

## ***“Worship in Spirit and Truth”***

Whether you’ve “had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband” – or you’ve had one, or two, or none – you know the daily struggle faced by this Samaritan woman. You know YOUR particular problems – the sin which weighs you down – which turns your life into a daily, never-ending chore of drawing water.

Is that why you are here? Is that why you have come to this place, to this worship service?

With this particular, Samaritan woman – some make much of the fact that she comes to the well to draw water at the “sixth hour” – at noon, in the heat of the day. Some suggest that she does so to escape the scorn, the looks, the contempt of her neighbors.

What we can say for sure is that, like all of us “poor, miserable sinners” – she has come to the well because she needs water. Water, necessary for relief – water, necessary for life. And Jesus is there – not by coincidence – but on purpose!

In the verse prior to our reading – it says that Jesus “had to pass through Samaria.” Sure, it was the shortest route between point A and point B. And yes, the Jews normally went around Samaria to get to Galilee. But all of that misses the point!

Jesus HAD to be there – God says so! St. John uses the “divine DEI” – “it is necessary.” It is divinely necessary for Jesus to be there – FOR this woman!

So, the encounter of the sinner with Jesus begins. Jesus says to her, “Give me a drink.” And right away you might wonder – is Jesus there for her – or is she there for Jesus?

It sounds like she’s a bit confused, as well. What is He doing, asking her for a drink? “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” After all, as John points out, Jews and the Samaritans don’t get along with one another.

Indeed, to drink from the same vessel as this Samaritan would make one ceremonially unclean – cut off from God’s presence – unable to worship. Do you have the same reticence in drinking from the same cup with other sinners – afraid of becoming “unclean”?

Jesus answers her saying, “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.” If you knew who is sitting here, right in front of you – if you knew who I AM – the One asking you for a drink – “if you knew the gift of God” – you would have asked me for a drink, and I would give you living water.

But this woman can’t see this gift staring her in the face – she doesn’t know who Jesus is. The well is deep – you have no bucket – how can you get this “living water” – are you greater than Jacob?

Well, this is a deep subject. As Jesus will go on to show us – this encounter is really about worshipping God in Spirit and truth. If she, and we – knew better – we would worship differently.

We wouldn’t be distracted by what man can and cannot do. We wouldn’t keep getting thirsty and have to come and draw water again. We wouldn’t compare God to our heroes of the faith. We wouldn’t confine Him to our definitions of true worship.

True worship depends upon the gift of God. “The water that I will give him,” Jesus says, “will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” And with this mention of this water – the Samaritan woman is thirsty.

She wants this water. “Sir, give me this water” – but notice her reason why – “so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” There is more for her to learn – and us as well – and the teaching continues.

But before we continue, did you notice that she never gives Jesus a drink of water? Does Jesus give her a drink .....

True worship reveals sin – and that’s what Jesus does. He not only knows of her multiple husbands and current live-in – but “all I ever did” she confesses (v. 29). Her thirst has become even greater – with her sin laid bare. True worship includes Jesus coming to us and repenting us.

And what is one to do? How does one take care of their sin? Which mountain do I need to go to in order for my sin problem to go away? I know my sin, it is always before me – but how am I to be forgiven – how can I be made whole – how can I be righteous in God’s sight --- which mountain do I need to go to – the mountain of the Jews, or to the Samaritans place of worship?

The short answer is – neither! True worshippers must worship “in Spirit and truth.” True worship begins with God coming TO and FOR sinners. He who loved us while we were still sinners, and died for us – He who knows all my sin – the very “gift of God” comes to us, giving us “a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The Holy Spirit is given to us so that we might see the One who is right here in the midst of us. The Holy Spirit enlightens us to this “gift of God” – teaching us that worship isn’t about us giving God a drink of water – or debating with Him about the proper place of worship – but revealing the truth that God comes to us – justifying the sinner – satisfying our thirst for forgiveness.

In our Lutheran Confessions, we confess that faith is the highest form of worship. “It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from Him what He promises and offers.” (Ap AC IV, 114.49)

BTW – did Jesus ever give this woman the drink He promised? Yes, He did – in speaking to her, His Word reveals Himself as the Messiah. The same Lord who spoke to Moses from the burning bush is sitting here with her – speaking to her – promising her living water and eternal life – satisfying her thirst – for He is her Savior, and yours.

God reveals His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He who died, and was raised to life again – sits with you now – giving you eternal life. He who knows all that you ever did – covers it all with His blood – redeeming you, and restoring you to your heavenly Father.

God grant you His Holy Spirit – that you may worship in Spirit and truth – that you may drink from the well of God’s love and grace to you – in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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