



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for Lent 3

March 15, 2020

Sweet Water of Life

John 4:5–30, 39–42

⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know



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that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?”²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?”³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² 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 indeed the Savior of the world.”

The Samaritan woman at the well was a very naughty girl. And everyone knew it. Why else do you think she would come to the well when no one else was there? Probably no one would talk to her. Maybe they wouldn’t even let her draw water. She was a woman of ill-repute. But even naughty girls need water. So she avoided the ridicule and dirty looks and came when she knew she would be alone.

Imagine her surprise, when this day she saw someone sitting by the well. Imagine her apprehension as she was faced with the dilemma: Do I go back home and wait for this man to leave? What if he sits here all day? How will I know when he’s gone? Should I just go ahead and risk the rebuke?

Then she noticed something. The man was not from her village. Well . . . maybe it’ll be okay. He won’t know anything about me or my life, so I can just go ahead and draw my water and he probably won’t even bother me. In fact, she was sure he wouldn’t. She could tell from his clothing that he wasn’t even a Samaritan; he was a Hebrew. Jews don’t like dealing with Samaritans. So, she would draw her water and be on her way without so much as a word between them.

Imagine her great surprise, when the man asked her for a drink! As you know, this man was Jesus and He had a few more surprises up His sleeve – for her, and maybe for you.

For instance, we’ve got it wrong if we approach this text thinking of how awful she was for the way she lived. I’m not condoning her life-choices. Married five times and now shacking up with a man she wasn’t even married to? Not good! But, have you ever thought of how things would have gone if the one meeting Jesus at the well that day had been you instead of that woman? I’ve often thought that the essence of true confession is to contemplate what Jesus would have said to me had I been the one standing there



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with the water jug. What would Jesus – who sees into the hearts of all men – have read in mine? As each of us makes confession of our sins during the divine service, we would do well to consider this – that He sees all knows our sins and yet wants to give us the sweet water of life.

Church is a funny place – a place where we come and admit that we’re sinners and then pretend that we’re not as bad as somebody else. We complain about the world and how terrible other people are and make believe that we’re not just like them. You see, if we admit that they’re just like us, then maybe we’d feel like we should invite them in and, well, do we really want to do that? They might be more trouble than they’re worth. But maybe the same could be said for me. Hmm?

Everybody has secrets – things about themselves they’d rather not have known by the rest of the community. Did you ever think that maybe that’s why some people don’t come to church? They’re ashamed of their life, and they feel that coming to the well with the rest of us would be to risk ridicule and rebuke.

Here’s the reality: We would all be subject to ridicule and rebuke if everyone knew our hidden faults and secret sins. Some of them we won’t even confess to ourselves, let alone anyone else. But, like I said, there is One who knows. And He knows it all. He knows *our* secret sins just like He knew the sins of that woman at the well, and He offers us what He offered her – not judgment, not condemnation, not rebuke or ridicule, but the water of life: forgiveness, salvation, restoration. And it accomplishes what He gives it to do.

It certainly did for the woman at the well. For in that moment when her faith was quickened and her spirit came to life, she dropped her water jar and hurried back to the village seeking out those whom she had previously avoided. Having tasted the sweet water of forgiveness and salvation, she was driven to share it with her neighbors, and in doing so, she was restored to her community, and together with her community, she was reconciled to God.

There is no happenstance with God, no coincidence. Jesus picked this very well to stop at because He knew this woman needed to meet Him. He knew her village needed her to meet Him. And He was eager to give her living water.

There is no coincidence with God. You’re here for a reason today. And, whether you knew it or not when you came through that door, Jesus is here to meet you. He knows that you need to meet Him. He knows that your community needs you to meet Him. And He’s just as eager to give *you* living water. Receive it from Him now. As once that water poured over your brow in Holy Baptism, feel it now pouring over you through the power of His Spirit working through the Word. Swallow it in great gulps as it rushes past your ears and into your heart and soul. Like a child in a rain-puddle joyfully splash away in it as it soaks into the very ground on which you stand. Get drenched to the bone with the water of life, and may it be to you a spiritual fountain of youth. For that is what His forgiveness is. It’s a bath, a shower, a cleansing, a quenching of spiritual thirst, an elixir of life that



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restores, refreshes, rejuvenates, enlivens, and renews.

So, drink up, beloved. Drink from the well of salvation. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Confess your sins, receive His forgiveness, consume His delicious Word, eat and drink His very body and blood given and poured out for you. For He has met you at the well today that your life and community may never be the same. In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen