

# Sunday's Sermon

## Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

March 12, 2023

The Reverend David E. Fox

Third Sunday in Lent (Year A) 2023

John 4.5-42

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

Thousands of years before the two of them stood there in holy conversation, the stone well was dug for water. Scripture doesn't outright say that Jacob built a well outside of Sychar, but it does say that Jacob purchased the land and set up camp there. Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Samaritans all agree that this well in Sychar was indeed Jacob's well. It would have taken a brave team to dig and construct this deep well made of stone. This hard and dangerous work provided water for people to use, to drink, to bathe, to clean, and even to birth.

Day after day people – women – from the city and the surrounding area would travel to the well, draw water from it, and travel back home to do their daily tasks. But the well was not just a place to get your water. It was a social hot spot. You could hear the daily gossip, it was also where Jacob, Moses, and Isaac met their spouses. Out of the well came water, news, and love.

If you've ever lived in a rural area and were not lucky enough to get water from a spring, chances are you had to rely on a well for water. The thing about water is that it finds its way to the lowest part of the earth. That's why they charge based on the number of feet to dig your well. The bill for digging a well may not be so nice, but can we really put a price on running water? If you go without water for a few days, you'll soon be able to put a price tag on how much flowing water means to you. Though water finds its way to the lowest points, when it is brought up out of the ground it brings life.

The verse leading up to our gospel reading for today says that Jesus had to go through Samaria. Going through Samaria was the short cut if you were in a hurry. For a rabbi this shortcut was off limits because this was deemed as unclean territory.

At first glance it sounds that Jesus may have just been in a hurry to get to where he needed to go, but that's not the reason. We know it isn't the reason, because towards the end of our reading we hear that Jesus stayed with the Samaritans for two days after they asked him to stay. That doesn't sound like being in a hurry to me.

It sounds like Jesus was planning to encounter this woman who believed she was at the lowest point in her life. Jesus planned this visit, I have no doubt in my mind. He sent his disciples away. And when he spoke with her he already knew everything about her. He knew why she came at the heat of the day to Jacob's Well to draw her water.

In my mind's eye, I figure that when this Samaritan woman saw this rabbi (she would have known by what he wore) she thought to herself, "Oh good, I don't have to worry about him talking to me." But little did she know, he would quickly ask for a drink of water; and he'd know the lowly thoughts she wrestled with in her heart.

I want to be clear to tell you that nowhere does it say this woman was loose in nature or that she was a harlot, going from man to man to man. This woman could have very well lost all of these husbands to death. If you've encountered one major loss in your life, imagine grieving five of them. She would have been at the lowest point in her life.

Water finds its way to the lowest points of the earth; though it finds its way to the lowest points, when it is brought up out of the ground it brings life.

Have you ever felt so low that you thought you couldn't possibly be loved? When we find ourselves in those times, we may also try to make it more difficult for those who want to show us love to be able to do so. We fight it so hard and may even define ourselves as unlovable. But friends, know that there is no one in this world, not even you, that is unlovable. You are lovely because you are loved – loved by our gracious God, and it is often in those lowest points in our lives, where we can fully appreciate the grace and love of God. That's because God's grace is like water. Philip Yancey, in his book titled: *What Good is God? In Search of a Faith that Matters*, writes, "Grace, like water, flows downward...No matter how low we sink, grace flows to that lowest part."

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At the well, Jesus offers this woman living water – grace – everlasting life. She is bound to be parched as she came in the noontime heat. However, her encounter with Jesus has her never taking a drink from the well. She even goes as far as leaving her water jar behind. At her lowest point, she has been filled with God's grace. And she wants to share this living water with the world, and she does. She is filled with the life that grace brings – that the Living Water brings.

That's the thing about living water. It flows. If it sits still, it becomes stagnant, maybe even undrinkable. The water that Jesus gives us is living water, meant to gush up out of us to cover the world in God's grace and love. It isn't meant for you to get your fill so that you are the only one benefiting from it; it's meant for the whole world. All of it. We need to be like Sherwin Williams and go out and paint the world with God's living water – with God's grace and love, brothers and sisters.

This woman at the well, this Samaritan woman at the well, this Samaritan woman who has been married five times at the well, is a better evangelist than even Jesus' disciples. Remember, they went into town to get something to eat, but brought none with them to come and see Jesus. The woman is the true evangelist, bringing the whole town to come and see Jesus.

When we share God's grace and love – Jesus' living water, we can't help but to feel full – full of joy, goodness, grace, and love. Water finds its way to the lowest points of the earth; though it finds its way to the lowest points, when it is brought up out of the ground, it brings life.

Sisters and brothers, when we are at our lowest, we can become our fullest. As Philip Yancy plainly said, "Grace, like water, flows downward...No matter how low we sink, grace flows to that lowest part." Even when we find our way to our lowest points of life, when we are raised up out of the depths, we are raised to new life. When Jesus lifts us up and fills us with living water, we can't go on living life like nothing ever happened.

Instead, sisters and brothers, we are to gush forth like geysers, spewing Living Water on everything we see and touch. By sharing with the world, those who believe that they are unlovable, and those feeling lifeless in their lowest points, that Jesus' grace and love flows like water, even to the lowest and unlovable parts of their lives, they are able to hear and know that Jesus is raising them up and by doing so is giving them life.