

The Lord IS Among You

Life in the wilderness is hard for Israel. “There was no water for the people to drink” – and – the people began to quarrel with Moses, grumbling against God. As is often the case – the Lord provides – even though the people do not deserve His gracious provisions. They had the audacity to test the Lord, asking – “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Life is hard for the Samaritan woman in our text. Her daily chores brought her to this well given to Joseph. In the heat of the day, she would draw water from the well – each day – every day. Do you suppose in the midst of her daily grind, the question crossed her mind – “Is the Lord among us or not?”

For us who hear the words of St. John’s Gospel, it would seem a silly question. Jesus Himself comes and sits on her well – but she doesn’t know who this man is. At first, it seems He’s just there to add to her workload – “give me a drink,” He says.

But then the language shifts. He speaks of a gift. His words become mysterious. Words about “living water” – “never be thirsty forever” – “whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

She might not understand everything that Jesus is saying – but it sure sounds good to her! “Sir, give me this water.” I can finally retire. No more of this back-breaking work in the heat of the day – no more thankless trudging over here to draw water!

But this isn’t a retirement opportunity. Drawing water from the well daily was not her only burden – her only hardship. Her past, and present, sins weighed heavily on her – sapping her strength – wearing her down.

She’s had five husbands, and the one she now has is not her husband. Without knowing all the details – we still know she’s had a hard life. A lot of brokenness, unfaithfulness, disruption, pain. She’s been sinned against, and she has sinned against others. Life is hard.

She is like Israel of old. Unfaithful to the Lord. Rebellious. Not trusting the Lord, but testing Him. Not following Him, but going astray. Living the hard life that results from the brokenness that our sin brings to us daily – living under the curse of sin.

Our prayer is for her today. “O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word”

She knows her sin. She knows she has gone astray. And did you notice that she immediately pivots the conversation to “worship”? The Lord commands that we remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy – because He wants us to have Sabbath, “rest.” Jesus is sitting on her well – to give her rest.

Dearly beloved, your life is hard. The daily grind. The past and present sins. The great mystery is that Jesus comes and sits on your well – on your couch, in your break room, at your lunch table!

“Is the Lord among us or not?” I AM is His certain and sure response. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I among them.” He who suffered and endured many things for you – He who died for you while you were yet sinners – He is the Lord who is among you today!

He comes – not demanding that you shape up first and then He’ll give you a drink of water – not requiring proof of sincerity and worthiness before bestowing His gifts.

He comes – not with a retirement opportunity – so that you’ll no longer have to draw water – feed the cattle hay – balance the books – keep the machines running – doing laundry, shopping for groceries, shuttling the kids all over the place. He comes to give you rest – His Sabbath rest.

The Lord God Himself breaks into your daily grind this very day – to give you what the world cannot give. While we are yet sinners – He gives us hope – a hope that gushes forth from His sword-pierced-side – a blood shed “for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins” – past, and present.

He does not put you to shame – He sets you free. Free from the never-ending attempt to make yourself pleasing to God – respectable in His sight – worthy of His love. He has shown His love for you – “in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

That freedom and that hope does not put to shame. Your grumbling, your testing, your unfaithfulness, your going astray – all of it has been cast into the depths of Christ’s grave – separated from you as far as the east is from the west. There is no shame. Only freedom ... and rest. [P]

Dearly beloved, the Lord IS among us – and He shows His love for you, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.