

Joshua Willadsen  
3rd Sunday in Lent  
Sermons  
March 27, 2011

## JOHN 4:5-26 - "JESUS DOES A BODY GOOD"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The ad industry has come out with a great slogan to market and sell a product I like to drink (no I am not speaking about beer or coffee), but milk. You know the slogan, "Milk, it does a body good." The slogan promotes the health benefits of drinking milk and all the people in the commercials and ads have healthy looking faces with a nice milk smile. Now as long as one is not allergic to milk, milk is good for the body. But there is a drink that is even more essential to our bodily health than milk, water. We can live without drinking milk, but we cannot live without water. Even more than milk, water does a body good!

Living in America today, we tend to take water for granted, even though our daily life revolves around water. We wake up in morning and water flushes away our waste. We go to the faucet or fridge and pour a glass of water to freshen a dry mouth and throat. We turn on the dial and nice warm water flows out from the shower so we can bathe and become clean. Anytime we need to wash our hands we simply go to the kitchen or wash room where water flows as needed. When we become thirsty throughout the day we can get water from drinking fountains or buy bottled water. We wash our clothing and dishes with water. We make coffee, beer, and other drinks with water. We cook with water. Just about everything we do involves or makes use of water in some way. Water, does a body good. It is essential to our life. Now imagine if our plentiful supply of water suddenly became scarce. How would your life change? Imagine if there was no water to drink for three plus days. Your body would not be doing well.

As essential and good as water is for the life of our bodies there is One who is eternally more essential and good, I am speaking of Christ Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord. Jesus, does a body good! Apart from Christ Jesus there is no life. Apart from Christ there is nothing good for the body, only death. But, in Christ Jesus there is life for the body now and in the resurrection for all eternity. Jesus, does a body good!

One of the ways the Gospel of John communicates humanity's absolute necessity for Jesus, is by using water. Water is essential for our earthly bodily life and existence. Water in John's Gospel is closely united with the Holy Spirit and His work to bring sinners to faith in Jesus and give them eternal life. We saw this last week when Jesus said to Nicodemus, "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the reign of God." Jesus was showing Nicodemus his need to be born from God, to be

baptized, so that he might believe in Him. No one comes to Jesus, but through the Spirit and no one lives apart from Jesus. But the Spirit does not work independently from Jesus but always with and from Jesus. The Spirit came upon Jesus in His baptism and remained upon Him; everything Jesus does in John's Gospel, He does bearing the Spirit. Jesus not only bears the Spirit, but He gives the Spirit so that sinners might live. In John, Jesus is proclaimed to be the Source from whom the living water or the Spirit flows. The Spirit is the gift of God, the gift of Jesus, so that sinners may not perish in unbelief, but might believe and live in the One lifted up on the cross.

When the Gospel of John was written in the 1st century A.D. and in ancient times before, water was not as readily available as it is for us now. It took a lot more time and work to get fresh water for drinking, bathing, cooking, and washing away waste. This was especially true in the ancient near east, what we today call the Middle East. Cities and civilizations grew up around fresh sources of water like the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates Rivers. Where water was scarce, so too were people and animals. Much smaller settlements rose up around springs and wells. Generation after generation would come to these springs and wells to draw water for their families and animals so that they might have life.

The setting for the Gospel text, John 4:5-26, is at such a spring and well. A spring that the Patriarch Jacob had dug and given to his son Joseph. A spring that had provided fresh water and life to generations of people and animals. Jacob had done a great service to a whole host of people after him by finding the spring and digging a well; he had given them life. Almost two thousand years later Jesus came to that spring and met with a Samaritan woman, who like so many others before her, came there to draw water. The Samaritan woman had routinely made many trips to this well to draw water for drinking, bathing, and cooking, but on this day Jesus, the One who gives the Spirit, was there to do her body good and give her eternal life.

