



Saint Mark's

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Dear friends and family of St. Mark's,

While we are unable to worship together this weekend, we hope you will be intentional about taking time to read scripture, reflect on God's Word for our common life, and pray together.

Pastor Ivy, who was the scheduled preacher for this week, has crafted a reflection and prayers for you to use at home, based on this Sunday's Gospel reading. Please use it as we ponder together – even though we are apart – this new reality we find ourselves in. God is with us and through Jesus, we are with one another. Nothing can separate us.

Many churches in the area are livestreaming services. If you are able, check them out. St. Andrew's in Mahtomedi has several services, as well as Roseville Lutheran, and Shepherd of the Valley in Apple Valley (where Lindsey Bina serves), to name a few. We will work this week to set something up for you from St. Mark's as well in the coming weeks.

While we are suspending larger gatherings at St. Mark's, the church offices will remain open as usual. Pastors and staff will be available to you through this difficult time. We will stay in close contact via email, website, and Facebook, so watch for more information as we walk together. We remain Christ's church with good work to do!

Praying for health, wholeness, and peace.

Pastor Mary



Devotion for March 15

The Samaritan Woman Meets Jesus at the Well

Scripture Passage: John 4: 5-30, 39-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me

everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.'

Devotional Thoughts

In this passage we witness an encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman who lives in shame, ostracized from her community by failed marriages, unclean practices and most harshly, banished by the judgement and self-righteousness of the community. This woman has been forced into social distancing, being set apart not for the benefit of the community but by its misplaced sense of righteousness. She was forced to remain apart and distant from others because of the path her life has taken, whether through her own decisions or those leveled against her by others. It's into this social distancing that Jesus walks right up to her and engages her not only in conversation but in normal, everyday interactions, asking for a drink and inviting her into everlasting life from the well spring of God.

In this uncertain and unprecedented time in our world, we are called to social distancing but for the best of reasons - for the safety of others, taking into account our neighbors wellbeing above profit margin, social power and pride. This practice of social distancing (standing 6 feet apart from one another, limiting face to face interactions and self-restricting, especially when ill) has drastically changed our daily practices and our normal routines and yet this global pause on the status quo is also inviting us into a moment of solidarity with one another and providing us with an opportunity to be creative about being community with one another when physical interactions are not in the best interest of our world.

Recently I heard that during this time of social distancing, we as people of faith, are called to **"take care of our body as a way of taking care of THE BODY"** meaning the Body of Christ. We are connected, one to another in ways we are now witnessing, in ways we have neglected in the past, in ways that are now essential for world-wide health and community safety.

Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky wrote recently, "Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise."

As we move into this new normal of refraining from physical touch and remaining behind closed doors, let us reach out to one another in meaningful ways in conversation. Let's show up for one another through words of affirmation, cards declaring that you are not alone, and in acts of service towards our neighbors at risk by checking and helping out.

Nothing in this world, COVID-19 or otherwise, can separate us from God's love in Christ. And Jesus will always find a way to engage us in conversation which leads to restoration and hope. Let us hold tight to God's love and the promise that we do not walk alone. Amen.

Resources

Check out this YouTube video which takes the story of the Woman at the Well and modernizes it, inviting us into being known and loved by Jesus regardless of what the path we walk looks like or feels like.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxvNf9M1InE>

How are we like the woman at the well?

What does it feel like to be known and loved?

Prayers

Gracious God, it is good for us to gather as your beloved in community. We treasure your presence with us in word and meal, song and prayer. Be with us in these days when gathering together as often as we would like is not possible. When we must be apart for reasons of safety, we trust that you surround us with your sheltering wings. Encourage us in connecting as we are able, reaching out to our neighbors in need and being persistent in prayer.

God, our peace and our strength, we pray for our nation and the world as we face new uncertainties around coronavirus. Protect the most vulnerable among us, especially all who are currently sick or in isolation. Grant wisdom, patience, and clarity to health care workers, especially as their work caring for others puts them at great risk. Guide us as we consider how best to prepare and respond in our families, congregations, workplaces, and communities. Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern, and acts of service, trusting that you abide with us always.

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen