

Emmaus Road Fellowship  
February 22, 2008  
Fireplace Room – Swiss Village

### She Came to Draw Water

- **Telling the Story**
  - **Patriarchs**
  - **Dynamics between groups**
  - **Crossing Boundaries (Pastor Blosser)**

It was a day like any other. There were chores to be done...daily chores. The day was already half-way over, and it was hot...the noontime sun shone with swealter on the hard-packed clay around the ancient well. For generations from the days of Jacob, from the days of Joseph, herds and herders, assorted vagabonds – furry & feathered...– young & old, willowy & withered... though mainly an unending stream of women - had trodden this corner of Jacob's field into a surface smooth and hard as stone. And..who knows what creatures crept to the life-giving water in the darkness sheltering the well by night?

Looking back, across the generations, there had no doubt been countless days like this. Looking forward, into the *uncertain* future, there would *certainly* be days like this: ordinary days with ordinary chores, wearisome days with wearisome chores. And it seems no matter what the era or the address, ordinary days, ordinary tasks; wearisome days & wearisome tasks require water.

- Water – that from which form & life arose at the beginning of time. “In the beginning...the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” Gen. 1
- Water- the fascinating result of the combination of hydrogen and oxygen without which life on earth...**all life, each life** ...as we know it could not be sustained.
- Water – the source of contention between peoples of all times and locations:
  - Lack of water
    - The cattlemen vs the farmers
    - The urban vs the rural
  - Overabundance of water
    - The rich vs the poor
    - Political maneuvers
- Water – something that we don't think much about, that is, we take for granted as long as we don't have too little of it, don't have too much of it and have it when we want it. A very tall order...a great gift to us!

As we consider the Samaritan woman's trip to the well this evening, we are reminded that our access to water is very different from hers. Our access to water changes what it means to live together in community. We draw our water for cooking and bathing in the privacy of our homes. Yet, for many person of our world today, the drawing of water is a daily task...not only a daily task, but perhaps a daily uncertainty, a daily risk of life and limb...

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May we give thanks this evening for the precious gift of water to us! The gift which without we wouldn't be interested in meeting here this evening!

The Gospel describes for us that Jesus had been traveling...he had left Judea and had started back to Galilee...passing through Samaria along the way. He arrived at Jacob's Well – Some of you have visited there perhaps! – he was tired out by his journey...and it was about noon. We've heard that the disciples had gone into town to get something to eat. So Jesus was alone at the well when along came a Samaritan woman to draw daily water.

**Jesus and the woman of Sychar came to the well for the same reason, they were both in need of water and they both sought to quench their thirst. One *had* a vessel; one *was* the vessel.**

I love these biblical motifs that are, yes, ancient, but yet, timeless.

- Travelers bumping into hometown folk as they meet up in places of rest and restoration. (Mary Beth & Anita in Missouri)
- Strangers oddly united by common need (Sharing space at the airport in delay)
- Meeting places that are frequented by everyone – across all dimensions of society (Berne Community Market)
- Jacob's well must have been such a place.
  
- Let your imagination recreate the scene in your mind's eye.
  - It's noon - A strange time for a local person to come to the well...
  - What did the woman feel as the well came into view and she could see an unknown man seated at the there? What risks did she have to weigh out... returning home with an empty jar or a risky encounter...
  - Perhaps, if Jesus hadn't spoken the woman would have drawn her water and left. Much like the ways we pass one another on city streets or as we reach into the freezer at the grocery. Fascinating to think about the ways that we stand next to a person clearly signaling that we don't intend to talk. (Elevator)
  - Jesus breaks the silence with the words... "Would you give me a drink?"
    - Sounds like some kind of pick-up line!
    - The woman raises her eye-brows and reminds Jesus of his proper boundaries.

What a clever conversation is recorded for us in this passage in John's Gospel! Deeply symbolic language cloaked in the dress of, so to speak, the "normal" symbol of language.

