

# THE SERMON SUPPLY



A Resource from  
Region 6



## Third Sunday in Lent, Year A

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Gospel Text - John 4:5-42

### John 4:5-42

<sup>5</sup>[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.<sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup> A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."<sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)<sup>10</sup> 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."<sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"<sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"<sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,<sup>14</sup> 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."<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."<sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,'<sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not

your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" <sup>30</sup> They left the city and were on their way to him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup> The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> 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 truly the Savior of the world."

## **SERMON TEXT:**

When I was in the seventh grade, I had two really good friends, Kerri and Karen. We spent most school days and weekends hanging out together. Kerri's house was almost exactly half way between Karen's and my house, so we'd meet up there and then, in nice weather, head across the street to the old field house playground. We'd sit and chat, as seventh grade girls do, but we'd often do it sitting on the teeter-totter. Kerri would take one end, Karen would take the other, and I sit in the middle. For me, it was the best place to be because I was never fond of that stomach dropping feeling you get on the teeter-totter, and while Kerri and Karen were friends they often fell on opposite ends of arguments, so up and down they'd go as they argued back and forth, and I watched like I was at a tennis game (head back and forth) wondering what would happen next and who would triumph.

Today's gospel gives me almost the exact same feeling, except instead of Kerri and Karen, I'm listening to Jesus and a Samaritan woman trying to figure each other out. Each of them is both at an advantage and at a disadvantage. They go up and

down, back and forth depending on the question being asked and the answer being given. Let's look first at the Samaritan woman-of course, we want to put her at a disadvantage, she is coming to draw water in the heat of the day, by herself, which tells us that she is somehow separated from the other women of the area, she has for some reason been married many times and is now not, but still attached, and she is approaching and about to have a conversation with the Son of God. However, we also have to give her a few advantages as well. After all, she has the bucket, the means to get the water, she is local and familiar with the well and the area, and she has knowledge of Jacob, the Messiah, and she worships God. And let's not forget that she's honest with Jesus (which many aren't), she isn't ashamed to run and tell the news about Jesus and bring people to him so that they may believe as well. She has a lot going for her that we often forget to acknowledge. And while it may be hard to see Jesus at any disadvantage, given that he is the Son of God, the living water, etc., he *is* alone, hot, hungry, thirsty, and dealing constantly with people who don't understand or appreciate him. While he is interested in a larger conversation with the woman, I do also believe that he is simply thirsty and in need of drink. We have to

remember that when God decided to come to earth in the flesh, he became truly human. Jesus fully experiences all those problems that we have-hunger, exhaustion, disappointment, anger, sorrow, and yes, even thirst. So, the two begin to talk, up and down, back and forth, and we are the wonderful witnesses to a conversation that changes lives.

That was a good conversation, I wish I could've been there. Too often I feel at a disadvantage in conversations. If you know me, that may be hard to believe, as I'm not exactly shy or lacking in my ability to talk, but when it comes to speaking about or to God, I usually feel unworthy or unable to keep up my end of the conversation. Anyone else know where I'm coming from? When I see someone struggling with their life, trapped in a society that disregards them or judges them unfairly (as the woman was), or someone trying to understand why illness or tragedy befalls them, or speak to or against those who seem so sure in their hurtful opinions. I feel like have no good answers or that my support doesn't matter or can't change things. There are times I try to reach out to God in my hurt and confusion, while at the same time praying God doesn't ask me any questions or bring up those things for which I am ashamed. And then there are those

really horrible moments, when your mouth says what it wants before you can engage your brain to stop it, and you say the harsh, the stupid, or the exact wrong thing. So you have to apologize and live with the damage. As much as I think I may want to have a one-on-one with Jesus, as the woman did, a large part of me has the feeling I would be at a disadvantage, and wouldn't be nearly as brave as the one who ran off exclaiming she had talked with the Messiah. I like being the watcher between Jesus and the woman, I'm not sure I want in the conversation.

Here's the thing, though, the woman didn't really want to be in the conversation either-at first. Her responses are truthful, but limited, and she skirts the issue Jesus is really trying to get at. She is never the one to bring up her disadvantages, she says nothing about her reasons for drawing water in the middle of the day or having five husbands and sixth man. She is intrigued by what Jesus tells her, but she doesn't see past the desire to change her disadvantages even though she doesn't believe it can be done "Are you greater?". She doesn't expect her world to be any different than what it is unless this strange man can give her something tangible to change it. Until...do you notice what begins to change her attitude and her heart? It's the fact that

Jesus does not see her as disadvantaged. He does not point out the strangeness of her coming to the well in the heat of the day. He is not the one to call out that she is Samaritan or a woman. He doesn't even judge the number of husbands or the one who is not, he gives facts, but not judgment. And to top it off, he even takes away her concern over the religious difference between the Jews and Samaritans (where they worship) and places it where it belongs-on who they worship. She, who enters the story weighed down by the negatives and disadvantages, becomes the catalyst for others' belief in Jesus. She proclaims a Messiah for Samaritans as well as Jews, and by the end of this story, others recognize Jesus as the Savior of the world. Whatever that woman may have felt about herself entering into the conversation with Jesus, he makes sure she walks away knowing she is worthy of spreading the news of God's love, and that the Messiah has come for her. Nothing in her life was changed, and yet everything was different.

That's the thing about Jesus-he doesn't see our disadvantages. That's not to say he's unaware of our sins and faults, but that he doesn't see them like we do. He is not waiting to meet us by a well, at church, at our job, or in our home with the

intention of letting us know what a disappointment we've been any given day. He's not searching us out to remind us of the stupid thing we blurted out or the important thing we kept inside. He's looking to remind us what's important, to quench our thirst, to cool our brow, to offer us forgiveness and hope, and just listen to us. He knows us, knows all about us, but he isn't holding it over our heads in judgment, he's letting us know he's there and we're worthy of his time, attention, and love. We are the ones that weigh ourselves down with all the negatives, with the what ifs and if onlys, Jesus is the one who reminds us that he get us, he's got us, and we're more than the sum of our thoughts, our facts, and our confusions, we are the chosen people of God, children of a Father of truth, who sends his Spirit to uplift us and give us hope, and that we have a message to give others who see themselves as less than, as unworthy, as unloveable. That there is someone who loves them beyond reason, beyond doubt, beyond fear, and beyond life, and that is something worth talking about. Amen.

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