

WELCOME 15 March 2020 – 3 Lent '20 A

DEEP CYCLE: DEEP INTIMACY

John 4:5-42

Good morning & Welcome to Living Water Fellowship! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...It is wonderful you're here! Please stay for morning tea after worship so we get to know each other better.

Between April 2nd & May 2nd I will preside at 3 weddings. Each couple unique & different in themselves, their circumstances & their life situations. Oldest groom 74. Youngest bride 24. Not marrying each other! Stop that! Widely divergent contexts for each of the 3 couples. Each wedding will be fabulous & I have a unique privilege as pastor to be part of the lives of those 6 lives & more. But as different as they each are, they all give evidence of something essential to human life: relationship.

Whether we marry or not, we're built to live connected to other people. We're designed for relationships...for belonging...for companionship...from childhood BFFs to husbands/wives to those friendships that sometimes last longer than spouses. Barring some emotional pathology we persistently reach out to others to link our lives to theirs in some way. We want to know/be known personally closely intimately

Jesus tells us that's the Father's goal...mission...*Now this is eternal life: that **they know you**, the only true God, & Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.* – Jn 17:3 But more striking than that: *My sheep listen to my voice; **I know them**, & they follow me.* – Jn 10:27 It gets better...*Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered.* – Lk 12:7

We are created to live in deep intimacy with God the Father in Christ the Son through the working of the Holy Spirit within us...Imperfectly now...like all our relationships...but that's the Father's desire & the gift he gives in Jesus Christ...*Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial & incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, **just as God now knows me completely.*** 1 Cor 13:12

What defines us most profoundly is not just that we come to know the Father, but that He took note of us & made us His own...filled us with his life...moved in in love. We'll explore & experience that together today as again Jesus comes in the power of his Spirit to plant his love within us to live through all we are & do.

Let's pray & then we'll get stuck into it!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father: meet us at the wells where we are lonely where we are forgotten where we are hurt by others & let us drink of the grace that brings life again

Lord Jesus: meet us at the wells where the sinners gather where the prejudices are made known where our histories are broadcast & let us drink of the forgiveness that brings peace again

Holy Spirit renew all that we are & make us into what we are supposed to be. Fill us with a new future inspire us with re-creation pull us into resurrection & let us drink of eternal life & the promise of heaven...Through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!

3 Lent '20 A - DEEP CYCLE: DEEP INTIMACY

John 4:5-42

To get us started this morning...we're going to watch a piece of video. There'll be no sound...just a guy dancing at a music festival in the US I think. We're going to talk about it a bit at the end...it's not me...but please watch it w/ some questions in mind:

1. What happens in the video? Just take it in & we'll talk about what you see.
2. There is a crucial moment in the video. What is it? Who is the crucial person in that moment?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO8MwBZI-Vc>

DANCING SHIRTLESS MAN VIDEO

So...What happened? What was the crucial moment? Who was the crucial person? Why? How do you know?

I've seen leadership experts dissect that video...Every one points to the big guy in the green shirt/black shorts as the critical dancer. He's the "1st follower" to the shirtless guy's lead dancing. The experts all point to him as crucial to everything that happens next...Now...I'm no expert...but I think that's only part of the story because him dancing alongside the guy w/o a shirt...didn't really make any difference. But when the shirtless guy wiggled over & they danced together...everything changed.

On its face...Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman about drinking various kinds of water from various kinds of wells...is just the guy dancing by himself. It's just weird. She knows...Jesus knows...we know...the disciples surely knew...that's just weird. Jewish men did not speak face-to-face w/ Samaritan women; much less ask something from them. Remember his first word is about his need not hers: "Please give me a drink" Jesus begins this conversation – this dance admitting a need she knows at every level: Thirst. We all know thirst...Not just in dry seasons or years...but as a society & as individuals we know THIRST: We know longing unfulfilled - hope thwarted - wants unsatisfied - frustration emptiness striving: THIRST

A friend of mine pointed this out the other day...he's absolutely spot on...He said Australians love reality TV. You may not. I know I don't, but the ratings say otherwise & proliferation of those shows...like fleas on a dog...Australians are living vicariously through the experiences of reality TV performers: from the safety of our own homes Living vicariously is safe - we don't have to risk our own heart or our own reputation - but it's not real. The networks have latched on to deep human desires & deep perceived deficiencies in our lives...We are always looking for more. And if we have to get it through someone else's public display...we will. He's right

We live dehydrated lives where we are thirsting for something more, something different, but we always keep returning to the same wells hoping our thirst will be quenched. What is your well? Work? Hobbies? Sport? Busyness? Marriage? Children? Your well? What well do you drink from that will never satisfy? Jesus begins this conversation admitting a need we/she knows at every level: Thirst.

Quickly...at a human level Jesus **is thirsty**...long walk hot dusty roads. He is thirsty. But even more...Jesus thirsts to reveal himself to those who most need to hear the good news of God's love for them. Jesus thirsts to draw to himself all those who are distant from God's embrace...estranged from the source of love & life satisfaction & contentment & peace. Jesus thirsts not just for water from Jacob's well but for the nourishment & satisfaction of carrying out God's saving will & work for/among we who are lost & drying & dying.

