

Tired and thirsty and encamped at Rephidim,

the Israelites quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”

Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord answered him, saying,

“Go on ahead of the people . . .

take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb.

Strike the rock, and water will come out of it,

so that the people may drink.”

Miraculously, water sprang from the rock that day.

And yet, amid the quintessential, a question hung over the place:

“Is the Lord among us or not?”



Centuries later, tired and thirsty and poised to make trouble,

Jesus revived and personalized the Israelites’ refrain:

“Give me a drink.”

And with these four words, Jesus, the troublemaker,

reached back through the centuries to Massah and Meribah,

seized the question that hung over that place,

and subjected it to his salvific, spiritual jiu-jitsu –

Jesus straightened the questioned mark into an exclamation point:

“The Lord is among us!”

The Lord is among us.

The Lord is among us.

The Lord is among us.

Tired and thirsty, the Lord is among us who are also tired and thirsty.

Tired and thirsty, the Lord is among us, waiting for us.

Tired and thirsty, the Lord is among us, calling us to true worship.



Tired from the slog of itinerant ministry

and the glut of a Messiah-minded mission,

Jesus crossed into enemy territory.

Jesus, the troublemaker, crossed into Samaria, even though many Jews

preferred to travel around Samaria to avoid defilement or conflict.

Because Samaritans were half-breeds, dogs, and mongrels,

descended from foreign settlers who intermarried with Jews

who remained in the Northern Kingdom

after the Assyrian Conquest in 722 B.C.

Because Samaritans rejected the Jerusalem-centered worship of Judaism.

Because in 110 B.C. the Jewish Hasmonean king, John Hyrcanus

destroyed the Samaritan temple at Mount Gerizim

spawning decades of Samaritans' harassment of Jewish pilgrims

and desecration of the Jerusalem temple.



So, at noon, in broad daylight,

Jesus, the troublemaker, like us, yes, like us,

tired of name-calling and scapegoating and dog-whistling,

tired of old, festering divisions,

tired of superficial, hypocritical boundaries,

tired of avoidance and fear and apathy,
tired of wars and rumors of wars,
tired of evil and injustice and oppression,
tired of harassment and discrimination and profiling,
tired of our inhumanity to one another,

Jesus, the troublemaker, crossed into enemy territory.



At noon, in broad daylight,

Jesus, the troublemaker, like us, yes, like us,

thirsting for freedom

from the dead weight of institutionalized oppression,

cycles of violence, and our petty prejudices and stupid fears,

thirsting for the affirmation of every human being's sacred worth,

thirsting for welcome and embrace,

thirsting for genuine connection,

thirsting for transformative encounters,

thirsting for real presence,

thirsting for new life and some still water,

thirsting for worship that heals, liberates, and delivers,

Jesus, the troublemaker, crossed into enemy territory.



And Jesus, the troublemaker,

had the unmitigated gall to plop himself down at a well –

almost like he was waiting for something . . . or someone.

When that someone came, a Samaritan and a woman no less,
Jesus refused to let well enough alone – as the Israelites
entreated Moses in the wilderness of Sin,
so Jesus said to this woman, this Samaritan: “Give me a drink.”



“Give me a drink.”

Over the centuries, much has been made of contrasts
between Jesus’ encounters with this woman and Nicodemus,
of her reasons for coming to the well at noon when other women
usually did so in the cool of evening – shame or guilt,
of her ethnicity and that she is never named.

Yet, amid this all too human plea and prayer from Jesus,
“Give me a drink,” all of this – the contrasts with Nicodemus’
encounter, her reasons for drawing water at this hour, her ethnicity,
that she remains nameless – all of this, for me at least, fades away.

And what remains?

A deeply human encounter, “Give me a drink,”

which reveals that

true worship is not confined to a mountain or temple or church
and happens in the honest, messy reality of daily life,
that true worship is a call to transparency, a call to conversation,
a call to confession, a call to transformation,
a call to living witness.

A deeply human encounter, “Give me a drink,”

which reveals that

true worship happens when we see that low aim, not failure, is sin,

that true worship happens when we stop hiding behind questions

like who is right or who is wrong or who is worthy

or who is acceptable or who is legal

and engage these questions instead by offering our true selves

to the One who sat down, tired and thirsty, to wait for us.



Beloved, Jesus said, “Give me a drink,” and, in so doing, revealed

that she who was enemy and stranger was really friend and sibling.

Jesus said, “Give me a drink,” to welcome us into the deeply unsettling,

yet wonderfully sublime dance of offering and receiving, of sharing,

that breaks yokes, shatters chains, and unleashes rivers of living waters

so that, when we hesitate or fail to join this dance,

we consider what we gamble,

and that, when we do join this dance,

we “ponder anew what the Almighty can do.”

Jesus said, “Give me a drink,” and in good old, troublemaking fashion

still challenges us to live so compassionately, creatively, and lovingly

that neither we nor anyone we encounter in the world

can tell where our worship ends and our witness begins.

Amen.