5 Then He entered into a city of the Samaritans called Sychar, which neighbored the field which Jacob gave to Joseph his son; 6 and the spring of Jacob was there. Therefore after Jesus had grown weary from traveling He was sitting in this way by the spring; the hour was as six. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give to Me to drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city in order that they might purchase food. 9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You being a Jew ask to drink from me being a woman of Samaria?" For Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.

It is quite important, perhaps more than you realize, that Jesus initiated a conversation with a Samaritan woman. Jesus is a Jew, and at the time Jews didn't have conversations and dealings with Samaritans, as John tells us. Why? Samaritans were seen by the Jews to be a tainted and polluted people, a mixed breed of Jews and Gentiles who only followed part of God's revelation, and that wrongly, instead of the full Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Interaction with a Samaritan was held to make a Jew unclean and would require a good Jew to under go various purification washings and rituals in order to worship in the Temple. It was simply forbidden, taboo, for Jews to be with Samaritans. Jesus was fully aware of this and yet He purposefully broke this cultural and societal taboo. Why? Because the Father sent Jesus to bring salvation to

all people in the world, not just to the Jews. Jesus came to do a body good, everybody, even to those who are considered outcasts by others. Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of the Jews, but as such He is Savior of the whole world.

10 Jesus replied and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and Who it is speaking to you, 'Give to Me to drink,' then you would ask Him and He would give to living water." 11 The woman said Him, "Lord, You do not have a bucket and the well is deep; therefore from where do You have the living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave to us the well and he from it drank also his sons and his creatures?" 13 Jesus replied and said to her, "Everyone who drinks from this water will be thirsty again; 14 but whoever drinks from the water which I, Myself, will give to him, he shall surely not be thirsty in the age, rather the water which I will give to him will be in him a spring of water springing up into life eternal." 15 The woman said to Him, "Lord, give to me this water, that I may not thirst nor come to draw from here."

In two ways Jesus' conversation with this Samaritan woman is similar to the one Jesus had with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. First and most important like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman is in the dark spiritually; she is a sinner who cannot come to God by her own will, reason, or choice. The woman does not "know the gift of God" nor does she know "Who it is speaking" to her. At this point the woman is even more in the dark than Nicodemus; she sees Jesus as simply a strange Jewish man. She has no idea that Jesus is the Son of God, the Word made flesh. Secondly as with Nicodemus, Jesus begins telling her spiritual truth in earthly terms that she, like Nicodemus, is confused over. This time Jesus speaks of "living water" which can have a double meaning, "water that gives life" or "running water" as in a river or stream as opposed to a water in a vessel or cistern. The woman takes Jesus to mean the later and then thinks it odd that he lacks the proper vessels to draw water to drink. Now she finds Jesus even more strange, for in some way she perceives that Jesus is claiming to be greater than the Patriarch Jacob who gave the very well she came to draw water from.

When people are in the dark, enslaved to sin, born only of the flesh, not born of water and the Spirit, then the things of God make no sense to them, Jesus Himself makes no sense to them. This unbelief and ignorance of God is the natural, fallen and sinful, condition of humanity from which we are all powerless to free ourselves, but from which God is powerful to save us. Thus much like with Nicodemus, Jesus directs the conversation toward that which He desires to reveal and give to the Samaritan woman. The water Jesus has to give "will be a spring of water springing up into eternal life."

As the text continues, Jesus confronts the Samaritan woman with some particular sins that she is guilty of, not because He wants to demean her and make her feel miserable, but to reveal that she has a spiritual need for the water that Jesus desires to give her. 16 He said to her, "Go call you husband and come her." 17 The woman replied and said to Him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus said to her, "Well you have spoken, 'that I do not have a husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands and now the one you have is not your husband; you have spoken truthfully." Jesus knows the past and present of this woman without her telling Him. The woman has and is committing adultery (she has had five husbands for one reason or another and the man she is living with at the present is not her husband). At this point the woman, much like Nicodemus, realizes

that Jesus is special and powerful; He is not an ordinary man, He must be a prophet, one sent by God to proclaim His Word and call sinners to repent.

