Feb. 4, 2018 Woman at the Well John 4:1-42 (Psalm 42:**1-3**) Liturgical color: Green

PRAYER OF THE DAY God of life, Shower us in your living water, bringing us to new life, fresh and clean. Walk with us as we share the knowledge of your living water with others, so that all might live. Amen. HYMNS For all the faithful women ELW 419 Take my life, that I may be ELW 583, 685, H82 707, UMH 399, NCH 448 O sons and daughters ELW 386 CHORAL Give me Jesus, Larry Fleming

Psalm 42:1 <To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites.> As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help

6 and my God.

**Announcements Prayers**

Souper Bowl- soup & sandwich sale today Grief: families of Grace Merkel

Aunt Phyllis - Carole Schmehl’s aunt

Warren Dietrich (died yesterday)

Big - Children’s Message:

Today in the Bible we hear a story about people meeting for the first time, helping each other.

😱 Here’s a story about a family. ‘Dad Agee, Mom Agee, and 3 children: R, E, F, Agee’ who lived in a huge city like New York in a country across the Atlantic ocean from here. A place where they speak English like we do, but children get kidnapped from school, bombs go off in public places, if a baby gets sand in his eyes from the desert they can get a sicknesses that makes them blind. They are scared, and now some of their aunts and uncles wanted them to do something that would hurt the daughter; so they ran away and stayed with their Christian friends in a little town like Robesonia.

# 😱 It was not safe to be Christian in that town, there are big bullies in a group called Boko that brings Harm! Churches are being bombed; Christians are not safe at home since it was even more dangerous than the city… so they ran back home. The same dangers in the big city got worse.

# 😰 Back in the big city they applied to their government for permission to go to a different country, it took a long time and because the government worker liked their children; they got a visitor’s pass to the USA. But the trip cost so much money they had to get extra jobs and still sell almost everything they owned. In May when they got to the US to change planes to Texas, the people they went to visit were not home. The family, ‘Dad Agee, Mom Agee, and 3 children: R, E, F, Agee’ was taken to jail for 2 months. But they were lucky they got to stay at the same jail together…. That jail is here in Berks county by Blue Marsh lake! But they could not go there to play in May or June because they were in jail for 2 months until they could ask a judge for a safe place to live in the US. A judge said you do not need to stay in jail. Go find a place to live and then come to my office in Philadelphia in 4 months (December), but during this whole time: mom and dad may not work nor drive a car, nor get money from the government. The children may go to school.

In December, the 2nd judge said maybe yes, come back in a year and we’ll see if you can prove to me you should be a refugee. Now you can fill-out papers for permission to work, when you get those, you may apply for a job. You may not travel far, and all your official papers will stay with us so that you may not leave.

What would Jesus expect us to say or do while the family is waiting?

Sermon:

In a western cowboy movie, when someone walks boldly through swinging saloon doors; that is a sign that this character will be an important component of the plot! And at the beginning of a romantic comedy when two characters bump into each other you know that there will be a relationship blooming. In the Hebrew scriptures, that we know as the Old Testament, when two people meet at a well… something HUGE is going to happen… a wedding is foretold (Gen 24:11[[1]](#footnote-1)) or a birth (Gen 16:14) or an important deep covenant relationship (Gen 26:20) even to the point of life and death (Num 21:16; 2 Sam 17:21). So the disciples’ response when they return to find Jesus at a well with a woman should not be too surprising. (Remember the New Testament was still being lived; it had not yet been written.) It is true that this meeting at the well of Jacob well is deeply significant… but the **birth is a re-birth** as a child of God… as this Samaritan woman echoes the exchange of Jesus and Nicodemus about being born-again… that you heard last week with Pastor Tim.

This is a covenant; a new covenant, forged in the exchange of temporal well-water for divine living water, gushing-up quenching waters to eternal life. This is not a marriage in the traditional sense; but **it is a life-long commitment** of fidelity from the divine… I AM. In the Greek Jesus says “I AM, who is speaking to you. (v 26) Bringing the almighty name, to their meeting place at the well, in the middle of an otherwise ordinary day. And this exchange is nourishment for Jesus! in the life and ministry of Jesus… who tells his confused disciples: (v 34) “My food is to do the will of him who sent me to complete his work.”

