

## Gospel and Sermon Transcript -3rd Sunday in Lent - March 8, 2026

Blessed are they who are not thrown by the time change.

Did anybody have to suspend their Lenten discipline

of giving up coffee to get through the day?

I don't know if it's my place,

but I would have granted you special dispensation.

That might be above my pay grade, so I'll watch myself.

Maybe one comment about today's worship service. We are privy to over here what is the longest

conversation in all of John's gospel. This has a few implications for us, this story

of Jesus meeting the woman at the well. The first was, there wasn't room to print the

gospel and the bulletin. So I told Rona let's save a tree and we can post the

entire reading on the website so you can consult that to read if you'd like to do

that. The other implication is that I won't be reading the entire gospel

today either. I'm going to stop at what I think is the most compelling of lines

and we will leave it there.

What else should I say about that right now?

Oh, it may surprise you, but just as the Gospel is read,

I do have a couple of comments I want

to make to sort of plant a few suggestions even before you

hear the Gospel read.

So those things will be different today.

And I'm going to share with you now a bit of maybe--

I wish I would have thought of this earlier,

but this is such a rich conversation.

This could have been a multi-part sermon series.

We could have read this gospel in parts maybe two or three

weeks in a row.

And I think we would have had a full measure of conversation.

So maybe one of these years, we may just do that.

We might deviate a bit from the readings

and take a little more time with this.

I think it's significant that today is International Women's

that this is Women's History Month. What a perfect gospel lesson for us to be

able to overhear today.

### **The Gospel John 4 v5-42**

Oh now I have a third thing to say. This is a long gospel reading. You might want to be

seated as if it's read for it's length. Now the two things I am going to say before I

even read the gospel. The first being Samaria would be the absolute last place that Jesus

in his ilk would want to go. And he goes there. Here's the second, that people who

heard the story of the Woman of the Well,

they would almost see the well as a stock scene where romance happens and

where marriages happen. You think of Moses and Zipporah betrothed at a well.

Think of Isaac and Rebecca, betrothed at the well.

Jacob and Rachel, betrothed at the well.

Hold those thoughts, would you? The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the fourth chapter.

Glory to you, Lord. So Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar near the plot of ground

that Jacob had given his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired

out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman

came to draw water and Jesus asked of her, "Give me a drink." His disciples had

gone to the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said, "How is it that you,

a Jewish person, "ask a drink of me a woman of Samaria." For the Jewish people

did not share things in common with Samaritans. Jesus answered, "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." The woman said to

will serve, you have no bucket, the well is deep. Where would you get that living

water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well and with his

sons and his flocks drank from it? And Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of

this water will be thirsty again. The water I will give will become in them a

spring of water gushing up to eternal life. The woman said to him, "Well sir, give

me this water that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming back here

to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back." The woman answered

him, "I have no husband." And Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband what you've said is true the woman said to him sir I see that you are a prophet our ancestors worshipped on this mountain but you say the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem and Jesus said to her woman believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know and we worship what we know, for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming. It 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. God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." And the woman said to him, "I know the Messiah is coming who is called Christ. When He comes, He will proclaim all things to us."

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

Just thank you. Jesus' disciples arrived. 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?"

The woman left her water jar and went back to the city. The gospel of our Lord.

### **The Sermon**

Grace and peace to you,  
and may God's well springs of love

flow up through the very core of your being.

She left behind her water jar.

Earlier this week, some of us had the experience

of worshipping at St. David's for their midweek Eucharist.

And Pastor Father Prakash preached a remarkable sermon

that had a few times stopped me in my tracks.

But when he got to that line about,

she left her water jar.

I was a bit gobsmacked.

I mean, this woman went through all the trouble

getting to the well at noon, hoisting the water buckets up, and she was just going

to schlep water back home as she had done every single day ever like probably

multiple times. And she and this stranger are talking about water, they're talking

about living water, and at some point she leaves the jar behind. What's up with that?

Senior moment? I kind of doubt it. I think there is something significant happening

with this woman. I think that the encounter she has with Jesus is so

compelling. She rushes to be an evangelist and to tell the neighbors what

she has experienced. Even though she doesn't have it all figured out yet, she

is in a hurry to go. She has something to share. So in my gobsmack-edness, now

there is a word for you that won't appear in the dictionary, I started doing

a little more reading and thinking about, well, what is this about the woman

leaving the jar behind?

I say this with all sincerity that if anybody ever wrote the book on the gospel of John,

it's Dr. Caroline Lewis who heads up the working preacher program that is at Luther Seminary in

St. Paul in the US. She knows her Greek language too, I'll tell you. It is she who says that a good

translation of the woman's leaving is to let go. That she let go of the water jar.

And with that comes a very provocative companion question. What else might have

she left behind? I'm indebted to Dr. Lewis for a couple of her suggestions. I

have a few that I'd like to add myself even as I expand on a couple of her

thoughts.

I think I'm going to flip how I present this from how I wrote it. So if you read

the website later you'll wonder, well, what is his deal? But I think I have an

idea that this might work.

