

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." 16Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." 17The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; 18for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" 19The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." 21Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 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?" 30They left the city and were on their way to him. 31Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." 33So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" 34Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. 36The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' 38I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor." 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."

When I was young it was Jacob's ladder that we sang about. If you know the song sing it with me: We are climbing Jacob's ladder, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, soldiers of the cross.

Every rung goes higher, higher.

Sinner do you love your Jesus

If you love him why not serve him.

The Christian life – climbing higher and higher – right up to God by loving Jesus, serving Jesus.

But today Jacob does not give us a ladder but a well.

Now it might be just a well – a hole with water gathering in the bottom. A source of water to drink, for bathing – for cooking.

It seems only that when Jesus came to that well and asked a woman for a drink. But immediately the conversation shifts: the simple request for water gets bogged down in religion and politics – us and them. “How is it that you, a Jew ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?”

Jesus replied, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’ you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water”

The woman said to him, “Sir , you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where will you get this living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”

Jesus answered: Everyone who drinks from this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink from the water I will give them will never be thirsty. The water I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

Maybe this conversation was not about water that you drink when your body is thirsty but about what will satisfy that deeper thirst. On the one hand there is Jacob’s well, the whole religious tradition of the people of Israel - the law and the prophets - the ten commandments. Jacob’s well is about how people live, and worship and obey God. Every day Jacob’s children – the children of Israel have to live that tradition. God will be faithful to the faithful ones. Every day asks the question, “Am I faithful?” Every day the faithful ones must dip their buckets into the commandments and teachings to satisfy the thirst for another day. And when faithfulness fails – the

people die of thirst. God turns God's back as God did in punishing the people by allowing their enemies to conquer them.

But Jesus offers living water - flowing water – a spring gushing up to eternal life.

Jacob's ladder and Jacob's well are great when you are strong - pulling up those buckets – climbing up to heaven – the Olympians of the spirit love these exercises.

But for the woman Jesus was talking with, the rungs on the ladder were broken - the rope to pull up the water was frayed.

God's law was for men – women were property – In the Ten Commandments women are property not to be coveted along with house and cattle and servants. And the men had not been treating this woman very well.

She had had five husbands – was living with a man who had not honored her with marriage. Had they all died? Had they divorced her, abandoned her? Whatever her history she would not be a respected one in the community that drew its life from Jacob's well.

And she was a Samaritan – a group of people who were partly descended from Jacob – partly descended from pagans.

But here was Jesus offering her living water – flowing gushing water - not water she needed to fetch – to draw but water that came to her continually – always.

“If you knew the gift of God,” Jesus had said, “and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’ you would have asked and he would have given you living water.”

Jesus himself is the gift of which he was speaking. From Jesus side water would flow to her to quench her thirst for all eternity.

It is not just the children of Jacob who climb ladders and draw water from wells but you and I who are known by Jesus are always tempted to quench our thirst and to build our hope on what we do. “Sinner, do you

love your Jesus? Sinner, do you serve your Jesus?" the song asks . Keeping the commandments as the well of Jacob implies. We think we will be saved by our spiritual strength.

But when we are busy climbing ladders to heaven we miss Jesus who is coming down to earth. And when we drink the water of our own goodness and righteousness we have no time for the gift of living water that is Jesus himself.

And so this morning as you come to this altar know that it is not your climbing the stairs nor kneeling on your knees that brings the gift to you but that it is Jesus who comes down to enter you. He gives his flesh and his blood to be life in you – a spring of living water gushing up to eternal life.