

The Third Sunday in Lent + March 12, 2023
Indiana-Kentucky Synod Sermon
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 Bishop Bill Gafkjen and my colleagues in the synod office. I am grateful for this opportunity to share with you a sermon for this Sunday, March 12, 2023, as we continue with the Third Sunday in Lent.

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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.