

The Third Sunday in Lent + March 12, 2023
Indiana-Kentucky Synod Sermon and Prayers
Pr. Dan Forehand, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Transition

Greetings to you this day. My name is Pastor Dan Forehand and I serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Transition in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. I bring you greetings from our Bishop, Bill Gafkjen and my colleagues in the synod office. I am grateful for this opportunity to share with you the Gospel, a sermon, and some prayers, for this Sunday, March 12, 2023, as we continue with the Third Sunday in Lent. We begin with the Prayer of the Day.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Gospel Reading: John 4:5-42

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 4th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The 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.) ¹⁰Jesus 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." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but 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." ¹⁵The 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."

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

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

²⁷Just 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?”²⁸Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,²⁹“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.”³²But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”³³So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?”³⁴Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.”³⁵Do 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.³⁶The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

³⁹Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.⁴¹And many more believed because of his word.⁴²They 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.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

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Sermon by Pastor Dan Forehand

Grace, mercy, and peace, be yours from our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

I often take for granted the great gift that I’ll turn my faucet on at home and clean water will flow from it so that I can shower, cook, clean, and drink. And, I can be turning on water in the kitchen, while my wife is turning on the water outside to water the

vegetables, while my kids are turning on the water to get a drink. We can do all of that at the exact same time.

So stories like this one can seem especially foreign to us and seem like they come from a completely different time. And, yet, at the same time, we have sisters and brothers around the world who daily make a commute to a well or a river or a pond to get water for their needs.

This is a fairly long reading, so there's a lot that could jump to mind as we read. But I'm struck by this one line of interaction between Jesus and the woman. "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"

Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever come to church or a point in your day and you stop and sigh. One of those guttural, tired sighs that you feel deep down. I am so tired. I am so worn. I am so overwhelmed.

The well is deep. The mountain is steep. The road is rocky. Whatever metaphor or image that speaks to you – we all know it, right? Life can be full of challenges and there are days where we just can't muster – even if we do have the wonderful modern conveniences of things like running water.

It can also be easy for us to say, why can't this woman see who she's talking to. But, come on, you and me, we do the same things. We miss Jesus in our midst all the time. We try to walk the path of self-reliance and self-righteousness and that's an impossible path to journey – because, as Jesus says, everyone who walks that path will not be quenched, everyone who drinks the water from the human wells we dig will need more, but the gift that Jesus brings transcends that and gives something far richer and more life-giving.

But the mystery of this is that all of us will be drawn towards the things that don't give fullness and away from the things that bring us life. And so, in many ways, that's what this season of Lent is all about. Lent invites us to think about the things that give us life and go towards them and to turn away from those things that distract or harm us. It's why some fast from certain things – to see and explore what taking that out of our lives might make room for.

Because the truth is that the well doesn't have to seem too deep. We really do have enough buckets to get the water that we need. And just as Jesus was ready for this Samaritan woman, Jesus is ready for us, too. Then, 5 minutes later, when we get distracted again, Jesus will be ready for us then, too. And again. And again. And again. And again. Forever and ever – every time.

And there will be the days where we are able to be like this Samaritan woman as we shout, "Come and see the goodness of God." There will also be days, when we need someone to gently speak to us, "come and see the goodness of God."

The other piece of what Lent is all about is a leading us to the baptismal feast that is Easter. Traditionally folks would take the time of Lent to prepare themselves to be baptized or to renew their baptismal vows on the Easter Feast. Perhaps we see this gift of living water most clearly in our baptismal journey, as we celebrate the gift of being washed, cleansed, renewed, claimed, and celebrate the goodness of God in our lives.

Whether you were baptized years ago or this is the year in which you will be baptized, there is an invitation for all of us to again seek the grace, love, and hope of God that we receive. To renew our promises isn't necessarily work on our part, but it invites us to look towards Jesus and be reminded of his constant love for us and calling toward us to see our lives in a more full and more expansive way.

Fasting and the renewal of our baptismal vows are just two ways that perhaps we can move from a mindset that the well is too deep and we do not have a bucket to a greater understanding of the abundance that God gives to us through Jesus. Again, though, we'll need to be reminded constantly of God's love for us and that's why we gather in communities. We support each other. We remind each other. We give grace to each other. We sprinkle each other with the living water that transforms lives.

So as we walk this road together, may we see God in new ways and may we find others to help us when we need it. May we turn away from those things that take us away to God, and instead open ourselves up to what God is doing in our midst in new and powerful and profound ways. And may we rejoice for Easter is coming and we have the opportunity to wash ourselves again in the waters of baptism where we have life and love and grace.

Easter is coming. May we see Jesus more clearly all around us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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Prayers of Intercession

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

We pray for your church. Bless partnerships with other Christians and inter-religious dialogue. Guide the daily work of denominational and congregational leaders, especially for our presiding bishop, Liz, and our synodical bishop, Bill. Strengthen our

combined witness for the sake of the gospel, that all experience your life-giving love.
Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for the universe. All creation teems with life, from the depths of the earth and seas to the skies above. Fill us with awe and reverence for the diversity and preservation of life. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for the nations of the world. Topple the dividing walls that separate us from our neighbors. Form us into your beloved community where diversity of gender, race, language, ability, and ethnic origin is celebrated and affirmed. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. Be present with all who are lonely, and give courage to all who are afraid. Comfort those who live with chronic illness or other sickness especially those we name before you now, both in silence and aloud. Give them your living water always. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We pray for the congregations of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod and all those who gather in faith. We pray especially for those preparing for baptism in this season. Nurture their faith and pour your love into their hearts. Inspire our community by their testimony to God's grace in their lives. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We give thanks for the lives of all your saints especially Gregory the Great, whom we commemorate today. Their hope in you sustained lives of faith and service. Encourage us with the hope they shared in you. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Hear us now, gracious Father, as we pray the words that Christ has taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

God, the giver of love,
✠ Christ, the resurrection and the life,
and the Holy Spirit of rebirth
bless you in this Lenten journey.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve in love.

Thanks be to God.

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