Well, for openers,

remember the absolute last place that Jesus and his ilk would go would be to

Samaria? Well, obversely, the very last people that Samaritans would welcome into

their region would be Jesus and his ilk. That there was this long-standing mutual

antagonism between the two people. And at least for the Samaritans, there was the

memory of some 120 years before Jesus and the Samaritan woman's conversation

that the high priest slash civic ruler took over the main city of Samaria and

sacked and destroyed their temple on Mount Gerizim.

Collective memory lasts. Trauma lasts. So I think this woman at the well has a little bit of resentment as she recognizes Jesus, probably from that

Galilean accent of his, "What are you doing here? What business do you have here?"

And this worn-out, tired, thirsty Jesus, maybe because of that, is a bit disarming.

He doesn't come in as a colonizer, he comes in as a thirsty person. Someone in just like she is in need. There are a couple of points where the woman says things like, "Well, you worship over here, we worship over there." You see those as not necessarily celebrating differences, but as a way of building a bit of a defensive wall to try to protect the sense of one's self? I think maybe so.

So there's something else that maybe the woman needs to let go of.

And then we get to that conversation about husbands. Remember that little bit I was telling you about the well being the site of betrovals? Isn't it just a little bit awkward that Jesus brings up the whole husband subject just now? True. True, she had no husband right now.

True, the one she was with was not her husband.

And we judging people, we want to know, what is it with that husband?

What are they doing?

Guess what?

And I will be blunt.

Jesus is not asking for the woman's sexual history.

Not even the point.

Ah, I might have surprised a couple of you on that one.

We like to read that kind of stuff in  
because it spices up the story for us  
and because we, like many people,  
have difficulty hanging out with people  
who have had a difficult life.

So it's easier to make up stuff.

Well, what if we look at the culture  
in which this woman lived?  
women never ever, ever, ever divorced their husbands.

Men always divorced if they were going  
to divorce their wives.

And the reasons, well, I was up to the husband to decide,  
but one of the most frequent reasons  
for a woman to be divorced,  
she was unable to bear children.

If we want to read something into this gospel,  
what happens if we read that in?

We have a woman divorced multiple times,  
and likely without children, because had she been divorced

maybe once or twice, there may have been somebody who would have taken her in like children.

OK, what about this number five guy?

What's his deal?

Well, it was a custom that if you were a relative of someone whose husband died or a relative of the husband who died rather, you could take in the widow as a way of protecting and sheltering.

Now, you may or may not decide to be married.

And that was considered perfectly respectable.

So this little spinning out of what's called the levered marriage is important.

And the reason it's important,

it gives us an idea of some things

that maybe this woman at the well would need to let go of.

How about grief?

How about that sense of loneliness?

How about that sense of estrangement,

even from our neighbors, because as I said before,

we have a hard time hanging around with people

who've had hard lives.

We don't want it to rub on us.

Or we're afraid we wouldn't know what to say.

So there is the loathingness, the grief, the estrangement.

And I would argue that, like for many of us,

we build up a character armor to try to protect ourselves

because, well, most of us have lived long enough

to where we have had enough thrown at us where we seek ways

to defend our hearts and our souls.

And I think the Woman of the Well even begins to let go of that.

You remember that beautiful line that Pastor Father Prakash offered as he was reflecting

on the Woman of the Well?

He said there's a difference between being seen and being exposed.

Remember that?

for those who are here. And that line really stuck. That guy can preach, I'll tell you that.

There's a difference between being seen and being exposed and Jesus sees this

woman for all that she is and all the pain that she packs with her just as she

totes that water jar he sees.

[ Pause ]

Now, add to that the famous verse of all of John's gospel

that you learned in vacation Bible school or Sunday school

or if you've gone to US sporting events you've even seen flown

as a banner, at least the address of these words.

For God so loved the world that God sent the beloved son

that whoever would believe would not perish

would have everlasting life.

Ha ha, you're courting it.

Awesome.

God so loved the world.

Not just a little corner of it,

not just those little people over there.

The whole shooting match.

So as the scripture says, Jesus finds it necessary,

necessary out of God's love to go to those places

where his buddies didn't want him to go

and hang out with the people he didn't want him to hang out with and Jesus goes there.

Does that.

I have a hunch that just as Jesus sees more in this woman than her neighbors do, she sees

more in him too.

He's more than a prophet, he's more than a water-bruising wizard.

He is someone who sees, who knows, much like God sees and knows and loves.

And maybe, just maybe, as some commentators suggest, maybe she intuits that the reason

Jesus goes to Samaria, is that he came looking for her.

He came looking for her.

That might be just enough to cause someone to let go of a few things in life, to let go of that water jar temporarily, that prospect of living water coming up up through the depths of one's being of this abundance. Now I don't think that this woman she should have a name but she doesn't. So whenever I'm reunited with people in eternity I'll ask about that. Why didn't you give her a name? She needed a name already. Well this Samaritan woman

I think so compelled by what she experiences goes to talk to the neighbours that she probably didn't socialize with that much to tell them you need to see this you need to meet this one who sees me who really sees me who sees us all

isn't her story our story

Isn't it true that sometimes we too need to let go of some things so that our hands are open for the gifts that God would give? And isn't it all so true that like the neighbours when stuff like that happens in these unlikely places to unlikely people. We join a mighty cloud of witnesses that say, "Yes, God so loved the world." And that means there is nowhere, no place, no anything that God would not enter into

to extend that love.

Amen