

Water

Third Sunday of Lent

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Text: John 4:5-42

There is a great place at Western Seminary called Community Kitchen. I have lunch there from Monday to Friday. This place is amazing not only because of wonderful food but also because of some people that have even changed my life. For me, I usually spend most of the day having classes or sitting before my laptop doing homework. But during the lunch time, I have a chance to encounter some friends in the kitchen. We have lunch together almost every day, talking and laughing, so we have become quite familiar with each other. And each of us is given a nickname, but I will not tell you what my nickname is. One of the friends, Jim, the manager of the kitchen, enjoyed cooking very much. We kind of had the same hobby. We talked about the food we like and how to cook it. And He told me how he and his son love dumplings. One day, I brought him some home-made dumplings. He tasted, and then touched my shoulder, smiling and saying, "Dumpling princess!" Every day, I was so happy to see him smiling. Jim passed away very unexpectedly a few weeks ago. So I've been thinking about him and the wisdom he shared with me.

Two weeks ago, as usual, I had lunch with some friends around the table. Actually, I was not very happy. I was anxious about the overwhelming midterms and presentations in class. But I tried to smile at everyone. Interestingly, on that day, we were talking about the benefits of smiling. We talked about how smiling releases the stress and stretches the muscles. One of my friends said, "Smiling is a lifestyle. Be happy. God loves us. Why so miserable?" Wow, "smiling is a lifestyle. God loves us."

John chapter 4 is the story about Jesus encountering a Samaritan woman by the well. Jesus is speaking to her and asking for a drink. Why is Jesus talking to her? He is crossing the social boundaries, for Jews have little to do with Samaritans. And, a man would never have a conversation with a woman in public. Why is Jesus talking to her?

Samaritan woman is coming for water. She keeps coming for water. But Jesus is giving her life-giving water.

Jesus says, "I have living water for you."

"Sir, you don't even have a bucket?"

Back to John 3, the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a socially respectable Jewish man. Jesus says to him, “You must be born again.” Nicodemus says, “How can a man be born again? Going back to the mother’s womb?”

In chapter 4, Jesus is speaking to the Samaritan woman, saying, “I have living water for you.”

Samaritan woman says, “You don’t have a bucket? How can you get the water?”

Both Nicodemus and Samaritan woman seem to misunderstand what Jesus is saying. Nicodemus thinks a man should go back to the womb and be born again. Samaritan woman thinks Jesus is talking about drinking water.

Jesus says to her, “I have living water for you. Whoever drinks this water will never be thirsty again. And this water will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Samaritan woman thinks Jesus is talking about our thirst for drinking water. But actually, Jesus is talking about our thirst for love, our thirst for justice and our thirst for God. My friend said, “Smiling is a lifestyle. God loves us.” But for me, the anxiety makes me keep seeking smiles instead of smiling. It makes me keep searching for love instead of sharing love. Smiling is a lifestyle. God loves us. Just like Jim, his life brings joy and love to the community. My friends in the community kitchen reminded me that I’m loved by God and smiling is a way that reflects the living being satisfied by the love of God.

What is living water? The living water also means running water, like a fountain bubbling up. A fountain never dries up, but is full of water running and nourishing all living beings. In the same way, Jesus will pour out his Spirit among us and bring life-giving water to nourish us, so that love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and the very attitude and character of God are flowing out of us. This is what Jesus offers to this Samaritan woman, also to us.

Look at those flowers! They are amazing, aren’t they? Some are purple, some yellow. Some are big. Some a little bit small. They never struggle with what to grow, but stay where they are. They never worry about how to bear fruit, but remain rooted in the water and soil. It seems they never do anything, but bring the beauty to the world. They never say anything, but spread their fragrance around the neighborhood. This is what they are. The water underneath is nurturing all the plants so that they will grow. The water looks plain and ordinary, but wherever there is water, there is life and there is growth.

We are like these flowers dwelling in the life-giving water and united in Christ. Jesus says, “Whoever drinks this water will never be thirsty again but

have eternal life.” The Holy Spirit is like the living water moving among us to quench each thirsty soul.

Jesus says, “I have living water for you.” For this reason, there is life in the death. joy in the suffering. freedom in the slavery. union in the division.

We are the children of God loved by God, nourished by the Holy Spirit.

Dwell in the water. Let love and justice flow out of us into the world.

Thanks be to God.