

## Bearing Christ's Living Water John 4:5-42

Last Sunday was the first Sunday where we really started following the worship guidelines to be used during the coronavirus pandemic. We bumped elbows during the peace, we didn't shake hands or hug. We didn't get too close to one another. I remember later that day on Sunday feeling strange - almost as if I didn't talk to anyone, like we didn't really have church. This continued during the week as I went to my usual places. I usually pay special attention to noticing people and greeting people, but I found myself holding back. And here we are this Sunday – truly apart – worshipping virtually.

And it is with this perspective that I came to this morning's gospel with Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Samaritans believe that their worship is the true [religion](#) of the ancient Israelites from before the [Babylonian captivity](#), preserved by those who remained in the [Land of Israel](#), as opposed to Judaism, which they see as a related but altered and amended religion, brought back by those returning from the Babylonian Captivity. The Samaritans believed that God was to be worshipped on Mount Gerazim while the Jews believed that God must be worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem.

A Jew would give a Samaritan a wide berth and vice versa. They would have stayed away from one another and so even though our staying away from one another is for very different reasons, these days we are getting a glimpse of what it might have been like for them to avoid each other. As we avoid the person walking down the street or keep our distance at the grocery store, we are experiencing the wariness they might have had when approaching one another.

So it was a big deal for Jesus and this Samaritan to talk. On top of that she is a woman whom a man would not normally address. Even with this barrier, Jesus begins a conversation and asks her for water. It is a precious and unusual conversation. Precious because it is the longest conversation Jesus has with anyone in the bible and unusual because it is the most unlikely of conversations – one that shouldn't have happened.

I love that the woman isn't shy. If Jesus is going to speak to her, she is going to speak back. Why are you asking me for a drink of water? Me - a woman and a Samaritan? Jesus says if she knew who he was, she would be asking for a drink of water – living water. This confuses the woman. How can this man offer her water? He has no bucket. Again she responds and asks if he is greater than her ancestor Jacob who gave her

people that well. Then Jesus tells her of a different kind of water - one that will never leave her thirsty. Living water – one that will give her eternal life. Amazingly after this short conversation with this Jewish man – she asks for this living water so that she may never be thirsty and never have to keep coming to the well.

But then, Jesus gets personal and tells her to call her husband. She replies that she has no husband. Jesus says you are right and tells her about her situation – five husbands and now she is with a man who is not her husband. This gets her back up – Ok – so you are a prophet and she brings up worship practices - one of the main points of disagreement between the Jews and the Samaritans. Should worship happen on the mountain or in the temple at Jerusalem? And Jesus tells her that she will neither worship on the mountain nor the temple, but the time will come when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. When she mentions the Messiah, Jesus says, I am he. Note that this is the first of the I am sayings of Jesus in the gospel of John and he says it first to a Samaritan woman.

The woman is so taken with what Jesus has told her that she leaves behind her water jar and goes to tell the people back in her town about her encounter. “He knew everything I have done. Can he be the Messiah?” They come back to see for themselves and Jesus ends up spending 2 days with them and they too come to believe.

Look at all that happened at the result of a most unlikely conversation – one that the disciples would never have had. Remember how they behaved when they got back from town and saw the woman – all that muttering about surely no one has given him anything to eat – meaning the woman. From that conversation, the woman came to know about the living water of Jesus and she bore that living water back to her people and they came to know it to.

I wonder how we can bear the living water of Jesus in this time of coronavirus barriers which are coming in so many forms. They are barriers of separation – people separated from contact with others – which I think we all need more than we might think. Barriers of lack of trust – worried about what information is correct. Barriers of fear – loss of money from not being able to work. Barriers of panic. One friend described another friend who was losing it - frantic over having to wait to go to the grocery store until her husband got paid.

With all this going on, what conversations could we have where we bear the living water of Jesus to others? What ways could these conversations happen and with what

unexpected people could we have them? Pray about that but let us also look to see what Jesus teaches us about these conversations.

Jesus shows us how to step out of our comfort zone when he asked the woman for water. I'm not saying go hug a stranger, but maybe wave at the stranger 6 feet away and smile. Maybe call a friend on the phone you haven't talked to in awhile and ask them how it is going and then listen for how it is really going when they say fine.

Share what gives you strength. Look at how quickly Jesus mentions living water in the conversation. No longwinded preparation. No careful directing the conversation in that direction. Jesus says - I have water that will never leave you thirsty.

We might say to the person we are speaking to - right now I am getting by with prayer. Every morning I get up and say Lord it is in your hands. Tell them whatever it is you have been doing to get by.

Don't condemn even when the other persons seems to be going a little crazy. Many people probably condemned her hence her arrival at the well in the middle of the day. And yet she probably had little control over being married five times. In those times, marriage was something done to women. Jesus doesn't judge her even though he mentions her status, and even though she tries to distract him with the worship question, he reveals to her that he is the Messiah.

In these very strange and challenging times, what is the living water of Jesus that you will bear? Who will you bear it to? There are many thirsty people out there in the world. If you can ask that question or share your story or just listen, and come with Jesus Christ in your heart, it can make all the difference in the world. Go out and bear that living water. Find ways to bear it across the barriers that separate us. We all are in need of it.