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Holy Vessels: "Stories"

John 4:4-24

The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

Water – we can't live without it. That's a biological and medical fact. The human body needs food and water to survive. A human can go for more than **three weeks** without food, but water is a different story. At least 60% of the adult body is made of it and every living cell in the body needs it to keep functioning. At best, you could survive 8-10 days without water.

For a moment, let's take a look at the current infrastructure in the U.S related to water. Many of our water pipes used today are cast iron and were installed in the 1880's and were built to last 120 years. If we do the math, that means they are 17 years past their expiration date. The other major pipes supplying towns and cities across our nation were built post World War 2 and were designed to last 75 years. Let's do the math again. They time clock has near run out. So, much of our water piping infrastructure is over 100 years old. With the deterioration of the infrastructure comes the increased risk of lead contamination. Let me just say two words to you – Flint, Michigan. The EPA estimates it will cost \$384 million dollars to fix and replace what for too long been neglected.

Some of us continue to take into ourselves that which is dangerous to our well being or downright contaminated so that we now are ailing. So, some of us this morning are going to have to decide whether we are going to absorb what others say about us.

Some of us have the same story as the Samaritan woman – we

have been defined by one thing and one thing only – her relationship to her husband, the five she had and the man she had now, who was not her husband. Defined solely in relationship to a man.

How often do we define ourselves by someone else? Maybe you think of yourself as your parent(s) thought of you. Maybe you think of yourself as how your grade school teacher defined you. Maybe you define yourself by just one thing – what you did or was done to you, by what he said, she said, by only one of your traits, by a failure, by a mistake, by an omission, by a commission done by you or someone else.

When we feel that we only fit into one definition believing only in how others define us, we then stand the chance of losing ourselves or at least not being able to manifest other parts of ourselves that don't fit that one definition.

The Samaritan woman drank the Cool Aid, she saw herself as others saw her. If they thought she was bad, odd, or incorrigible she thought she was. Her opinion of herself, relied on their opinion of her. She was enslaved by their thought and feelings about her.

Jesus pretty much said to her at the well, enough is enough. No more Cool Aid, from now on just Living Water. In other words, when you realize that I, Jesus, can be the Living Water that you can indeed take in, it will cause you to never be thirsty again, just completely satisfied.

The real truth is, as long as we are dependent on others bolstering up, cheerleading, and continual accolades, we will feel good only when that is present.

Yet, here in our passage this morning, Jesus seems to be

describing something very different; something that is on the inside, and thus not dependent on outside circumstances or people. “Whoever drinks from the water that I will give, will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life.” (John 4:14)

One of the first things I learned, as a backpacker was to never drink stagnant water, rather only drink water that is moving. All those around the Samaritan woman saw her as stagnant. Jesus saw her as fluid, holding the possibility of being a container of Living Water.

Next, I learned never to take a chance on drinking water unfiltered or not treated because there is bound to be bacteria, protozoa and viruses. Thus, the 5 best ways to treat water;

1. Purifiers are a must, some bombard contaminated water with UV rays (Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world”, neutralizing all that is harmful and best of all it works in less than a minute. Yet, this method works best in relatively clear water.
2. Then there are chlorine dioxide tablets, yet they take much longer to work – 30 minutes for Giardia, and yet won’t kill some form of bacteria and viruses, and they leave an unpleasant aftertaste.
3. For silty, ultra cloudy water and sediment choked puddles collect water in a pot, and fire up the stove. Yet, this method is fuel intensive and requires waiting till the water-cools.
4. Then there are pump filters, which snag bacteria and protozoa, but don’t manage viruses, and are pricey and require field maintenance to boot.
5. And last but not least, water purifying method number 5, gravity filters which can handle a large volume of water, yet

take time due to the need to hang and let drip, till one can get enough to drink.

When we seek to survive on drinking the water we encounter along the way, we run the risk of getting pathogens that make us sick, ailing, ill, vulnerable to disease or should I say dis-ease.

Yet, all forms of water filtration can be avoided and proven not necessary, if we receive and believe, that we now contain nothing less than Living Water – pure, good, life-giving and life sustaining, water that will never run out.

If we believe we are like the woman at the well, and thus be vessels of the holy, containers of Living Water, then we need not have our day, week, year or life ruined by external water conditions.

The Gospel of John, where our reading is from today, stresses to us that when thinking of eternal life, we need to think of it as a present reality, and a future hope, to think of it in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

In John 17:3 we read, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Eternal life in the here and now, of utmost quality, and quantity, because we know God. It is important to note that the word “know” in the Bible, always denotes an “intimate” relationship. In other words, we have eternal life in the here and now and in the hereafter and of the greatest quality, because we have chosen to respond to God’s love for us by having an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

And in that relationship with the One who calls himself the Truth, we can hear Jesus say to us (through listening to God’s word in both scripture and during time of listening in prayer – who we

really are, in all our multifaceted ways, as a person who is valued, precious, respected, honored, cherished and loved). And when you and I take that in, we become refreshed by it, and then we have no longer any need to continually hear the cheer of the crowd or the applause of others, or to be sured up and told our worth.

And lastly, the reading for today reminds us, that it important to worship God in spirit and truth. May the God-Spirit of Love, and the Word Made Flesh Jesus-Truth, be seen by us, within us, and among us. Amen and Amen.