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Third Sunday of Lent

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### Living Water Within and Among Us.

The story is told of an old monk who one night in a dream was visited by the Risen Christ. They went for a walk together in quiet intimacy, enjoying each other's presence. Finally the old man turned to Jesus and asked.

*"When you walked the hills of Palestine, you mentioned that one day you would come again in all your glory. Lord, it has been so long: When will you return for good?"* After a few moments of silence the Resurrected and Living One said,

*"When my presence in nature all around you and my presence beneath the surface of your skin is as real to you as my presence right now, when this awareness becomes second nature to you, then I have returned for good."*

Our chapter 3 in the book *Christ in Crisis* is focusing on the early words from Genesis: What does it mean to be created in God's image and likeness?

The old monk is longing for the world to know the returning Presence of Jesus - the Risen Jesus... Obviously he knows both the Old and New Testaments - and maybe because he is old - he is tired and longing for the fullness of the Risen Jesus' Presence .... maybe he hasn't realized the truth of that Presence all along!

But let's allow our readings today to lead us: *Thirst* is the key word here...

The Hebrews in our 1st reading were facing a desperate need to find water. Dehydration was the serious condition they were experiencing. Its impact on their bodies - their blood pressure, lungs, all their systems, including their brain... left them crying out in anguish: *"Are we just here to die?"* Moses realizes that was possible - their fear was very real and taking over - so he goes to God and God directs him to the Rock - and water comes forth... Their sense of life is restored - their sense of God's Presence is restored - their sense of personal worth to God is restored!

Now let's move forward to Jesus meeting the woman at the well:

We know from hearing this encounter over the years that Jesus was outside his territory in choosing the route through Samaria. We don't know exactly *why* he chose that route... We *do* know it would take from Judea to Galilee in 3 days - where going around this perceived enemy territory would double the time on the road.

So - was he in a hurry? or As Jim Wallis advised in Chapter 2 of our book... *to grow and understand our neighbors we need to go outside our boundaries- and listen to the lives of ones whose pathways have been so different from ours and who still are our neighbors.*

Was that the reason Jesus chose this route - as he was always teaching his disciples along the way. Science today is proving that all of creation comes from within and thrives within relationships. That is the message of Jesus - throughout his life and explained clearly in his specific encounter with the woman at the well.

As Jesus sits there - truly thirsty - this woman comes toward him - stops as she grows closer, seeing that he is a Jew.... After a moment's hesitation - she moves resolutely forward. She needs the water and this well! Besides - it won't be the first time she will have felt contempt, faced rejection - been mocked or sneered at....

So imagine her surprise in this man who smiles kindly and asks her for a drink of water....At first disarmed, then suspicious - she asks: "*How can you - a Jew - ask me - a Samaritan and a woman - for a drink?*" Imagine the look on her face as she asks this question...

Jesus - quietly and kindly responds: "*If only you recognized the gift of God who is asking you for a drink - you would have asked him instead and he would give you living water!*"

Imagine her mind trying to take that in! What in the world is he talking about? Living water?

She can only respond from what she understands..."*Sir, you don't even have a bucket - this cistern is deep...where can you get this LIVING WATER? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us THIS cistern and drank from himself?*"

Gently Jesus responds: "*Oh, drinking from this well, you will be thirsty again. But the water I give - well, you will never thirst again. This water will become a SPRING of water within you, welling up to eternal life.*"

Not understanding or caring about that - she responds: "*Sir, give me this water so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here draw water.*"

Jesus then brings the mystical back to her present situation, asking about her husband, disarming and embarrassing her. You have to admire her.. for instead of trying to explain her past life, she stays focused on Jesus and starts questioning his religious beliefs... if he is genuine, how can they reconcile their religious differences?

What Jesus does next is the 2nd step in this understanding. He starts by saying: "*Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. The hour is coming and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth.*"

She replies..."*I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything.*" Then she hears- : "*I AM HE, the one who is speaking with you.*"

She runs back to town to tell them the news - she has seen the Messiah....

But in the days, weeks and years ahead... were they waiting like the monk in our opening story? Or did it thrust them back into the Hebrew Scriptures? Did they go back to Genesis? Did they recall the most important words that is the focus point of our chapter 3 this week?

*We are all made in the image and likeness of God!* **Jesus understood that-** he took it very seriously and it became the way of life for him... He could look more closely - listen more deeply to a person in front of him. They weren't just individuals walking along the same path of life...

They were persons - created in love, by love and for love! It pained him so ~ that people could care more about externals than the person! The Law over people - a kind of "caste system" if you weren't within the "normal" range of what *they* defined as "normal"... Today we are calling it racism - sexism - and all the "isms" that separate us.

But **Jesus understood the original purpose of creation! Each person is created in the image and likeness of God!** That is why so many were drawn to him: They felt he accepted as they were and were meant to be!

You see: **That is the Thirst** of every human being! WE all long to be accepted as we are while believing in our potential! When that happens in our lives - we become our best selves! The *longing and thirst* to be loved

is primary in all lives. The woman at the well longed for that! When she found it in Jesus - she ran back to all those who had looked down on her - fearless and unafraid - open to new life - her thirst quenched!

You see: **The Presence of Love - is the Living Water!**

We all carry that within us - **that *is the image and likeness of God!*** God is Love and nothing else!

When we are in touch with that - when we know we are loved and accepted by God - no matter how often we falter or fail... we come in touch with that Living Water! When we allow that to flow freely - We **BECOME the LIVING WATER**...for the Presence of God within us is free to flow out into our relationships...

We don't exist *other* than God - - - We exist *within* God!

We can see others as equal human beings - made in God's Image... and the Living Water in us reaches out quietly and kindly - offering acceptance of them - as they are...and seeing in them their potential.

Jesus didn't turn away from the woman because of her past - he offered her a future....

Sr. Ilia Delio writes and I quote:

*"A person is not a product of the past, but the process of the future. To be a person is to live in openness to the future because we are in evolution and thus in the process of becoming more whole and unified!"*

When we are able to assimilate that reality - we are opened to becoming: becoming alive and ready to **be** and give the *LIVING WATER* - In some degree - quenching the thirst of others: the thirst for water - the thirst for love and acceptance - the thirst for justice - the thirst for hope!

Our call as people created in God's image and likeness is to live as Jesus:

Opened to the future possibilities - to see each other as God created us - in God's Image and Likeness then.... instead of seeing just individuals over there.... We recognize a Person - thirsting for *LIVING WATER*...

Then we will realize as that Monk did when Jesus answered his question: When will you return for good?

*"When my presence in nature all around you and my presence beneath the surface of your skin is as real to you as my presence right now... when this awareness becomes second nature to you, then I have returned for good."*

*and I might add: This awareness is the LIVING WATER~ welling up to eternal life.!*

Amen!