

Together We Eat Together We Serve
John 4:3-14
October 4, 2009

As you heard, this morning's Scripture Lesson was about a conversation Jesus had with a Samaritan woman at a well.

Though the focus of the text is the living water Jesus provides, the context always catches my attention. Jesus is by himself at a well. This well was located near the town of Sychar in Samaria. There he is resting when a Samaritan woman joins him at the well.

Having been born and raised in Detroit I never had to go to a well to get water, all I needed to do was go to a sink and turn on the faucet. It's not that I didn't know what a well was when I was growing up. In Scouts we would often camp out in places where we had to fetch our water. Sometimes the well would be close, other times it would be further away.

In our story we don't know how far the woman lived from the well. Whether it was close or far, it still was something she had to do everyday.

Growing up I never considered myself privileged. As I got older however I realized just how fortunate I was. Just like that Samaritan woman, there are women today that walk miles to get water. And for many, the water they have access to is not clean.

I remember a number of years ago I was working at one of our United Methodist camps. Our campsite was up a pretty steep hill. We shared a well with another group that was up the next hill over. The well itself was in the valley between the two camps.

It was easy carrying the empty container down to the well. It was quite a different story carrying the water back to camp. Since I had 6th, 7th and 8th graders in my group, the five-gallon container never was filled to the top. Though it was close to 20 years ago, I still remember a lot of complaining when it came to getting water.

Given the time and energy required to get water, I can understand the woman's desire to have the water Jesus was talking about. Remember Jesus

said, “no one who drinks this water will ever be thirsty again.” We know Jesus is not talking about water. We also know the thirst he is talking about is spiritual not physical.

Later on today hundreds of Christians will be taking part in a CROP walk. We will be walking in order to raise money for Church World Service. This is a cooperative ministry of 35 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican denominations, providing sustainable self-help and development, disaster relief, and refugee assistance around the world.

One of the signature projects for Church World Service is drilling new wells. Once a village has its well up and running, the women no longer have to spend hours each day getting water.

For years now the CROP walk has taken place on the first Sunday in October. For a number of Protestant denominations this Sunday is recognized as World Communion Sunday. I think there is a natural fit having the CROP walk on World Communion Sunday.

By talking with a Samaritan woman Jesus was modeling inclusion. Jesus did not want to divide people. Over and over Jesus said his wish was that the people would be one, just as he and God were one.

Unfortunately, the church has not been the model for acceptance and cooperation. Over the years there has been tension between churches and denominations. Even today there are churches that will not recognize, let alone cooperate with other churches.

One benefit of a CROP walk is that it brings Christians together. As we walk together we make a witness to our community that we believe in helping those in need. Today’s walk will have participants from eleven (11) churches.

We walk because they walk. That has been the slogan for the CROP walk. Though it is the need of others that bring us together, it is Jesus Christ that unites us. The communion we will share in just a few minutes is a reminder of the bond we have through Christ.

On our outside board I put the words “One Bread One Body”. World Communion Sunday highlights this concept. Whether we are Lutheran,

Episcopalian, Baptist, or Congregational, we all partake of the same body and blood of Christ.

Granted, how we do it and the elements we use may vary, but at its core communion is a remembrance of the last supper and a means of God's grace.

Jesus spoke to the woman about living water. When we receive communion we are tapping into that well of living water. Christ is able to quench our spiritual thirst.

Another metaphor we might use besides thirst is hunger. Once our spiritual hunger is satisfied the question is what do we do next? When we eat a big meal the tendency is to relax, maybe even take a nap. That may be okay on Thanksgiving, but it is not what God wants on World Communion Sunday.

Once we eat, once we are filled with God's Holy Spirit, we then are called to serve the world. God knows the need is there. Whether it's people far from God, or people struggling under poverty, we are called to go to them.

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May our holy meal remind us of the connection we have with brothers and sisters in Christ. May our holy meal also energize us to use our own abilities to serve a broken and hurting world.