

John 4:5--15, 25--29, 39--42

⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "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." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷Just then his disciples came. 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?" ²⁸Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

³⁹Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

Just Say It: Jesus Is Lord!

We are three weeks into Lent and our worship series "Living Out Our Baptismal Calling." We began on Ash Wednesday by reminding ourselves of our mortality, from dust we came and to dust we return, that death comes to all, not because it was part of God's plan but because, we, all of humanity, chose death over life when we chose to separate ourselves from the love of God. Fortunately God is stronger than death and out of his infinite love has chosen to rescue us from death and restore his rule over this world, to make his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, as the Lord's Prayer reminds us. Jesus is the return of God and the beginning of that kingdom; Easter celebrates his triumph over death, and he promises that we too share in that victory when Jesus returns to make God's kingdom universal. The season of Lent reminds us that we still are too often trapped in our sin, and it should be a time not only of humility and repentance but of transformation, a time to draw close to Jesus. And so our worship series,

“Living Out Our Baptismal Calling,” models itself around the Confession of Faith, the promises that we make when we take on the title “Christian,” promises that, let’s face it, we have a hard time maintaining.

Two weeks ago we reminded ourselves that we renounce the forces of evil in this world, and last week we reminded ourselves that we accept the freedom and the power God has given us to resist evil, and we handed out index cards and asked you to answer the question, “How will I use the freedom and power God has given me to make a positive change in my life or in my family or in my community?” So before I continue with the sermon, I’d like to hear anything that you’d like to share. I know how humble some of you are, and you may think of this as “tooting your own horn” so to speak, but I encourage you to share because what you say may encourage others, and part of the function of the body of Christ (i.e. the Church) is to encourage one another.

How have I used the freedom and the power God has given me? Unfortunately I used the freedom and power to make a positive change in our church community in a way that caused me some pain, because I had to rebuke a member of the church, and the person did NOT take this rebuke kindly, even though I told this person that I was saying what I was saying out of love and concern for that person and for the church. I’m glad I did what I did, but it wasn’t what I would call a pleasant task. But Jesus reminded us that anyone who wishes to follow him must take up the cross and follow him. Not everything we say and do in the name of Jesus brings us joy, as Jesus himself knows.

Well, I would guess that some of you might prefer to share ways that they did NOT use the freedom and power God has given you to resist evil or make positive change. And so I think today’s message, which I call, “Just Say It: Jesus Is Lord,” will help you, because I believe that the only way we can fully ACCEPT the freedom and power God offers us is when we can sincerely CONFESS that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. I’d like to show you a short film clip, and just a warning: there is nudity in this clip (though the film was rated PG).

Play clip from “The Mission”

In the scene you just watched, which by the way is a clip from the movie that we’ll be airing next Saturday for Movie Night, we find a Jesuit priest deep in the rainforest of Argentina who is alone in an effort to evangelize a Guarani community. I think that we could all agree that this priest is truly using the freedom and the power God has given him to resist evil and bring about positive change in the world, *but let’s face it; there aren’t many Christians in this world who use their freedom and power to this degree; to be a priest is a sacrifice in itself, and to be a Jesuit priest is even more demanding, and to go solo amongst the Guarani who aint exactly happy to see you because other white folks have been trapping and shackling and enslaving your people, well that’s really pushing it . He goes alone, armed only with an oboe, not just to “make friends” with a people who are hostile to white folks, not to apologize for the mean things that others have done and are doing, and not just going to teach them ways to improve their environment or their hygiene. **He’s going to introduce them to Jesus!** And he’s taking a lot of risks in doing*

so. Where does such courage and determination come from? **It comes from knowing Jesus, and knowing Jesus means CONFESSING Jesus as both Lord and Savior.**

Today I asked you if you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as Lord, in union with the church Christ opens to people of all ages, nations, and races and by the grace given you will you to remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world. And you kind of answered yes, though I don't think you were imagining yourself scaling waterfalls and facing hostile natives in South America or South Beach. Because to be THAT gung ho about introducing people to Jesus you truly have to appreciate Jesus as Savior of this world, and I don't think many can go that far. I've spoken repeatedly about how we've diminished Jesus to be our personal savior who will take us to heaven when we die, but do we believe that he has initiated God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven and that one day he's coming back to this world to finish the job? Because what we believe determines how we behave, and the more we believe the more we are apt to DO. The stronger our faith, the more likely we are to scale cliffs and face danger and go out of our way to introduce others to Jesus.

In today's Gospel lesson, a Samaritan woman comes to a historic well where she meets Jesus. She doesn't know him from a hole in the ground – that's the way we start in our relationship with Jesus; not knowing him from a hole in the ground. And a few things we should note: Jesus is tired and alone, not some supernatural being and some powerful king with an army around him. He's a tired, thirsty stranger to this woman, and he actually asks her to help him get a drink of water. Jesus does not care that she is a woman or a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jewish people. And this tired, dusty, thirsty stranger speaks to her of magic water that is the ultimate thirst quencher – that's how she understands it, *literally*, just the way Nicodemus understood Jesus literally when he spoke of being "born again." But Jesus is speaking in symbols; he's speaking of water that nourishes the soul, of spiritual water nourishes more than any actual water could ever nourish, of water that not only sustains life but brings abundant life, and not just abundant life eternal life.

But when this woman asks Jesus for this water, she's expecting only plain water in abundance, something that will save her from making daily trips to the well, something that will convenience her in this life. I think we often approach Jesus with such limited expectations. We end up asking Jesus for very little – help me get over my cold, help me find a better job, keep me safe on my next vacation. There's nothing wrong with these petitions, but they just scratch the surface of the abundant gifts that Jesus has to offer. Those are the kinds of gifts that make Jesus a great provider, a great healer, a great guardian, **but they are not the gifts that prove him to be Savior of the world.** And if we only look upon Jesus as provider, healer, or guardian, we'll never see him as the one who makes all things new, including us. If we don't recognize the full power of Jesus we can't possibly accept the power, and with it the freedom, that he offers us.

And the first thing he offers us is grace. That's the thing that made this woman see Jesus as peddling something more than magic water. Jesus tells her to go get her husband (that was not

included in today's reading, but if you look at the passage you'll find that and so much more!), and when she says she has no husband Jesus reveals that he knows that she has had several husbands and the current person she's living with is not her husband. AND THE POINT HERE IS THAT JESUS KNOWS BUT DOES NOT CAST JUDGMENT UPON HER. There were already two reasons why a Jew shouldn't even talk to this woman; she's a woman AND she's a Samaritan. Add to that the fact that she's had five husbands and Jesus shouldn't come within a hundred feet of her. But here he is asking her for a drink and having a conversation with her. And it's this grace, this non-judgment that Jesus affords her that sends her into her village telling people to come and meet this guy. And it only takes two days with Jesus for the people of the village to come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Savior of the world!

And they come to this conclusion NOT because Jesus walked on water or fed 5,000 or healed their sick or raised the dead. They come to this conclusion because a poor, tired, thirsty man shared with them the TRUE nature of God and the TRUE nature of his kingdom. And when we SEE Jesus for all that he is, and when we confess him to be TRULY our Lord and our Savior – and not just our personal Savior but the Savior of the world – then we can live more freely. Then we can more fully accept the power that God has given us to be Christ's true ambassadors in this world. AMEN.