Last week we read about the story of Nicodemus. We saw how his faith took a dramatic turn from a very personal and private one to a much highly profiled one when he stood before the religious council in trying to defend Jesus’s innocence, but unfortunately to no avail. Then later on we also saw how Nicodemus petitioned for the crucified body of Jesus so he can gave a proper anointing and prepare for the burial.

Surely Nicodemus had come a long way while overcoming many of his personal challenges, fears, and even doubts in order to demonstrate his faith in Christ. We have seen how Nicodemus turned around and exemplified for us of how we should go about living our faith each day for Christ.

In the passage that we just read, we’ve come across another famous faith hero – the Samaritan woman-at-the-well. At first glance, you would probably not associate her as a faith hero, after all she and Nicodemus had very little (if at any) in common. She was an Gentile woman and he was a Jewish Pharisee - teacher of the law. She held a shameful past that she probably wouldn’t want anyone to know about while Nicodemus was a highly respected influential leader among his people. The woman encountered Jesus at high noon, while Nicodemus came to Jesus in the middle of the night. But they did share something in common – their faith and conviction in Jesus as their Lord and the people’s Messiah. Both accepted the call when God chose them to serve a pivotal role in the proclamation of God’s plan of salvation, not just for the Jews but for ALL of God’s people as well.

It was about high noon on a hot summer day. Jesus had sent his disciples into town to get food and he came upon this well outside of the city of Samaria famously known for its ancestor - Jacob. Jesus was thirsty and wanted a drink. Then he saw this woman sitting by the well and she had something that Jesus didn’t have – a bucket, so naturally he went over and asked her for a drink. That seems to be no big deal, right? Well, it was a BIG deal!!!

It was a BIG deal because Jesus really had no business whatsoever in talking with this woman because she was a Samaritan and he was a Jew. Jews and Samaritans did not get along and they were not supposed to even talk to each other but they did. Jesus made a statement making an offer to the woman by proclaiming that ***“whoever who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give will never be thirsty.”[[1]](#footnote-1)***

Surprisingly this Samaritan woman took up Jesus’s offer. She responded, “g*ive me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water [again]”[[2]](#footnote-2)*. Now this woman might have come here for many years to draw water, but this was something that she had been yearning for.

As Jesus and this woman continued their conversation, more information about her began to unravel. The woman was shocked of how much Jesus knew about her past and present…that she has had 5 husbands and the one whom she’s with is not her husband. This woman was an adulterer and even lied to cover up her own sinfulness, shame, and guilts.

What started off as a chanced encounter between a passerby asking for a drink from a local woman turned into a profound theological discussion of who this Jesus really was. The implication of this conversation profoundly reached far beyond just a drink of water. It was a revelation of God’s plan for human salvation.

Well, it turned out that God works in a mysterious and unexpected way through people’s lives. Not only did this Samaritan woman believed in Jesus because of her faith, she got all so excited and went back into her town and started telling everybody about her new discovery through her testimony, the people believed even though she was an outsider, someone who has been marginalized by society.

Now let’s look at this story from a sociological perspective. This Samaritan woman told Jesus that she had been drawing water from the very same well dated all the way back of her ancestors. God has been faithful to them in providing the source of water, but **deep inside this woman has a spiritual well that seemed to be running dry**. No one seemed to car or pay attention to her physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles and her needs. That’s why she was shocked when this Jewish man asked her for a drink and began a conversation. This woman’s social struggle was real, just as the case with many of the women today struggling for their womanhood, what they should wear, how they should behave, what they can or cannot do, along with other forms of socio-economical challenges that they face each day.

Jesus reached out to this un-named, Samaritan woman at the well despite her backgrounds and personal flaws. Both Nicodemus and this “woman-at-the-well” did share something in common. Despite their struggle of faith and their sinful past, both Nicodemus and the woman at the well responded faithfully to God’s calling in their lives! They became one of the first witnesses and proclaimers of who Jesus really was….as the Son of the Living God. The people were so inspired by the woman’s testimony that they declared him as the “true Savior of the world.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Furthermore, our passage today also challenges us to break through our barriers or walls that we often find ourselves entrapped in…this includes many traditions and values that we’ve indulged ourselves in**. We’re concerned about who’s IN and who’s OUT, while focusing on what makes others different instead of our commonality. Jesus was thirsty, the Samaritan woman had the bucket. He asked her and she offered a drink to him. In return, Jesus offer her back the “living water” that has up until now only reserved for the Jews….but now he was offering that to this Gentile woman.

