

Lent 3A John 4:5-42 12/03/23

Living waters! That's what we need and that's what Jesus offers us this morning; living waters that can satisfy our thirst for life. He offers living waters that promise to give sustenance to our faith, living waters that supply us with an endless source of strength and encouragement no matter what we face in life.

We avow that our Christian faith is important to us. We say that we trust in God. But so often we refuse to draw close enough to God to allow God to touch us and change our hearts inside. We attend church when we can. We open the pew sheet and hold it in front of us. We listen and say the words each Sunday, listen and watch the beauty of holiness but inside a thousand other thoughts are running wild ( is the lunch going to be ready if he keeps on going- that last hymn was my least favourite-why is so and so doing so and so- the crack in the church wall is looking worse ). The same judging of others still plagues us. The same seeking and striving to be better than those around us continues. The same inconsiderate nature still rules unchecked within our hearts, and the seeds of faith planted within us never seem to fully take root.

Lent reminds us that we need living water. We need to draw close to God, open our hearts, and allow the waters of God's love to flow within us and nurture that fragile planting of faith into fruit. For all too many, the choice is to satisfy thirst by drinking from the sugary fountains of the world around us. We dip our cups into the streams of modern life; we try to quench our thirst with the things around us. We try to fill ourselves with the drinks of power, of possessions, and popularity. We hope that power and prestige will fill us up. But if power could produce peace of mind, then there ought to be a lot more contented people in Canberra, Spring St and the board rooms of successful companies. If prestige could satisfy, then there ought to be a lot more satisfied people in our wealthy suburbs. And if possessions could produce happiness, then our world ought to be filled with nothing but joyful people, because no one can dispute that we have more possessions than any generation ever before us.

But we aren't happy, and this world is not filled with satisfied, contented people. Because none of the distractions of life: power, prestige, possessions, popularity, or personal pleasure; none of them can truly satisfy the thirst in our souls. Our thirst is for truth and meaning. Our search is for purpose in life that cannot be found in possessions or worldly power and prestige. Those streams do not contain living water. Those who drink from those streams will thirst again and never be totally satisfied.

Nothing short of living water that flows from a real, living relationship with God can satisfy. Jeremiah knew that as well; he says, "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose confidence is in God; they are like a tree planted by the water, which sends its roots out to the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and it never fails to bear fruit." I don't know about you, but that's the kind of life that I want to live, that's the kind of faith. I want to have. Those who drink of the living water that Jesus offers cannot fail. We are like a tree by the river that never dries up. The mercies of God are always present. Our lives are safe in God.

Streams of living water: That's what Jesus offers us, a faith that is strong and active, and a life that is steady and true. It's the kind of life that God wants us to live and it's the kind of life available to those who live by streams of living water. And yet, how often we fail to do that. How often we refuse to send down roots. Instead of turning our hearts over to God, we just go through the motions. Instead of grounding ourselves in worship, we only come when we feel like it. Instead of disciplining our hearts and minds through scripture reading and prayer, we ignore God's word and only pray

when we want something. Instead of flexing our spiritual muscles and exercising our faith through Christian witness and service to others, we refuse to volunteer our time or make it conditional upon it fitting our agenda. Streams of living water: We need them as badly as the woman at the well. We need to encounter Christ as badly as she did. Having gone through five husbands (and living with yet another as well) she was in search of something. Her life was empty inside. Looking for happiness in all the wrong places, her encounter with Christ was to be a life-changing event, for he offered her streams of living water. He gave her a new start on life. He offered her love and forgiveness and she was a new woman after having met him. Streams of living water: That's what Jesus offers us today: Streams of living water.

There is a source of blessing in our world today. There is hope for every living thing, and it is faith in Christ Jesus. It is the living water he offers us. But we must send out our roots. We must risk and take God at God's word. We must say to ourselves, "Lord, I want that water. God, I want to drink. I'm going to risk that you know what you say when you tell me to love my neighbour. I'm going to trust that you know what's best when you tell me to bear another's burdens. I'm going to accept that doing things for you has to be unconditional. I'm going to believe you know what what's when you say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Lent reminds us that it's time for us to take our faith seriously. It is time for us to dedicate ourselves to deepening our faith. It is time to send down our roots and its time to get passionate about our faith. Jesus says to us, "If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink, for I will give you streams of living waters." That is what Jesus offered the Samaritan woman and that's what he offers us as well: streams of living water that flow from his sufferings and death. Jesus offers streams of living water that bring us blessings and peace. Amen.

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