

Sermon March 8, 2026

John 4:5-42

Today we hear a familiar story of Jesus and a woman at a well. As you listen, remember that the Samaritans were enemies, holding ancient grudges. This is not just ancient history, but continues to impact people throughout the Middle East and the world. The area referred to as Samaria is now known as the West Bank

When you hear this story, remember:

- *Jesus has entered a region that was **ethnically and religiously distinct** from his own*
- *He meets a people who were **neighbors yet estranged***
- *Jesus **crossed this boundary intentionally***

Today, that same land is:

- *A place of **deep political tension***
- *Home to Palestinians, Israeli settlers, and a tiny surviving Samaritan community*
- *A landscape where boundaries—walls, checkpoints, identity papers—still shape daily life*

Hear now the Gospel of Christ.

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "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."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "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 have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"

The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 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 seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the One who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

Living Water

Today we hear about moments when water appears in places it has no business being. Moments when God's presence breaks open in the dry, cracked places of human life. Moments when liberation begins not with thunder or spectacle, but with a trickle... a stream... a wellspring.

Moses strikes a rock and water gushes out. Jesus sits beside a well and living water rises from the life of a woman who has been dismissed, diminished, and pushed to the margins.

These stories are not just ancient miracles. They are revelations of who God is—and who God calls us to be.

As Moses and his followers stumbled through the wilderness, they forgot who led them there in the first place. They forgot how God came to them over and over, first bringing plagues and then bringing freedom. They forgot the glory of crossing through the Red Sea as if it were dry land. And they forgot the promises that should have sustained them. The promise of their own land... of a home.

And so they stumbled along, never realizing that their lack of faith led them further into the wilderness and farther away from home.

Today we hear of the time when they stumbled into a place deep in the wilderness... a place that had no water. "Moses!" they cried, "give us some water! Why did you bring us to this God-forsaken place?" And God comes to the people... God comes to this place that is not really God-forsaken, but filled with God's sacred presence. God shows no sign of anger or frustration, but simply tells Moses how to ease the people's suffering.

Moses does what God commands. Water flowed from a rock, and the people drank from the Living Water.

Thousands of years later, the Samaritan woman finds herself in the wilderness and she doesn't even know it. It is a different kind of wilderness; she never even leaves her small village. Her place in the wilderness is found deep within her soul. She lost her way and tried to feel the void with one relationship after another. And yet the desolation and emptiness seems to overwhelm her.

Until that day when she carried her bucket to the well during the hottest point of the day... certain that no one will bother or judge her. But on this day, she met a stranger... not just a stranger but an enemy. "Give me a drink," he says, and as she shares the water that she draws from the well, she receives a greater gift – Living Water that will refresh her until the end of time.

Jesus sees this woman, and he knows her. He doesn't see an enemy but a sister. He has crossed the border to another land because he knows her pain and her longings. The thirst that Jesus recognizes is more than the longing for cold water... he sees in her a deeper thirst – a thirst of the soul. She comes to Jacob's well, as usual, but finds also Jesus' well – that well from which we may draw the refreshing gift of God's grace. Here is a reservoir that never runs dry; a spring that overflows because its source is God.

And Jesus recognizes that thirst in each of us as well. We all spend time in the wilderness... some of us live there right now. Perhaps like the Israelites, you wonder how you will provide the basic needs for your family to survive – food and water and shelter. Or maybe like the Samaritan woman, you face broken relationships that seem beyond healing, and you do not know where to go. Perhaps your time in the wilderness is surrounded by the pain of debilitating illness or the despair of addiction. We all face different threats, but there is one thing we all share. Our time in the wilderness is scary and lonely and dark. But when we emerge, we will be stronger than ever. We will discover that God truly is with us and the Living Water will refresh us forever.

With faith and hope, we can emerge from even the darkest place. And when we walk out of the wilderness and into the sunlight of God's grace, what will we do next? We are called to not just accept the gifts given to us by God, but to share them with our brothers and sisters... and our enemies. Jesus tells the disciples that what nourishes and refreshes him is to do God's will... to serve and minister and love... to give the gift of the Living Water to all who thirst.

The Living Water is not just meant to quench our own spiritual thirst. Jesus offers us transformation that is personal, but also communal, and systemic. When we drink from the Living water:

- dignity is restored
- shame is dismantled
- boundaries are crossed
- communities are healed
- systems are challenged
- The walls that separate us are erased

My friends, this is what we are called to do – to offer love and kindness to friends and strangers... to be a place that welcomes and heals and loves... to call for true justice that reorganizes unjust systems... to quench our thirst with the Living Water. And somewhere along the way, we will realize that Living water is justice in motion. It is the Spirit moving through the cracks of our world, refusing to stay contained by the walls we build.

We come to this place and our needs are great. We thirst for water, for hope, for healing. But, what we really seek is God. And when we turn to God for help, even in the darkest, most remote places of our heart, we will be refreshed with the Living Water.

Thanks be to God.

Beloved, Your strength may fail but *God's hand never will!* Chris will lead you wherever you may be