

“God Was In the Water That Day”
A Third Sunday in Lent;
John 4:5-42; March 19, 2017
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

I. LIVING WATER

(Start of Worship)

You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it. (Psalm 65:9)

Ancient biblical tradition suggests that waters—well, springs, oases—are also places of renewal, hospitality, and spiritual vision, where human beings see God and receive God’s blessing.” (Grounded p. 73)

Water is a place of healing, flowing, cleansing, healing, and transformation. But it is also a place of *play*, of celebration. I imagine the river of God with everyone splashing at its edge, diving deep in its waters, laughing and playing together. You who are Living Water, may we play in you! May we be free enough to dive into the depths of the river, never fearing the splash of grace! (Butler Bass)

Open my eyes, O God, to see the wells of your presence around me in the world today. And give me the passion to provide wells and waters for all. Amen. (Butler Bass)

II. Another Woman at the Well

(inspired by John 4:1-42)

Another look at the story. Written by Mark Diller Harder.
The picture was all wrong.
This couldn’t be what I was seeing, could it?

First there was ‘that woman.’ It figures.

She always marched to her own drummer and standards.
Unconventional, awkward, embarrassing.

No one else would go to Jacob’s well at noon,
in the middle of the day.
But I guess the rest of us women have not always been so friendly or hospitable to her.

The town well, lifeblood of the community,
given by our great ancestor Jacob - his very flocks
and people drank water from there. Water!
The source of all life. Without water we perish.

This well is as sacred to me as any shrine or temple,
that’s for sure. There are rules to this well too.
Don’t draw water in mid-day.

Don’t be caught there with *men*, certainly not talking
with them.

And don’t even think of being there with an outsider,
as a Samaritan, especially not with a Jew – given our shared,
yet antagonist histories – they think they are so much better!
This is *our* well! They can keep by-passing our whole territory
and our well and our much needed water for all I care.

But there I was, at noon, and watching her draw water.
And this man, coming right up to her.
I moved closer to watch.
He didn’t look like anyone we knew.
He had the look of a Galilean.
It looked like he was asking her for a drink. Unbelievable!

I moved closer, I caught some words.
Something about water and living water.
She looked confused. He kept right on going.

*“Everyone who drinks of this water will never be thirsty again.
The water I give will become in
them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”*

And they just kept talking.
It was as if they were close relatives
in the privacy of a family home.

Family, husbands, worship, prophecy, theology for goodness
sake – nothing was out of bounds.
It's as if he knew her whole story –
but could talk about it *without* all the judgment –
she mattered, she was important.

You should have seen the look on the faces of the other men
when they returned.

They must be some sort of followers, disciples of this...prophet?
The woman left her jug, and ran back to the city.

It was as if she was a new woman. She had changed.
For the first time ever, people listened to her.
She spoke the words 'Messiah.'
Suddenly people were flocking there because of her!
She was so compelling!
Whatever it is, I want some of that water!

(by Mark Diller Harder, St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, 2010)

III. WHERE DO WE FIND THE WATER

I want some of that water! Don't we all?

*"Everyone who drinks of this water will never be thirsty again.
The water I give will become in
them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."*

How do we find that Living Water? Where do we meet Jesus at
the well that never runs dry, so that we can quench our thirst,
feed our deeper hungers?

In this Journey of Lent—walking with Jesus in the Wilderness
toward the cross, we find ourselves midway on a dry and dusty
road. Across the border, out of bounds in a sense. Encountering

strangers who challenge us. Yet, we also encounter the One
who sees us for who we are and all that has happened to us on
the journey so far. And yet. And yet. Reaches out, across the
boundaries, and sees us, connects, listens, talks with us. Meets
us just.as.we.are.

When we're honest. When we open ourselves to be seen, heard
and loved just as we are, we drink from the well of living,
bubbling, never-ending water that is offered.

Two weeks ago, we committed to giving up indifference for
Lent. Doyle led us last week to consider giving up doubt and
waffling about who Jesus *really* is, and give up our hesitancy to
proclaim that— as we move through the mountains and valleys
of our journey. Today we consider how to give up Dryness for
Lent. To come to the water. Fill our souls, let it rush playfully
over us and quench our thirst that Gatorade can't!

Come to the well. Drink. "[Jesus] gives water, and he is
water." (Grounded, p. 76)

God Was in the Water

(By Randall Bramblett, and sung with great soul by Bonnie
Raiit)

God was in the water that day
Pickin' through the roots and stones
Trippin' over sunken logs
Tryin' not to make his presence known

God was in the water that day
Wadin' in careful steps
Bubbles risin' from his feet
Comin' up from the muddy depths
Castin' out a line
Castin' out a line to the shadows
Castin' out a line but no one's biting

Where is God in the water for you? Casting out a line? Reaching out to you from the mud; the tangled roots and stones. Where is God making his presence known in the muck and mire of your life? Offering a line to cling to when you are tripping? When you are stuck in the shadows? Lost in the darkness? Needing a lifeline?

IV. LITURGY TOGETHER

And now, I bring you good news of great joy! On this day, we will have no homework. I understand you've had a couple weeks of a break from that now!

But, you *do* have work to do—and time to get it done in class! First of all, a little “churchy lesson.” Does anyone know what “liturgy” means? You know, liturgy—what we do together in worship.

Liturgy, worship, means “The work of the people.”

And today we're are putting that lesson—and you—to work. For Act 2 of the sermon is a song. (And don't worry—it's a familiar tune!) We are going to sing our reflection on this scripture. Consider what this sacred scene--the woman at the well with Jesus—discussing the Living Water of God—means for us.

First, imagine yourself there, talking with Jesus at Jacob's Well, as you listen to these lyrics.

Then, ponder the message you—the work of the people—proclaim as we sing.

THE WATER GOD GIVES US

1. The water God gives us in wondrous supply
Is water that's living and never runs dry.
For everyone drinks and is thirsty again,
But God's living water gives life without end.

2. O God, we confess that we seek empty things;
We strive after wealth and the comfort it brings.
We buy things in hopes that our spirits will soar
Yet still we are thirsty and left wanting more.

3. Then just like that woman who went to the well,
We hear you, O Christ, and the truth that you tell.
You know who we are and you know what we've been;
You know us and love us in spite of our sin.

4. The gift that you give is the greatest of wealth;
You give living water! You give us yourself!
May we, like that woman, go back where we live
And tell those we know of the life that you give.

(Biblical Text: John 4:5-42. Tune: American Folk Melody, Funk's *Genuine Church Music*, 1832. Text: Copyright © 2011 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.)

CLOSING PRAYER

As a deer longs for living streams, as a weary traveler longs for the waters of life, so our souls long for you, O God. Refresh us, cleanse us, heal us with your living water. Pour out your Spirit upon us so our lives might overflow with your love. Pour out your Spirit upon all creation so that justice might roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Amen.

(Talitha Arnold, UCC, Santa Fe)