**Woman at the Well – Welcome Back Women’s Retreat; Feb 2021**

**Focus:** God meets us in our thirst

**Function:** Follow your thirst to Jesus

It’s wild to me to imagine God

Going for a mid-day walk through the desert:

sweaty, exhausted, thirsty –

I imagine him seeing Jacob’s well and making his way to it

I imagine him leaning with a heavy sigh over the edge of the well and

 staring deep down into it…

and realizing:

 no. bucket.

So ironic and so humble..

The author of the universe,

sharing in creation’s desperate need for water.

It’s here, in the person of Jesus,

that God’s needs/desires

and human needs/desires become one.

Jesus thirsts.

Jesus thirsts for water,

and Jesus thirsts for communion with *humanity*,

and as he takes a seat next to the well:

here she comes.

Here comes humanity, in the form of the Samaritan woman.

In this woman, we see humanity *before it knows Jesus*.

She tells the human story.

This real, complicated woman,

tells our story through her specific, complicated life.

We see her:

sweaty,

determined,

and perhaps jaded

by all the relationships that failed to fulfill her,

that failed to temper that restlessness in her heart.

That feeling that there must be something, *something* more.

Here is humanity, trudging along in the heat of the day

to temporarily quench, yet again, her thirst.

She is human. She is each one of us.

And this is the humanity that Jesus wants to know **–**

 humbly, he has become one with this human reality.

So that he can know humanity,

so that he can know this woman,

so that he can know each one of us –

and offer his life-giving, healing water.

But he will not force it upon her.

Instead, in his humility, he *asks* her:

 “would you please give me a drink of water?”

He who was there when the Creator spoke water into existence

puts himself at the mercy of his own creation.

He thirsts – for water, yes, but even more deeply for her.

To know her and to love her.

But the canyon left by fractured relationships

and a broken world

runs deep and dry within this woman.

She seems to distrust Jesus: he is, after all, a Jew – and she a Samaritan.

How could they share water?

They have nothing to do with each other.

They are estranged from each other.

If only she knew how far Jesus would go to remedy that gulf between them.

Jesus says as much:

“If only you knew what God wants to give you…”

And still she challenges him. (Don’t we all?)

Who does he think he is?

One greater than Jacob, her ancestor,

who literally wrestled with God?

He thinks he can alleviate my thirst?

He thinks he’s can alleviate

my pain,

my suffering,

my loneliness,

my fear,

my hopelessness

my grief…?

“Fine, give me the water then” – she starts to say.

But then she abruptly changes the subject:

 to religion –

his being a prophet and

the appropriate place of worship.

Why? Is she nervous?

Is he getting a little close to her heart?

Is she afraid of believing him –

and being disappointed… again?

She stalls her request,

she pushes it off to “someday” or “another time” –

Yeah, yeah. The Messiah will tell us. Someday..

And so Jesus does. He makes his most radical move yet.

Jesus reveals himself to her as the Messiah,

 for the first time in John’s whole Gospel:

***I am he*.**

Love himself – God enfleshed - gives himself entirely over to her.

He shares his deepest identity.

He probes her deep wound and

dresses it with a radical outpouring of love.

He shares his full self with her,

overwhelms her with his deep desire to know her

and be known

by her.

And the dry valley inside her begins to well up.

 First a trickle,

then stream,

 to a flowing, rushing river of love and joy.

He has placed a life-giving spring in her heart.

***I am he*, he said.**

And it changes her life,

sends her streaming into town to sing the good news.

And new life follows where she trod,

like little ponds pooling in her footsteps.

Marking the way back to that man

who offers living water.

Thank God for her thirst.

It led her to Christ.

God met her in the shared thirst for each other.

Thank God for thirst,

for the truth that it speaks to us

about what we truly need, what will bring us life.

What are you thirsting for right now? (BIG pause. Really think about this.)

Will you let it lead you to the well,

to the man there who waits in thirst for you?

Will you let Jesus into that parched place

and allow him to bring new life there?

And then – like the Samaritan woman –

will you let that life-giving water bubble up

and overflow from your heart and into your families,

your workplaces,

your communities,

your parish?

Name your thirst,

acknowledge it,

and follow it to the heart of Jesus.

He thirsts for you too.