychar. He stopped at a well about a quarter mile outside the town. Traditionally, it was believed that Jacob dug this well although there is no record of this in Genesis. Genesis 33 does tell us that Jacob bought all the land near it. So, it stands to reason, that he would have dug a well there to provide water for himself, his family, and his livestock. The well currently is about 75 feet deep. Originally, it was over 100 feet deep. A church now stands over the well.

Jesus was resting at this well when an unnamed Samaritan woman came to the well to get water and Jesus asked her for a drink of water. She is shocked. She seemed to know that Jesus is not a Samaritan maybe because of his clothes, his speech, or his demeanor.

She was shocked that Jesus, a man and a stranger, spoke to her because she was a woman. It was considered inappropriate for a good pious rabbi to have a one-on-one conversation with a woman in public. It just was not done. In many places in the Mid-East this is still the case: women may not speak to a man outside their family unless an adult male family member is present. And so, when the disciples come back later, and they saw this happening, they were a little surprised, if not shocked. In v. 27, we learn that Jesus' disciples "marveled that he was talking with a woman." Jesus was having a conversation with a woman.

Secondly, the woman was shocked because she was a Samaritan. This woman at the well knew the attitude that Jews have toward Samaritans. She made that clear when Jesus asked her for a drink, she said, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" And the text adds, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." She was shocked that Jesus asked her for a drink of water.

The woman also is clearly uncomfortable in coming to the well at noon. The land is on the same latitude as Savannah, GA, so you can imagine the temperature. This is not the time of the day to be hauling water up out of a well and then carrying it a ¼ mile back to town in a heavy earthen jug. It was not unusual for a woman to come out to the well to draw water. But it was unusual for a woman to come out at that hour. Most women would walk out to the well earlier in the morning, before the heat of the day. But this woman waited to come to the well when she was sure no one else would be there, especially, no other women from the town. She did not want to deal with them. She

did not want to endure their stares and gossip, even if it meant she had to go out there under the hot sun.

Have you ever felt like you are a bit of an outsider? Like you did not belong? That maybe you are being looked down upon by others whether fairly or unfairly. Maybe you have done something to bring some shame upon yourself. And maybe you feel some guilt before God. Most of us are clever in that situation at evading contact with others who know us, and we are experts at putting up facades and smokescreens to keep anyone else from finding out about us. This woman was no different.

Then, Jesus threw her a curve. Jesus suggested that if she knew who she was speaking with and what he was offering, she would ask him for a drink of water, not the other way around. Jesus was talking figuratively and spiritually about salvation in Him. He talked about this water as “living water.” The Samaritan women misunderstood just like Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus. Nicodemus thought being born again mean literally being born again. The woman at the well thought Jesus was talking about physical water. In both cases, He was not. The confused woman quickly noticed that Jesus had nothing to draw water from the well. So, she confronted him about this. She asked if He is greater than the patriarch Jacob who build the well.

Jesus clarified that He was not talking about water from the well. His water was spiritual water that slaked one's thirst forever. The woman still did not understand but she seemed to have a need for this kind of water. When she admitted her need for the spiritual water Jesus offered her, even though she did not know who was giving it or what it really was, Jesus disarmed

her completely when He told her to go get her husband and all her façades and defenses were dismantled. She admitted she was not married; Jesus notes she told the truth. Then, Jesus told her He knew her better than anyone in the town. He knew about her former 5 failed marriages and her current live-in. She was standing before Jesus just like Adam and Eve stood before God in the Garden when He confronted them—nowhere to go and nowhere to hide. She knew she needed that spiritual water Jesus was offering her even if she did not know who was offering it to her.

Jesus knows your sins and my sins in the same way. He knows what we try to hide from others and how we try to prevent them from knowing us. He sees the great burden of guilt and pain that we carry because of our sins, and He offers us living water. He offers us forgiveness and salvation. He offers us spiritual water that will never leave us thirsty again. His forgiveness, as we often sing, is like cool clean water on our skin. Notice, Jesus did not say a single word of condemnation or criticism to the woman. He simply spoke the truth. It is the same with us.

We know Jesus knows the truth about each of us. And Jesus gives us the waters of forgiveness on Calvary where He takes all our sin and all the retribution, disgust, malicious and hurtful things that should be heaped upon us, upon Himself.

And just before He dies for us, he looks out to us and says, “I thirst.” He is the one who asks for a drink before He says, “It is finished.” And, after he dies, a spear opens his side, and blood and water rush out. He offers Himself for us and we receive the living, spiritual water of His sacrifice.

The Samaritan woman may not have been at the cross when Jesus died. But she did know that He was her Savior. He told her so. She was so overwhelmed that she raced back to town leaving her water jug behind and announced to everyone that she had encountered the Messiah. The townspeople responded by coming to see Jesus and he remained with them in the town for 2 days. They believed at first because of the words of the woman at the well, but later they believed in Jesus because they heard His words personally. And they believed that Jesus was the Savior of the world. Jesus departed and went on to Cana, the place where he had performed his first miracle of turning water into fine wine. Coincidence? I do not think so.

Jesus is our Living Water. Living water does not come from a well or a tap or a spigot. It comes from the saving grace that came with the death and resurrection of our Savior. Our Savior, who still seeks us out daily. He looks for us to reassure us that we are His and He is ours. He looks to lead us by still waters. He commands us to baptize others with water and the word, just as Sean and Clara O'Leary were baptized yesterday.

And, that woman who is nameless in our text, according to the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic tradition, used the name Photini after being baptized. She was an evangelist, and her continuing witness is said to have brought so many to the Christian faith that she was described as an "equal to the apostles." Eventually, she drew the attention of the Roman Emperor Nero, was brought before him to answer for her faith, suffered numerous tortures, and died a martyr after being thrown down a dry well.

I am told there is a survey that says a lot of people might be numbered among those in worship on Sunday morning except for one thing: they were never invited. It does not take an evangelism program (helpful as that may be), and you do not need to spend a lot of time memorizing a lot of Bible verses (as useful as that is), based on this Gospel reading to share Jesus with others. The most important thing needed is a wet spirit, a wet spirit that you already have, a wet spirit that you have had since your baptism. It is already yours, all yours. The living water and life-giving Spirit are yours right now. The woman at the well had these also and knew what to do and rushed to do it. Our sister in Christ, a Samaritan, Saint Photini, did not have any reservations saying, “Come meet the man,” to everyone who would listen in her town, after she met Jesus at the well.

How hard could it be for you to say, “Come meet the man who knows all about you and has come for you? Come meet the man who knows about your thirst, your very real sin, and who did something about it with two pieces of wood, three nails, a crown of thorns, and a spear. Come, meet the man who made all things right and righteous for us in the eyes of God giving us the spiritual waters of salvation.”

In the coming days as we walk toward Jerusalem, Calvary, the cross, and the tomb, make your plans to invite someone who needs to hear about the life-giving waters offered by Jesus and ask them to come and hear about him.

They are hurting and burdened just as you and I often are. They need to hear about the life-giving waters offered to them by Jesus just like you and I. Start by quoting a woman who lived 2,000 years ago. Just say, “Come meet the man.” Amen.