

Grace Lutheran Community, 12th March 2023: Third Sunday of Lent

The sermon text for today is based on John Chapter 4, verses 5 to 42.

Provided by Paster Mark Gierus

Today we find ourselves on a journey with Jesus and His disciples who pass through this town of Sychar but Jesus stops for a while with a purpose.

How often in life do we pass through towns or pass by people and not even stop to think of the people in the town or the needs of the people themselves?

They say you can't do more than one thing at once. Yet my grandmother seemed to be able to knit and hold a full conversation with my mother and keep an eye on what was cooking on the stove all at once.

In our modern world there is a focus on mindfulness. Or being in the moment and hearing, smelling, seeing and being present. Mindfulness has its benefits and there is a push for this to be used in schools and workplaces and so on but it has its roots in Hinduism, Buddhism, yoga and now in non-religious meditation.

The problem with mindfulness is the way it is taught and the way we are starting to use it even in our Christian schools. You see it is self-focused. You are mindful to enjoy who you are and what you are experiencing and so it would be logical then to use this mindfulness to help others with their wellbeing. Yet because mindfulness is self-centered often it stops at the self without helping others in the community.

When we as Christians think of mindfulness we need to remember that our focus is not self rather Christ who lives in us. Mindfulness or if I can be bold and say Christian mindfulness is certainly about stopping and being.

Psalm 46 encourages us to be mindful. 'Be still and know that I am God.' We hear in the words of this Psalm. We are called to stop before God, to listen, to see with faith the blessings of God in our lives. We are as God's people able to look at nature, to be in nature and praise God for His gift of creation for me and for you and for our community. God made us a gift to each other to be a blessing to each other, to share God's love for each other.

When we stop and think about the now and think of Jesus in the now what is He calling us to do today? He gives us purpose each and every day, just as He gave the woman who came to fulfil her daily task of drawing water.

So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.' 'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?' Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.'

What an encounter. The disciples like us often are totally unaware of what is happening. They went to buy food which is important of course important but the focus to feed the body physically here was not the first focus of Jesus.

Jesus is all about love. He came to save the lost, all of us dying on the cross for our sin. To offer us in faith, forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. But Jesus always is about building relationships with people, the people He came to save. He speaks and continues to speak to us by His word building a relationship with us, remaining with us as we remain in Him.

Jesus asks this woman for water. Men don't really talk with women and this woman is coming out to get water at an unusual hour. Perhaps she is ashamed of her life. No Jesus gives her dignity. He talks with her, He shares the truth of who He is with her. Then He tells her that He knows her story.

He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.'

'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'

Jesus knows our story too. Because Jesus knows this woman she sees He is not out to judge her but to connect with her. He teaches her as who He is.

The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I, the one speaking to you – I am he.'

Now this is what happens when Jesus begins a relationship with someone. Then grows it with His word by His spirit.

Look at what the woman does.

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?' They came out of the town and made their way towards him. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I've ever done.'

So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, 'We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.'

Jesus calls us to stop at the towns along the way of our life to build connections with people in Jesus name, to share His love and His joy, peace and hope in His life. As we bring Jesus to others they too like the woman go and tell others to come and meet this Jesus who is the messiah.

The woman saw that Jesus was the one who forgives, loves and changes lives for eternity and so she brought others, but they in the end wanted to meet Jesus, not just to hear the testimony of another. They wanted to meet Jesus themselves. We have the very word Jesus in us and with us forever so as we meet people let us pray that they meet Jesus in us.

'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

What a joy it is that Jesus came to us while we were sinners, to save us and send us out into the world to stop and be present in others' lives in the name of Jesus. For we have eternal life, we have all God has promised in Jesus, forgiveness, life and salvation to not hold onto for self but to live it and share Jesus with others so they too can say Jesus is my Lord. Amen.