**Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost—Symbols of Christ in Stained Glass: The Water of Life**

**Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY October 20, 2013**

**Based on John 4:4-26 written by Vicar Ben Zuberbier**

**The Water of Life flows to you**

*4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 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.) 10 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.” 11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?” 13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” 15 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.” 16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” 17 “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 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.” 19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21 Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth.” 25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” 26 Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”*

I’ve been in Kentucky about two months now, and I’ve been told, if I were to go and watch the Derby, not to go exploring too much in the neighborhood around Churchill Downs or I might find myself in one of the rougher parts of Louisville. I’ve also been told, I’ll generally want to avoid traveling through the West side.

For the Jews about two thousand years ago, Samaria was the part of Israel to avoid. In fact, if they wanted to travel from the province of Judea in the South to Galilee in the North, they’d take a few precautions. They’d avoid the direct route north through Samaria so they wouldn’t risk running into any of its citizens on its roads. Instead, they’d walk East and cross the Jordan River, and then travel north until they could cross safely back over the river onto Galilean soil. They’d go out of their way and nearly double the length of their trip just so they wouldn’t have to come into contact with anyone of the Samaritan race.

But for Jesus, when he was about to head back north to Galilee from Judea, this route to the East of the Jordan simply wasn’t a possibility. It just didn’t fit his mission plan. Yes, he’d have to go through the rougher parts of Israel and be in a few uncomfortable situations. Sure, he probably got a few confused looks from the people as he passed through the Samaritan towns and villages. Maybe even his own disciples were wondering what he was thinking cause Jews simply didn’t associate with Samaritans. But John tells us, **“He had to go through Samaria” (v 4)**.

And near a well on a small mountain just outside of a Samaritan town called Sychar, we find out why. After walking for a good number of hours, Jesus stopped there to rest and sent his disciples into the town to buy food. Jesus was no doubt thirsty from traveling out in the hot sun for most of the day, but he didn’t have a bucket to draw water with. So, he just sat and waited. Then, a woman from the town came out to the well to draw water. So Jesus asked her, **“Will you give me a drink?” (v 8)**. Of course, this was strange to her. He was a Jew. She was a Samaritan. Outside of conversation that was strictly business, the two didn’t talk. Her irritation came out in her words, **“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?“ (v 9)**.

Now this wasn’t the only thing that was odd about this conversation. Jesus wasn’t the one who needed water. It was this woman, but not the same water she had come to the well for. Jesus said to 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” (v 10)**. Although she didn’t get what Jesus meant. **“Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?” (v 11)**. So Jesus explained, **“Everyone who drinks this water [**here from the well**] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst” (vv 13,14a)**. You see, Jesus was trying to teach her it was him who she needed. She needed the **Water of Life**, so her soul would never thirst again. That’s why Jesus had to go through Samaria, to teach her this very important truth. But she still didn’t quite understand, **“Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water” (v 15)**.

So Jesus showed her she was in fact spiritually thirsty, he did it by getting her to realize her sin. **“Go, call your husband and come back” (v 16)**. **“I have no husband” (v 17a)**, she timidly said. **“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 said is quite true” (vv 17b,18)**. “Whoa! How did he know that? How was he able to call me out on that sin?” So she came to a conclusion and told Jesus, **“Sir, I see you are a prophet” (v 19)**.

She thought Jesus was just a prophet, but he was much more than that! He was the Messiah! And he had just come all this way to meet with this individual woman to show her her need for him, **The Water of Life**. When she heard his accusing words, her mouth probably dried.

Imagine if Jesus came to you individually and pointed out your sins like that. How would you feel? Would you be thirsty for forgiveness? Maybe you aren’t committing adultery by living with someone who’s not your husband, but if Jesus were here he would call you out on the website you visited last night. Or on the dirty thoughts you had about someone before you walked into church today. Or maybe even the dirty thoughts you’ve had since you walked through the door into this church. Maybe he’d call you out on the gossip that you’ve taken part in.