While the woman is taking her new insights back to her neighbors in the city; her growing understanding first recognizing Jesus as a Jew; then calling him lord/sir – and then a prophet – by the time she has returned to the city without her water jar she is wondering if Jesus is the Messiah –

While the woman is taking her new insights back to her neighbors in the city; Jesus pours-out the truth, inundating the disciples with more than they can absorb. In harvest symbolism, Jesus points-out that **now** is the time to harvest for eternal life, stop waiting! Although some people are still waiting to act, four-more months… Jesus would have these disciples recognize that the time is now! Time to act. Time to harvest. In fact the harvest has begun… with laborers including a Samaritan woman who at that very moment was returning from her city with the gathered fruit for eternal life… **people** who would be coming to believe; even-though they did not yet believe; they did not believe because of the woman’s testimony; but they were curious, they were searching for something, they came to see for themselves and in that very first encounter with Jesus there was something about Jesus that inspired them to make the encounter something more… right there at the well; the people of the ‘enemy’ city extended to Jesus an invitation into relationship… they asked him to stay with them. **And he did**. For two entire days.

Jesus, a Jew, stayed **in** this Samaritan city, among Samaritans, being ritually unclean, for two **days**… even though Jews would not talk with Samaritans, Jews would not walk on the same sidewalk, Jews would not eat with Samaritans, Jesus stayed with these ‘century-old enemies’ for two days! They said in essence, Come to us, abide with us, our LORD Emmanuel… because while Jesus accepted their hospitality … they believed because of his word. The harvest ripened in 2 days! And look what they believed!... **they believed that Jesus is the savior of the world**.

They believed that Jesus was a Jew; more than that they believed that Jesus was a lord/sir – and more than that they came to believe that Jesus was a prophet – and then even more they came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah – and after abiding together for 2 days with Jesus **they believed that Jesus is the savior of the world.** Not only for Jews, living with Jesus and listening to his word, the hated people of this city were embraced by this Jewish outsider who they now know as the savior… and not only a savior to the Jews… Jesus came to save almost-Jews like them… and even non-Jews like us. Thanks to the thirst our LORD has for pouring-out himself as living water for all people, ready-or-not.

We have an annual meeting today. We are waiting for a long-range plan to go into effect with dreams of a full sanctuary on Sunday at 9am, a sanctuary loud with wiggling, and rustling, and crying children; a sanctuary full of busy young adults who got up, and said I can’t work this morning I’ll be at church; or I can’t stay late Saturday night, I need to be at church in the morning. People bringing their neighbors, others bringing grandchildren… we are waiting for things to change. But the harvest is plentiful now and the laborers are few now. We have already begun to trim and prune and grow so that when we invite people who are not like us, we will be inviting Jesus to stay with us. Even though we may have different rituals, and traditions. Like the Samaritans inviting Jesus to stay with them; we may not even **like** the way our visitors live, or think, or practice their faith… but People before us have sown the Word of God, and this Word has grown faith and belief by the grace of God… there is no time to waste.

Will we be like the faithful who were so fearful that they made people who were interested in the message of Jesus fearful enough to sneak to him in the secrecy of night like Nicodemus? Or will we be like the hated Samaritan people who had the same faith in the same God and used the same scriptures, and opened their homes and their hearts to this radically different One… who taught them, and lived among them and saved them with a divine flood of grace, so they would never again be parched for salvation.

Prayer: God help us. Amen.

Notes from Working preacher podcast for Epiphany 5; Feb 4, 2018 Luther seminary

*(Read as a script)*

*Jesus goes to the well and finds this woman!*

*The woman gave Jesus water for his thirst; Jesus gave her Living water*

*JC needs her to witness to her town; she needs Jesus for living relationship with God*

*First I AM… not to disciples nor Jewish leaders, but rather to the world!*

*26 Jesus said to her, "I am ~~he~~, the one who is speaking to you."*

*She is not an immoral woman – 5 husbands may be because she is widowed or barren (seriel victim not serial sinner)*

*Reminder of Samaritans: 2 territories Judea and Galilee (after the exile Jews were given a grant) in between Assyrians intermarried; Torah and Mt Zion is Mt Gerizim… almost 200 years ago this fighting friends/1st cousins… there has been violence*

*This is not 2 people on neutral ground… lots of ancient grievances; high ethnic tension!*

*This relationship not starting with neutral ground nor blank slate… even here something new can happen.*

*Jacob’s well; in the OT well-scene means something is going to happen (like come into swinging saloon door; or romantic comedy 2 people bump into each other and drop what they are carrying)*

*Jacob and Rachel likely to get married… but Jesus never marries… but disciples WOW! What?!*

*Question that divides… worship on which mountain? JC says neither, God is who and right here.*

*invitation to abide/dwell from the towns people to Jesus! Meno*

*1st model witness – do not sit back and wait until you sort all this out! Go and witness, share, let God do the work.*

*Her witness was because she asked the right question and gave others an invitation to encounter Jesus for themselves; not through her.*

*The woman at the well journey of discernment - truly you are the savior of the world; being in relationship with Jesus is a salvific moment.*

*Starts JC is a Jew – sir/ lord/kurios – prophet – messiah – savior of the world! – savior of the cosmos*

1. Isaac and Rebekah marriage arranged; later Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29:3) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)