

“GIVE THEM A DRINK”

Pastor Mike Corwin

1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

TEXT: JOHN 4:1-10

GOD’S WORD: MATTHEW 25:31-46

I – OVER COFFEE:

I get in the office each day between 8:30 and 9 or after. I’m up every day between 6 and 7 but I don’t leave the house until I get that first cup of coffee in my hand and take one with me for the road, then I have more here. There are some mornings I don’t get in until around 10 because I’m sitting at Bob Evans or someplace else talking to someone over a cup of coffee. One of my favorite times of the week is sitting in nearby coffee house with a cup in my hand. Believe it or not I’m doing ministry.

I probably do more ministry over a cup of coffee than I do in one of the endless meetings that consume the life of a minister. It’s over coffee that I get to know people and hear their stories and it’s over coffee that they’ll listen to me when I try to give them guidance based on the Gospel. It’s over coffee that people have shared their problems and asked me to pray for them. I usually leave with a couple of prayer requests that had been shared with me. A lot of times they are from one of the waitresses. I was recently at the Pelican House in Bucyrus and over a French Vanilla Cappuccino I explained the meaning of Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent to a mother and son who had never been told its significance in the life of a believer before.

Coffee even helped me solve problems when I was on the police force. When the weather was like it’s been the last few days this past week with all the snow and ice there was one elderly lady who would call with some off the wall complaint and demand to see the police. One day she offered me a cup of coffee and I sipped and talked for about a half hour and realized she was deprived of human contact and that’s why she called. So when I knew she was stranded at home I would just stop and have coffee with her every once in a while and she never called the department again.

II – TEXT – JOHN 4:1-10:

The fact that this kind of ministry works should come to no surprise to me or you. After all Jesus modeled it for us. Remember the story of the woman at the well?

John 4:1-10 (NLT)

¹Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ²(though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). ³So he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ⁴He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." ⁸He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food. ⁹The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?" ¹⁰Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

Jesus had been traveling around doing ministry with the people and the Pharisee's were getting upset. Jesus knew it was only a matter of time before they confronted him or the Roman government confronted him because he was causing problems between the Jews. His was not ready yet to have all that come into play so he took his disciples and left Jerusalem and went back to Galilee.

If you took the straightest and quickest route from Jerusalem to Galilee, you passed through the Samaritan region. Most Jews avoided this at the cost of travel time and money so they could go around the area instead of through it. They hated Samaritans, considered them half breeds, half Jew and half Gentile. Not only that but they refused to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem and worshipped at Mt. Gerizim instead because that's where Moses worshipped. See – they even had denominations in Jesus day too!

But Jesus is Jesus and he doesn't pay attention to such things, he is not bound by the prejudices and opinions of humans, he is God's Son and goes where he wants to proclaim the Kingdom of God to all people. So he finds himself in the middle of the region at noon and leans against the well of his ancestors to rest and sends the disciples on to get food.

While he rests a lady comes to the well. She comes at noon because it allows her to avoid the sarcastic remarks and shunning she got from the other women of the village because of her promiscuity over the years. Her many husbands and boyfriends did not fit it with their image of a modest and upright woman.

Jesus definitely steps outside the bounds of propriety when she gets to the well; he exceeds all the limits of his Jewish upbringing. No rabbi like him would talk to a woman alone, and they certainly wouldn't speak to or even acknowledge a shameful Samaritan woman, or touch anything they had touched.

So Jesus startles her or amazes her when he not only speaks to her but asks her to serve him a drink. And look at what happens over this drink...he starts to do ministry.

III – JESUS REVEALED:

There's a few things in this story that we need to sit up and take note of as we do ministry, as we claim the City of Bucyrus for Jesus Christ.

- **Jesus went to her** – Jesus did not wait for the people to come into a temple and listen to what he had to say. He went out into their environment and met them where they were at.
- **Jesus went where others wouldn't** – Jesus traveled into areas the rest of the religious community wouldn't go. He believed God's Word and Salvation was for everyone, not a chosen few.
- **Jesus talked to her** - Jesus engaged her in conversation. He spoke to her before he started preaching to her, he gave her the message of the gospel through an everyday conversation.
- **Jesus asked for something** – Once Jesus finds us, he calls us. Jesus wants us all to serve in some way, even if it's just giving someone who is thirsty a drink of water.

In other words Jesus set down and had coffee with the woman. He built a relationship with her and then asked her to do something for him. He asked her to give him a drink. And over this drink of water the woman saw Jesus. Through this act of service she saw the face of Jesus, the Messiah. If you jump ahead in the story, to verse 26 it says:

"Then Jesus told her, "I am the Messiah."

Over the simple act of giving a stranger at the well a drink, the woman had her life changed forever. She saw Jesus and found Salvation. The rest of the story tells you how she ran off into the village and told everybody else about Jesus too. So a whole village was ultimately changed over a drink of water.

IV – SERVING JESUS:

Do you want to see Jesus? Then serve Jesus! The modern church has forgotten why we do the things we do. It is good that we respond to disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. It's good that we serve soup to the hungry and give clothes to the poor. It's wonderful that we financially support United Way, the Red Cross, and UMCOR, Jesus calls us to do this. But we need to change the way we think and realize that we aren't doing it "FOR JESUS", we're doing it "TO JESUS."

That's what the reading from Matthew was about wasn't it? That when you fed the hungry, gave a drink to the thirsty, provided housing for the homeless, clothes to the naked, and companionship to the sick and oppressed, you were giving it to Jesus. We have to change our opinion of ministry. When we do outreach, when we help others, we aren't helping them, we're helping Jesus and it should be an honor to do so. If we build a relationship with those we serve and look deep into their heart we'll see Jesus. It will move us closer to our Lord and Savior.

Mother Teresa and the sisters of "Missionaries of Charity" she led in the slums of Calcutta grasped this truth well. They believed it was a privilege to serve the poorest of the poor because in doing so they got to see Jesus. One writer summed it up this way in an article about Mother Teresa and the nuns:

"To the sisters, the neglected poor man is nothing less than Jesus crying for recognition and love, Jesus in need of food, Jesus without a home. They see in the face of each and every poor person the face of Jesus. They change the diapers of Jesus, cook and provide meals for Jesus, wash the handicapped Jesus, and much more. They are his servants."

They followed the example Jesus had provided. They didn't build an institution or a church; they built a relationship with people that others neglected and in those people they saw and loved Jesus.

V – GIVE THEM A DRINK:

Jesus said that he is the "Living Water." Our job as his church, his disciples, is to make sure everybody gets a drink of that water, that everybody finds and embraces Jesus as their personal and perpetual Lord and Savior. We don't do that by being the smartest people in the world, or by building the best church, or by having the biggest bank account. We don't do it by putting up billboards, taking out ads in the paper, or having fancy radio jingles. We do it by going to the people and meeting them where they're at and then building a relationship with them and then serving their needs in the hopes that we'll see Jesus in a new and closer way through those we help.

Mother Teresa summed it up this way:

"At the end of our lives, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made or how many great things we have done. We will be judged by 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.'"

We have the "Living Water" in us and we must take it to those who thirst. We must – GIVE THEM A DRINK. AMEN