

## Sermon for March 15, 2020

Third Sunday in Lent

By: Rev. Linda J. Ferguson

*O God; open our hearts to your word - a word that passes swiftly and faithfully from the ear to the heart, from the heart to our life. Amen*

Lent isn't really about us! Lent gives us a chance to look really closely at our lives and think about what we might want to change in it. How can we be better persons? If we only focus on our own sin, it becomes about us and it is a self-absorbed exercise. When we are caught up in guilt, we are looking at ourselves. But, what if we change the focus from ourselves, to God's love? Then, we come into the amazing awareness that even though we are sinners, we are loved incredibly by God. That is when we become people who are drawn back to that love and to our God.

A woman was telling the story of how her father was teaching her how to swim. She stood at the edge of the pool and her dad was in the water. "Jump in!" he would call to her. But she saw all of water and it was big and huge and she was afraid. Jump in! But she couldn't. Then he said to her while he pointed to his own eyes, "Look at me. Look at me. Watch my eyes. Jump." And she did it. Suddenly her focus wasn't on the water and her fear ... but on her father.

God is also saying to us, "Look at me! Don't focus on your guilt or your fears! Jump into my arms and let me love you!" God is inviting us to jump into the deep water into a close and loving relationship.

***Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well. It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."***

Jesus sits casually at the edge of the well and talks to this woman. But Jesus speaks to her directly. He is comfortable with her. He is offering her new life. A friendship with him. He wants to offer us the same thing, a real relationship with him. How does he encounter us? He sits in the same place we are. He meets us in a place where we carry our shame and we want to hide. And he wants to love us and give us a new, deeper relationship with him.

A lot of times, we try to keep God at a distance. Life is good and we have it all under control. Often, we think I don't need God. I have my life in control, or so I think until the next natural disaster in daily life comes along. Then we suddenly realize, "Oh! we need God in our lives. Help us, God!"

One of the first things we can really realize is that God Is Here. Not There. God is here. When we finally "get it," that God is not in some abstract place far away but here, in our own hearts, just waiting for us, then maybe we can move God out of our heads and into our hearts.

Jesus said, "You did not choose me, I chose you." Jesus actively wants a relationship with us and our messiness doesn't change his desire. In fact, the messier our lives are, the more we need his love and the more he wants to love us. He longs to be with us, to have us share our lives with him and talk to him.

***It was about noon. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. And then it was noon and the woman of Samaria came by herself to draw water.***

The question in our minds are what kind of a life did she lead? The well was a gathering place in town and the people would have met there, talked, laughed and connected with

each other. Then I imagine that they go home with their water because it's getting hot. They leave the well, carry their water and go to the shade of their homes.

She was avoiding the people of the town. She knows they will judge her. Often we may think to ourselves, "Oh those people, judging someone like that, so harshly." But would we be different? How would we be as one of the other people in the town? Would we be willing to be-friended her the way Jesus did? Would we want to be even seen at the well with her?

So, what does Jesus do? He sits down and asks her for some water. Would we have accepted water from her? And what makes us condemn her more harshly than Jesus does? It might be because we can't comprehend how absolutely loved we are by God. We think in our minds, not our hearts, and our minds tell us that we know how we love, and God must love us the same way. We love carefully. We love as people deserve. We know how people have treated us in the past and we adapt our love accordingly.

So here is Jesus, sitting at the edge of the well, asking for a drink of water and then offering the Samaritan woman living water. Her response to him is from her brain. She is logical, the way we are.

***"Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water?"***

Jesus doesn't go to the logic of what she says. He speaks to her heart:

***"Whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."***

"The water I shall give will become a spring of water welling up with life!" He offers her something that will change her life forever. When she heard Jesus say this, the Samaritan

woman was looking at Jesus, standing with him and she could feel that he was offering her something she had never had before. A new way of life. The invitation was to her heart, not her head and she began to listen in a different way. She says,

***“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”***

We can say that to Jesus, too. We can ask Jesus to be with us in everything we have ever done. The things we are proud of; the things about our lives that make us ashamed. We could say, “Lord, we also hang out at the well at noon. We don’t have five husbands, but we have a dozen areas where we fall short of living the life of faith and trust in you. We are not so together. All you ask is to let you give us the water you offer us.

***The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, “Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Christ?”***

She opened her heart to Jesus and her life is different. She left her water jar! What had been her lifeline, her water jar, she forgot about it. She has a new water and a new life. She goes to town, a town in which she had been humiliatingly rejected, and she boldly calls people together to tell them about this incredible man she has met. She says: He told me everything I have ever done. Suddenly she is no longer burdened by her past life. Her guilt and sin are not the focus. She has heard Jesus say, “Look at me! Put your focus on me, not on your past life” and her life is changed!

And what is the response?

***Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me everything I have done.”***

Jesus shows us who we really are. Not who we WANT to be, but who we are. Imperfect and utterly loved in God’s eyes.

It's not a message we can hear with our brains. It's one that Jesus asks us to open our hearts for. "Look at me," he says, "and jump into the deep water

***Let us Pray:***

My brothers and sisters,

There is a thirst in every human heart.

Each of us is like that lonely Samaritan woman.

We are thirsting for something,  
something that will satisfy all our longings.

But often we search in the wrong places.

We draw the water from many wells:

the water of praise to quench our thirst for self-esteem;

the water of success to quench our thirst for importance;

the water of pleasure to quench our thirst for joy.

And, yet, we still remain thirsty.

For only God can give us what we are looking for.

God alone can cause a spring to well up inside us

and the water from this spring will sustain us in our journey  
to the Promised Land of everlasting life."

*Amen.*

*Sources used for this sermon:*

*The Passion Bible*