

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

That old, old concept of sin still holds sway in this world of ours, and quite frankly is all around us, it ranges from the idea that the gods of this world, money and power, are all important, even more important than peoples' lives, to the idea that you can be a good Christian and not be at all concerned about your neighbor's welfare, to the notion that you can be a good Christian and inflict racism, insults, verbal and physical abuse on others especially if they are of a different religion or look different from you, to the idea that you can be a good Christian and it's okay to hold others to a higher standard than you yourself maintain. We, brothers and sisters, live in a world drenched in sin, and sin has a grip on us.

Our gospel this morning opens with Jesus asking a Samaritan woman for water, a request that violates the social and religious order and customs of the time. There has been bad blood between Jews and Samaritans for hundreds of years when Jesus asks her for water. She is baffled by Jesus' request, a Jew would be rendered ceremonially unclean, defiled by contact with a Samaritan, in addition to which, he's a male and she is female. This Samaritan woman, like Nicodemus a religious Jewish male aristocrat, are treated equally by Jesus who is willing to break the taboos to do so. She cannot know that Jesus isn't defiled by what is considered unclean, he touches a leper and the leper heals. Jesus sanctifies what he touches.

Jesus is thirsty and through their conversation he in effect challenges this woman to recognize who is speaking with her, prompting her to ask him for living water. She thinks Jesus to be less than Jacob, she's thinking of water on a worldly level, but Jesus is speaking of water on an eternal level. She is intrigued, and asks for such living water.

Now consider she has had five husbands and has a current live-in, it's about noon when she comes to get water, not early in the day and again in the evening as would have normally been done. She is avoiding the company of other women, knowing that she has pushed beyond the moral standards of the day. When Jesus asks her to go get her husband, she gives an ambiguous answer, Jesus uses the answer to uncover her sins.

In the third chapter of the gospel of John, we read starting with 20th verse "For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed." But the Light has come into the world and has just confronted her with her past. So will she turn her back on the light? She doesn't turn her back, she looks to the light, she acknowledges Jesus as a prophet and turns to matters of worship. She is a woman of the world but is beginning to think on another level.

Jesus then explains that true worship of God who is spirit is worship in spirit and truth. Now recall Jesus talking with Nicodemus last week, those born of water and the Spirit. The Samaritan woman tells Jesus that she knows the Messiah is coming who will proclaim all things to them. Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is

speaking to you.” And now we see a person who struggling to understand, leaves her water-jar and heads back to the city.

We too struggle to understand when Jesus speaks to us, sometimes we don’t recognize him or his message, yet he brings living water. Even his disciples don’t understand, sometimes they don’t realize that they don’t understand. They, like us, can be incredibly obtuse. Jesus speaks to his disciples about food on another level, eternity, while they only wonder how he could have eaten in their absence.

Jesus’ food is his mission from God, his food is to do the will of him who sent Jesus and complete his work. And Samaritans come to Jesus, inviting him to stay with them. The harvest has started from Jesus’ ministry, and the Samaritans are now part of it. Planting the seed, harvesting, all on the same day, this is the reality of the Lord Jesus and the living water he brings. The seed that he plants, the Word of God, repentance, the good news that the Kingdom of God has come near. The seed brings recognition that it is Jesus who turns people from sin, who breaks the chains of bondage binding us to the things the world holds so dear, including sin. Disciples are sent to harvest what they did not plant, Jesus plants and harvests.

This gospel reading today is marvelous, it shows what happens when Jesus unexpectedly comes into one’s life, it is intentional for this season of Lent. Giving in to the desires of the world, the lure of flesh, the lust for money, the longing for power will only corrupt and destroy. We cannot flirt with these other gods, these worldly gods, we sometimes gamble with our lives, thinking we can come back to Jesus as long as we don’t die first.

The truth is, we belong to God right now, we are his, baptized by water and the Spirit, called by our Lord to follow him, called by our Lord to plant the seeds of the gospel, to join the harvest.

The Samaritan woman raced back to her city sharing the good news of the Messiah, we too are to share the good news of Christ Jesus, God’s only Son, our Lord.

AMENM