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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent/Year A  
March 19, 2017  
Text: John 4:5-42

### Refreshed in Jesus

We are hearing a lot from John's Gospel this Lenten season. And it is not always easy to preach John which is rich with symbolism. But of all the Gospels, it is John's Gospel that emphasizes Jesus as both human (one who got tired, cried, got angry, and showed compassion) and as divine. One of the many blessings of this Gospel is that John also emphasizes Jesus as being very available and relatable as Jesus speaks of himself in ways those who sought him would understand as he speaks of himself as The Gate, The Good Shepherd, as Living Bread, and yes, Living Water.

I suppose that many of us have our favorite Bible stories. Whether it comes from the Old or New Testament there is probably at least one that resonates with our spirits. One of mine happens to be today's gospel of the Woman at the Well because it tells the story of someone whose life was radically changed the day she met Jesus.

You see, the woman was much like me, like us. She spent her whole life looking for something and someone to fulfill her needs and her vision was limited. Like her, we search and search for those things that will fulfill us, that will fill any and every void we may encounter in life. We hunger and thirst for attention, status, recognition, power, love, and all sorts of things. And in our humanity we, like her, put our trust mainly in things we absorb along the way; ideals, the latest trends, and experiences that we know, which isn't always bad, but sometimes and often without being aware of it, we box ourselves in, relying solely on what we can see with our eyes and what we think we know in our heads. And we are sometimes afraid of stepping outside of the boxes that we create for ourselves and we are never really satisfied. But as this story of Jesus and the Woman shows us-there is always more to our lives when we remember to put God and the Christ in everything we say and do.

By this fourth chapter, Jesus has well begun his ministry. He has called disciples, turned water into wine, overturned the money changers' tables in the Temple, and performed many signs or miracles. He had been

about the countryside teaching, preaching and instructing his disciples to baptize those who gathered along the shore.

So here we are in the heat of the day. Jesus has stopped to rest at Jacob's well on the way to Galilee while his disciples have gone off in search of provisions. He was tired, hot, and thirsty. And as he sat, there came along someone else, a Samaritan woman who came to fill her water jar at the well. Curiously she came during the heat of the day instead of the usual morning hours to fill her jar then go home to wash or to cook as she did every day. She had not come expecting decent conversation from anyone especially from the Man now sitting there by the well. But it is here at the well and in this encounter that her life would change forever.

Jesus looked at her and said, "Give me a drink." The woman looked at him and asked how he could dare ask her, for some water. She was a Samaritan woman, an enemy, an outsider and of questionable reputation, and he, by his appearance and clothing, was a Jew, and Jews and Samaritans did not get along. And on top of that, they should not be speaking to each other for no man was to be seen talking in public with a woman who was not his wife.

Yet Jesus said to her, 'If you only knew who you were talking to and what God is offering you, you would be the one asking for a drink,' "and he would have given you living water." The woman looked and saw that he had no bucket and retorted, "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well?" And Jesus replied, "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 was puzzled for like Nicodemus in last week's gospel who took Jesus' words of being born again literally, the woman thinks Jesus has THE cure for thirst for she said to him, 'Sir, give me this water. Give me this water so I will never thirst and I won't have to carry water in this hot sun ever again.' But Jesus was not talking about water that could be drawn into pots and jars from a manmade well.

As their conversation continued, the woman's life and story was revealed and at the same time, changed. The longing and thirsting she sought to relieve was quenched not in the water drawn from a well or in finding yet another man in her home, but in Jesus who offered himself to her as a spring of Living Water that gushed up to eternal life; as the One who, in

John's Gospel, first reveals to her, a Samaritan woman, who he really was—the Messiah so longed for.

The woman of Samaria came to the well as an outsider but because of Jesus, her past was left behind and she was claimed for the kingdom Jesus came to proclaim. She had been shunned and alone but now she had become part of the family of God, welcomed and loved. She had been given a so great a gift that she in turn, became a witness to others. And John tells us that because of the Samaritan woman's story, many came to believe in Jesus and many more came to believe when they met him for themselves.

We know that water is essential to these bodies of ours. We cannot survive without it, not for long. Think, for a moment, of times you have thirsted for this wonderful gift, a gift not afforded to everyone in the world—think of the lack of sources of clean water all over the world, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, of people speaking out at the Dakota Access Pipeline. We do not diminish this essential need.

But when was the last time you really thirsted? Thirsted like the Israelites who wandered in the desert; thirsty for that which would nourish their bodies and their spirits? Take a moment. What is it that you have been thirsting for, longing for? For yourself? For another person? For the world? Have you found yourself during this Lenten season thirsting and longing for more?

In the heat of the day, a Samaritan woman was at the right place, at the right time. She was there where Jesus was – at the well, and her world was turned upside down. She was transformed.

Jesus says to us as he said that day to the woman at the well: “If you only knew who you were talking to and what God is offering you, you would be the one asking for a drink,” “and he would have given you living water.” Jesus speaks to us being the One we too long to see and desire. He offers himself as Living Water for us even now. He is the gift that God gives to us each and every day. He is the Gift of Living Water that quenches our thirsts and gives us comfort beyond the dryness of our mouths and the deepest desires of our souls for he promises, promises, to be that fountain of Living Water that transforms lives and gives life, eternal life to those who believe.

Sisters and brothers, the rest of the world is in deep longing too. There are people at the well in the mid-day heat. They thirst. They hunger. They long for what will truly satisfy. Hopefully, we won't keep our blessings to ourselves, but we will run and tell others, as the Samaritan women did so long ago, how our lives have been changed so that they too will come to know the Messiah, the Giver of Living Water: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.