

## **John 4:5-14. Living water.**

During the week, some friends who live in the Wollongong area have been posting pictures online of their flooded roads, bridges & creeks. They've had days of torrential rain, and the waterways simply can't cope.

It's been pretty wet here too. You can hear the grass growing right now!

Then again, only a few weeks ago, as I walked up our driveway, I commented to Jay how brown and crispy our lawn had become. That's Australia for you.

Dorothea MacKellar said it well:

I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.

Here in Australia we know only too well how precious water is.

In our Gospel reading today, we have Jesus asking for a drink of water. He'd just arrived in a little Samaritan village in the middle of the day, after walking for many kilometres in the dust and the heat. The disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

As he sat down by the well, worn out from his journey, and parched with thirst, a Samaritan woman came by to get some water.

How Jesus ministered to this woman is truly beautiful. And the transformation that came over this woman as a result of her encounter with Jesus is something that can happen in our own lives, and in the life of our church.

So what was going on? Three things stood out for me.

- **First: Jesus - the Son of the living God - KNEW this woman.**

He knew her deepest needs, her deepest longings, her most intimate secrets. She wasn't able to hide anything from Jesus. When Jesus suggested she bring her husband to meet him – she hedged. Told him a half truth. But Jesus faced her with the facts – and she realised he was from God. “A prophet”, she called him. Jesus knew all that was good about her, and all that wasn't. He knew her through and through.

Jesus knows US in the same way. As the Psalmist prayed, “Lord - you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.”

- **Second: Jesus LOVED the Samaritan woman.**

He knew of her adulterous living arrangements, and of her promiscuous past. He knew that she was, according to her society, a bad woman. An outcast – which is why she was drawing water in the heat of the day. No woman in her right mind would be carting

water at midday. Yet Jesus treated her with courtesy, gentleness and compassion. He knew what she was, yet he loved her.

Isn't that an amazing concept? That God knows EVERYTHING there is to know about us, and yet STILL loves us! I wonder have we ever felt that we're not worthy of God's love. Perhaps we think we're not bright enough, or talented enough. Perhaps we think you're too old, or too young - That we're not as good as everyone else, perhaps that we don't really measure up? Maybe we've done something we're ashamed of, and have never really felt that God could love us.

Jesus knew this woman through and through – all her sins, failures and shortcomings – and yet he still accepted her. Still loved her. He loves you! He loves me! No matter how inadequate or unworthy we may feel.

We're reminded of that incredible truth in our reading from the letter to the Romans this morning:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus doesn't wait for us to clean up our act before he loves us. He loves us AS WE ARE. "While we were yet sinners," says St Paul. "Christ died for us." That's pretty extreme love, isn't it, to give up your life for someone. We need to think often about that. Meditate on it. Let that incredible fact sink in. Jesus loves me AS I AM – and he died for me, just the way I am.

First, Jesus KNEW this woman.  
Secondly, Jesus LOVED this woman.

- **Third: Jesus met this woman at her point of deepest need.**

He knew all about her life and her relationships. But he also knew that in her heart, she thirsted for God.

Jesus asked her for a drink. It was a most unexpected encounter. Men didn't speak to women in public. Jews certainly didn't speak to Samaritans – they were the enemy – and it was unheard of to think that a Jew would actually drink from the same cup as a Samaritan, which is what Jesus would have done to accept a drink from this woman. He certainly had her attention!

Then he made a curious statement – he intimated that God had a gift for her – and that if she asked, he could give her water that would satisfy the deepest thirst she had – her spiritual thirst. He could give her LIVING water, and she would never thirst again!

It's the same for us. Whether or not we identify it, our deepest, most consuming need is to be at peace with God. To be spiritually reborn. To commune with God. It is what we are created for. And until we find our peace with God, we are restless indeed.

For many in our society, who have not identified their need of God, the quest to satisfy this need finds its expression in the pursuit of materialism, power, pleasure and excitement. But none of this really satisfies. None of this can meet our deep spiritual thirst. Only the LIVING WATER that Jesus offers can do this.

Initially, the woman didn't understand. She took Jesus literally. But patiently, gently, answering her question about worship, Jesus led her to the point where he revealed to her who he was. He was the Messiah. He was the chosen one for whom the Jews and Samaritans had waited for centuries. He was here in front of her, promising to give her eternal life.

Like this Samaritan woman, we may feel we don't understand things at times. Perhaps there are aspects of our faith that confuse us. We may not even be able to identify our deepest need – but Jesus knows it. And if, like the woman, we come to him; if we sit at his feet and listen as best we can - the light will go on. Jesus will see to it. Revelation will come, and as he promises, he will lead us into all truth.

What is this living water that Jesus offered the woman, and that he offers us? It's himself, isn't it? Jesus offers us himself. If we'll respond to him in faith and trust, He offers to dwell within us, to cleanse us, renew us and bring us new birth. He offers to lead us, guide us, and fill us with his spirit. He offers us eternal life.

If like the woman at the well, we accept this gift from God, we'll find we are transformed. We'll never be the same again. Do you recall this verse from Paul's letter to the Corinthians?

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Just listen how the woman was transformed!

*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 ever did. Could this be the Christ?"*

**Note that she left her water jar behind!** The fact that she didn't fill it first and take it back into town with her indicates that she was EXCITED. The water jar would slow her down. What she'd gone to the well to do suddenly paled into insignificance.

**Note that she spoke to the people.** Her encounter with Jesus had enabled her to overcome her desire to avoid people. She was no longer concerned about the comments and the taunts – she had some incredible news and she was going to share it with them! , *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"*

**Note that she was persuasive.** She may have been an outcast in the village, but there was now something about her that touched people – moved them. They followed her, perhaps initially out of curiosity, and met Jesus for themselves.

An encounter with Jesus will always transform us. Whether it's that first encounter where we intentionally surrender our lives to Jesus, or whether it's the one of countless touches of his Spirit throughout our Christian walk – we will always come away changed.

But maybe it's just not our experience right now. Perhaps we're just not as excited by Jesus as we once were. Maybe our weaknesses are getting the better of us. And perhaps it's been a very long time since we've spoken to someone about knowing Jesus.

**If that is the case, then we really need a drink!**

Jesus said to the woman, “ASK me, and I will give you living water!”

We need only ask. But to ask we must COME to him. There needs to be an attitude of humility on our part – an acknowledgment of our thirst. We need to say to Jesus, “Lord – I'm thirsty. Please give me your living water to drink.” But it's the COMING to Jesus that is the key. It's prayer. As we spend time in his presence, that water is poured out within us.

And then the promise is this:

“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.”

“Welling up” – such a descriptive term!

There used to be a water main at the bottom of a hill we once lived on. At times, the water board would come and unscrew the valve to release water pressure. Wow –it gushed! So much water! It spurted several metres into the air filling the gutters, flowing over the road and drenching the area all around it. That's the picture here in the Greek – God's spirit welling up – gushing forth – welling up to eternal life.

I've left the collect till now. It's a great prayer. Can we say it together.

Let's pray.