If you examine yourself according to the Ten Commandments and go through the whole list one-by-one, you’d feel your spiritual hydration level decrease after you read and considered each Commandment. The dehydrating effect of looking at how you live up to what God expects can leave your mouth and throat so dry you feel like you’re about to choke. You realize you need the **Water of Life** more than ever and you wish it would just **flow to you** individually to quench this terrible spiritual dehydration, because your hydration is so low, you’re almost dead. And take a warning from this, there’s not a drop of water down in the fiery pit of hell, the Bible makes that more than clear.

But Jesus went out of his way into Samaria so **the Water of Life this woman needed could flow to her**! He made her realize her thirst but he also explained the life-giving water he would give that a person could drink and never thirst again. Right then and there he knew he would have to continue to Mt. Calvary to offer himself on the cross. There on that cross he took on the dehydration levels of this woman, of you and me, and of the whole world and died of them there. And when a Roman soldier stabbed his lifeless body, the last of the water in his body spilled out onto the ground. Then he was placed in a tomb.

Then three days later, he rose again in a fully hydrated body and burst forth **a stream that flows to each of us**. This stream is the **Water of Life** that flows to you with forgiveness. This stream flows to you personally and wets your mouth and throat parched by the drying effect of sin. This Water of Life flows to you and keeps you soul constantly hydrated. **This Water of Life replenishes** all the elements in your spiritual life that sin stripped you of. **The Water of Life flows to *you***.

In fact, the stream of the **Water of Life flows to you** through God’s Word. It keeps you refreshed each time you’re back in it. As you sit down to do a family devotion, the **Water of Life is flowing to the members of your household**. When you sit down and read your Bible, **the Water of Life flows from its pages**. When you gather together at worship this stream is flowing into this sanctuary and is channeled to each of you. The bottom line is—when you’re in the Word, the Water of Life is flowing to you; it’s replenishing your soul with forgiveness, comfort, peace, and new confidence.

And the **Water of Life flowed to you** in Baptism too. When you were baptized, water was applied with the Word and God promised you, his own child, that you would never go thirsty again. The waters of Baptism washed away your sins. Baptism also means something to us each new day. Martin Luther wrote the meaning of Baptism for our daily life in his Small Catechism: “Baptism means that the Old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” Baptism also revived our dead, lifeless, spiritually dehydrated bodies by raising us up with Christ. The Apostle Paul explains in Romans, chapter 6, **“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (vv 3,4)**. Through Baptism, the **Water of Life flows to you** with *such* rich spiritual hydration every single day.

Here’s something interesting; the Water of Life doesn’t just flow to you, it’s in you. Jesus said, **“Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (v 14b)**. That’s right, God placed the Water of Life in you like a spring that breaks forth from the ground. But it doesn’t flow like a spring you’d find in Saunders Springs, and it isn’t like the reservoir or holding ponds that welled up to a certain level and stay there. No, the Greek word for “welling up” doesn’t just mean rising gradually and stopping at a certain level, it means “jumping up.” The spring Jesus places inside of us through the Word is more like a geyser. When Old Faithful at Yellowstone National Park erupts, it shoots water over 100 feet in the air, around 17 times a day. But Old Faithful doesn’t even come close to illustrating the spring that’s jumping up inside of us. This spring is constantly “shooting up” and it reaches up to eternal life. You could even say it’s like it’s shooting up to heaven.

When we reach life everlasting in heaven, together with all the saints and angels, we will drink from the crystal clear River of Life that flows from the throne of God down the middle of the great street in the New Jerusalem. We will draw water on the banks of the stream where the tree of life is planted, and our souls will be eternally refreshed.

This morning we ask God that **the Water** **of Life continue to flow to us through his Word** and in the everyday meaning of Baptism so the spring of life-giving water in us may continue to vigorously grow until we enter heaven and drink from the River of Life. Amen.