19 The woman said to Him, "Lord, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and You, You say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship. 21 Jesus said to her, "Believe Me, woman, that the hour is coming when not on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You, you worship what you do not know; we worship Whom we know, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in the Spirit and the Truth; for also the Father is seeking such as these who are worshipping Him. 24 God is spirit, and it is necessary for those worshipping Him to worship in the Spirit and the Truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the One called Christ; when He comes, He will announce to us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I, Myself am He, the One speaking to you."

Confronted with her sin and present state of things, the Samaritan woman does what we sinners excel at doing; she seeks to change the subject and focus of the conversation to another matter. In this case the woman brings up the theological feud between the Jews and Samaritans over where God has promised to be to forgive sins and hear prayers and where it was proper to offer sacrifices to God. The Samaritans held that Mt. Gerizim in Samaria was the place, while the Jews held to God's Word and promises in the Scriptures that the Temple in Jerusalem was the place where God's glory dwelt to forgive sins and hear prayers. Jesus answers the woman and refocuses the conversation upon the salvation that the woman needs.

Jesus declares to the woman that the worship of God is not on Mt. Gerizim nor any longer in the Temple in Jerusalem, but is through Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus says later to His disciples in John 14:6 and 14:16-17, 26: *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me...And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you...But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

Jesus does a body good because God is present in Jesus to forgive sins and hear prayers. Jesus is the One anointed by the Spirit, this is what Messiah or Christ means. Jesus bears the Spirit of God in full, because He is the Son of God; Jesus is the bearer and giver of the Spirit. And as the Christ who bears and gives the Spirit, Jesus reveals Himself to the woman so that she might believe, just as He also has done for you.

Jesus is the Source, the One from Whom the Spirit, the living water, flows springing up into eternal life. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He is the Christ, the One anointed by the Spirit to die for the sin of the world. From His crucified body and pierced side blood and water flowed out to grant forgiveness and eternal life to sinners. Jesus, does a body good!

But just like we Americans take water for granted, we Christians also take Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit for granted. We often forget that forgiveness and eternal life are not ours by right, wage, or reward, but are God's gracious gifts to us for the sake of Christ. We often live as if Christ Jesus has not given us His Spirit in Baptism and freed us from sin; we often make the false assumption that because we are forgiven by grace for Christ's sake through faith in Christ alone, that this is our license to sin so grace can increase or that the Gospel allows us to live life out on the edge of the cliff without fear of falling away, because God's grace will catch us. We get caught up in the routine of our daily lives and are deceived into thinking that our own individual tasks, responsibilities, work, play, and interests are the most important things in life. We busy ourselves with things that are not necessary and neglect that which is most necessary; we actually run away from Jesus, the Source of the Spirit, who does our bodies good.

None of us is guiltless in this. We all run after different things and busy ourselves with things we deem important or get caught up in trivial matters. And we are all dehydrated and malnourished because of it. One hour a week in Worship receiving Christ's forgiveness through Word and Sacrament may keep us alive in Christ, but only just barely. Jesus calls and invites us to daily come to Him and drink from the Spirit in the Word. Our congregation is good at doing things in and for the community, but our congregation struggles with that which is most important, receiving the gifts Jesus wants to give us through His Word and Body and Blood.

The Good News is that in spite of our sinfulness, Jesus still does a body good. Jesus still calls us to gather where He has promised to be to pour out His Spirit upon us, and to forgive our sins. Jesus' gifts are not nullified by our unfaithfulness. Jesus was lifted up on the cross for our sin, for your sin; from His side blood and water flowed. As Jesus sought out the Samaritan woman at the well and invited her to drink from the water that He gives, so He continues to call and invite us through the Gospel to drink of the Spirit, to be forgiven, and to live. Jesus, does a body good! Got Jesus? Amen.