- The conversation continues with us, as readers, having the sense that Jesus and the woman are speaking the same language, but remaining on strangely different wavelengths. (But this isn't simply due to the denseness of this Samaritan woman.)
  - Jesus requests water, but before you know it he is offering water.
  - Jesus requests water, but before you know it the woman is asking for the water from him – even though she was the one who had noted that he had nothing with which to draw water!
  - 
  - This exchange turned into a conversation. A real conversation! Its likelihood as unexpected as seeing water flowing from a rock!
- The woman came on this ordinary day with her water jar. **She came to draw water...**her intentions, her plans – a matter of survival. In her faithfulness to daily chores, surprisingly, she found herself greeting the one who was to become widely known as the Christ. As a matter of fact, in the faithfulness of her daily task, *ultimate revelation* was spoken to her...and her engagement with Jesus, her acknowledgement of thirst, her acknowledgement of the toil of life and the struggles of human relationships unleashed an *understanding and voice that welled up within her*.
- She leaves the well, she leaves her water jar, with Good News. Amazingly, the voice that she now has found doesn't just sound like a babbling stream to the ones to whom she returns.
  - In the past, with whom had she spoken? What had she been allowed to say? If and when she had spoken, had anyone listened?
- A woman – one for what ever reason – found it safest to come to the well at noontime- alone- not in the chatter and companionship of the other women - returns to the village with clear, convincing words of invitation. Words that carried such power that they couldn't be ignored...words that foreshadow those of the women who return on Easter morning from the tomb...with an unbelievable message...It is the Messiah...It is Jesus – and he lives. He lives and offers life beyond the grave of earth's disappointments. He lives and offers living water as Savior of the world!
- The woman encountered Jesus and her withered life began to swell with the awareness of being alive.
- In the preceding chapters of John the story of Pharisee Nicodemus is recorded. We're told that he came to Jesus by night. Even in his learnedness he had a difficult time understanding what Jesus' offered to him, (How can one return to

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- the mother’s womb to be born again?) Under the cover of darkness, Nicodemus marveled... “how can these things be?”
- This unnamed woman met Jesus at high noon. Both the curious Pharisee, and she, this puzzled, keenly attuned woman- share in the embrace of Jesus’ welcome. The disciples returned to find Jesus at the well and encourage him to eat of the bread they had procured in town...but they are also bewildered when Jesus said that he already had bread. No, it wasn’t simply the denseness, the lack of proper training of the Samaritan woman that led to astonished responses. It was the encounter with Jesus that challenged everything that they had ever taken for granted – about themselves and about others, about hunger and about thirst.
  
  - Life is like a hot Kansas wind. Life is like a cold Canadian gale. Life can be like Indiana winter – hard & long... Life dries and withers. Life burns and chafes. Everyone – Curious Pharisees, outcast women & followers of Jesus...
  
  - Friends, tonight, let us confess our thirst...the thirst that sends us searching for relief. Let us bring our awareness of this thirst to Jesus.
    - Perhaps, we’ve gone so long with water that our tongues are too parched to speak, drink deeply of living water.
    - Perhaps our cups of caring and compassion are empty...let living waters pour into our barren vessels.
    - Perhaps our ability to see God’s way is obscured by the grime and grit of daily chores, wearisome realities. Let us wash in living waters.
    - For this evening, let us leave our water jars at the well. We’ll need to fill them with the work of ordinary days, but how different that water will taste when first our souls are filled to the brim with Living Water!

### **Call to Communion**

Just as Jesus came to the well for water – midway on his journey to Galilee, so we, too, need refreshment and renewal on our journey through our days.

We find ourselves midway through the days of Lent. In the narrative of the Gospels Jesus has already turned his face toward Jerusalem. He is aware that as he “fleshes out” the ways of God, that even though common folk may be thrilling at his work and words, that those in places of power are becoming more and more convinced that he must be silenced. Yet, his journey continues. Jesus’ example calls us to faithfulness

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and obedience. Jesus' example calls us to share in the symbolic elements of communion – eating and drinking of the bread and cup in remembrance of him.

Our Gospel text this evening truly has called us to communion - to draw near to the bread of life, to drink from abundant living water.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed....even on that night, Jesus spoke these words, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Prayer from STJ #173 - Melissa

**Benediction** – *I Hold My Heart As a Gourd* - Jessica Powers

**Or STJ #**