But from any objective standpoint...it's still just weird...Jesus is so far outside of the realm of what's normal/expected/acceptable...And she responds in kind with some tap dancing about social niceties & water-drawing logistics...But Jesus is relentless in engaging her with his offer of love life satisfaction & wholeness *"If you only knew the gift God has for you & who you are speaking to, you would ask me, & I would give you living water."* *"Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."* 2 different times he makes his offer...standing across the well from her Jesus reaches out to draw her in...and like the big guy who jumped up to dance...she takes a few meagre shuffles alongside Jesus. *"Please, sir give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, & I won't have to come here to get water."*

But then the whole thing changes with 5 words: *"Go and (call) get your husband..."(and come back) phonésou & get yourself back here...*And at that moment Jesus no longer stands across the well from her...he's no longer standing outside her experience looking in...she no longer has Jesus at a safe distance/arm's length. At this crucial moment, Jesus steps inside her world...& lets her know...He knows. From that moment on...everything about this conversation changes.

From now on...She knows He knows...He knows the inner restlessness the nagging anxieties...He knows the hurts the hangups the heartaches & the habits. He knows the sleep stealing cravings...the mind-numbing discontent...He knows the twisted self-interest & the corruption no one else is allowed to see...She knows He knows. She knows she brings nothing remarkable to the well except her need...no pedigree that would attract Him...no uniqueness that would fascinate Him...no earthly reason He should look at her, talk to her step into her life but He does...And what's more she

knows he knows...and he steps into her life nonetheless...in love w/o judgment in kindness w/o condemnation in compassion w/o criticism...Finally she finds & feels whole – complete – content...Here's the secret...

Jesus is more interested in her future than her past. He wants to satisfy her thirst more than judge her history. Jesus knows her. He looks beyond the surface of whatever the men & their comings & goings have taken from her...He sees beyond what it is that puts her at the well alone at the wrong time of the day...He views her from inside & sees a woman dying of thirst; thirsting to be loved, to be seen, to be accepted, to belong, to be forgiven, to be known & made whole & complete.

Which is precisely how he sees you & me...dying of thirst at wells that will never satisfy...day after day drawing something that just can't get the job done & might leave us thirstier & emptier & drier in the drinking. There is nothing in you that Jesus has not experienced...he knows – your fears, your desires, your hardest moments, your deepest chronic longest lasting pain...your shame at your own failures – your heartbreaks & griefs – he shares...he knows. *This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do...*

For the woman the change is instantaneous. *"The woman left her water jar beside the well & RAN back to the village, telling everyone, 'Come see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?'"* Having received a love & an embrace that far exceeds anything her 6 men could have given her; the woman raced off as an agent of that all-surpassing grace. Having received THE THING which quenches her thirst, she now abandons the daily water-drawing chore to become a well-spring of that reconciliation for her community. She cannot keep the good news to herself or somehow she misses what Jesus fully intends for her life. Jesus would later say... *"All you thirsty ones, come to me! Come to me & drink! Believe in me so that rivers of living water will burst out from within you, flowing from your innermost being, just like the Scripture says!"* That's her: a river of living water The 1st evangelist outside of the 12 apostles & a Samaritan woman to boot!

But it can't be any other way. Now that Jesus has stepped into her life she summons the others with the good news that finally there *IS* a source of satisfaction there *IS* one who promises life...There *IS* one in whom we are known & loved... There *IS* one who invites you to drink deeply from him & be completely satisfied... There *IS* one who offers the deep intimacy that comes from being known loved, seen, accepted, included, & forgiven.

Drawn into the deep intimacy of the Father's love in Jesus she now is able to say to those who might well have scorned her before that moment: *"If you only knew the gift God has for you..."* Now she is able to invite others into that raucous celebration where Jesus Christ encounters us at our dry wells & invites us to drink deeply from the well of his life/love. Now she is able to call others into the deep intimacy that will deeply satisfy. And the fields are ripe for harvest... *Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!" When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, long enough for many more to hear his message & believe. They said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world."* – Jn 4:39-42

What defines us (and all those folks who joined the dance in Sychar) most profoundly is not that we come to know the Father, but that He took note of us, made us His own ...filled us with his life...moved in in love...and never moves out or away. Nailed himself to the cross so that once & forever nothing could separate us from his love.

I want to finish today...just giving the Spirit a chance to wash over us...to remind us again of the Father's loving nearness & just how deeply he treasures each of us...I'll simply read some Scriptures & want you to simply let them soak into your soul... Give the Spirit space to bless you & Jesus to whisper his love for you...They're promises...assurances...for you...for the woman...for her village...that you can take to your village...close your eyes if it helps...

You keep track of all my sorrows.

You have collected all my tears in your bottle.

You have recorded each one in your book. – Ps 56:8

Can't you see?

I have carved your name on the palms of my hands! – Is 49:16

I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand

and I say to you, 'Don't be afraid; I will help you.' – Is 41:13

For this is what the Lord Almighty says...whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye... - Zech 2:8

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one & only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us & sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sin. – 1 Jn 4:9-10

We are created to live in deep intimacy with God the Father in Christ the Son through the working of the Holy Spirit within us...the Father's desire & the gift he gives in Jesus Christ

Let us pray...**Lord Jesus come today to quench our thirst with your life. Pour out your Help us to drink deeply and often at the well of your living water that we might be satisfied by your grace, experience joy in union with you, be sustained to life eternal and draw others to the bottomless well of your love. I pray right now for...***(silent prayer for those living distant from God's grace)* **In your name we pray... Amen**