The question becomes, who are our “Nicodemus” and the “Woman-at-the-Well” among us whom we need to identify? Well, You are, We are! Despite our shortcomings, our lack of faith and sinfulness, God has invited us to come out of the dark to meet Christ face-to-face and make our faith shine before others. **This living water will not deliver and sprout itself up, it must be tapped into and the bucket must be lowered one individual and one cup at a time.** By the grace of God, Christ has offered us this spiritual drink of the living water so that we would never thirst again.

Like Nicodemus, this Samaritan woman was also “born again” of the water and of the Spirit. She moved from unbelief to belief, from darkness into light, and from blindness into sight. The Spirit gave her a renewal sense of courage and boldness to go and share her new found faith with others**. She signified her moment of transformation by dropping and leaving her water jar behind at the well**,[[4]](#footnote-4) very much like those disciples dropping their net, their fishing boat and even their family behind, when they decided to follow Jesus as His disciples. She no longer needed to come back to draw water from the well, now that she has had a taste of this spiritual Living Water.

About 10 years ago, I took a group of high school and college students on a short-term mission trip to Taiwan, as part of the *I Love Taiwan* program that was organized by the *Presbyterian Church of Taiwan* – a sister denomination to the Presbyterian Church (USA). Youths from all over the world spent 3 weeks of their summer to literally sweat for Jesus! We were laborers of God’s field, doing various ministry work with the local churches, especially among the children. Only about 2% of the Taiwan’s population of 23 M consider themselves as Christians. The rest are mostly Buddhist or non-religious at all.

Our group was assigned to a local church that served mostly the aboriginal Taiwanese…many of them were from the poorest neighborhood of the city. Many had never been to church or heard of Jesus. Our job for those two weeks was to spend time with these children through English lessons, Bible Stories, skits, songs, and games. We were ambassadors of God’s love to these children. I was amazed by how spiritually thirsty the children were when we taught them children songs and bible stories. **Many of these kids were hungry for God’s Word and thirsty for the living water of the Gospel.** They wanted to learn more about Jesus because they had no one to ask questions or to share their experience with.

Each morning these neighborhood kids would be waiting at the door at 7am to come to church and they wouldn’t leave until 10-11 at night. The Church has become a safe haven and a shelter where they can learn and be nourished in God’s love. We were the highlight of the kids’ summer. Each day, these kids brought in more kids from their neighborhood the next day to join the camp. By the end of the week, we had close to about 100 kids running all around the church. The Holy Spirit was truly at work among those young lives who were thirsting for the living water. We pray that as they grew up they would continue their walk in faith with Christ.

Come to think of it, how many of us are also wrestling with our faith like these children, Nicodemus, or the woman-at-the-well? How often do we find ourselves not knowing who we are, how we got here, or where we are going, or what we truly believe in? We might think we do, but do we really? We might be in a spiritual oblivion like sheep wandering out in the wilderness. Our faith may become mundane with little excitement and purpose. We would just go through the motion of drawing the same water from the same well for the many generations, because we have been told to do so. But we’ve neglected to pause and ponder what got us here to begin with? How has God been faithful to us in supplying what we need in order to live an abundant life, including the gift of faith and believing and how we must share that with others?

**When Jesus met this woman-at-the-well, He offered her the spring of the living water that will never run dry.** Wouldn’t that be great to have a well that will never run dry?

Jesus took a huge risk by breaking down social barriers and overstepping boundaries in order to reach out to this woman. The woman graciously accepted his invitation and offered her heart to listen to what he had to say.

During this Lenten season, as we continue to journey through the wilderness of LIFE, we’ve been reminded that **Christ has sought after us in unexpected times, unfamiliar places and circumstances.** It is through our struggles and challenges that we come to see God’s grace face-to-face. We’ve been invited to identify those who are still thirsting and yearning for this living water…those whose voices are being silenced and faces shunned and erased into oblivion by the dominant forces of our society. There is indeed good news to be discovered and grace to be embraced.

Thankfully, we do not have to look very far in order to seek God, because **God has come to us right where we are – as He has done so at the manger, in the wilderness, and now at the well, at the cross, and deep in our hearts.**  **Come, let us come to the well and thirst no more! Come, let us come to the table and hunger no more!** Thanks be to God.

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *John 4:13-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *John 4:15* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *John 4:42* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *John 4:28* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)