

## *Sunday Sermon March 8, 2026*

*O Let all who Thirst*

*Let them Come to the Water*

Spiritual writer Anthony de Mello tells the story of a group of children talking about what church they attend. One says, "I'm a Lutheran," another says, "I'm Catholic," a third reports "I'm an Episcopalian." Finally, it's little Sally's turn and she can't seem to remember. "Are you a Presbyterian?" a little boy asks. "No, no, no," Sally replies, "not that, we belong to a different abomination."

A different abomination... In today's Gospel, Jesus meets someone from a different tribe, a different denomination, if you will. A Samaritan woman. Tribal and religious law dictated that Jews and Samaritans were to have nothing to do with each other. For a Jew to drink from the same cup as a Samaritan made the Jewish person "unclean" because Samaritans were considered "less than." Less than fully human. There were also strict social prohibitions against men and women who were not related speaking to each other. That sets the stage for today's surprising, even scandalous, encounter. The longest conversation Jesus has in any of the Gospels.

Jesus is alone and tired. He's thirsty. He's sitting next to Jacob's well without any means to get the water. It's noon – make a note of that – and a Samaritan woman shows up with an empty water jar. An empty water jar... at noon...

Women did not draw and carry water at noon. That was during the heat of the day, so it would have been much more grueling to do that work in the middle of the day. Women carried water at dawn, when it was cool. They went as a group for safety and so they could socialize. Alone at noon, we can assume the Samaritan woman at the well was an outcast. An outcast as a woman, an outcast as a Samaritan, an even outcast among her own. 3 times outcast...

And there's Jesus sitting by the well -exhausted- and he speaks to her! He wasn't supposed to do that. John the Gospel writer even notes that "Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans." There were clear dividing walls that needed to be observed, clear boundaries between "them" and "us," but Jesus asks her for a drink. Imagine her shock.

“How can you ask of me?” “How can you speak to me?” The outcast.

But they proceed to have a long conversation. She asks Jesus a lot of questions. She points out how different they are, how her people worship God on this mountain and Jews worship God in Jerusalem. Jesus points out her several husbands. Jesus knows the truth about her, and He accepts her anyway because that’s how it is with God. (X2)

The two of them could not be more different on the outside, but on the inside, on the inside... they are so much the same. They are both thirsty. She thirsts for belonging, for acceptance, for genuine love, and Jesus thirsts for her and for the whole world to know the love He came to bring: love in the flesh, thirst quenching, life-giving, poured out for the whole world. Love in the Flesh. Love even for “those” people.

Jesus sees beyond all the labels the world has placed on this precious child of God and He focuses on the thing that brings them together: thirst. Her thirst for love and acceptance, His thirst to show the world the transforming power of complete and unconditional love.

Jay Cormier puts it very succinctly and clearly. He says: “To be a disciple of Jesus requires us to dismantle the obstacles and tear down the barriers that divide us from others, to move beyond the differences among us to embrace the dignity we all share as human beings created in the image and likeness of God.” Yes. It is no accident that our baptismal covenant asks: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?” Every one. Even her...

Our calling is to see others as God sees them, and today’s Gospel is an inspiring example of this happening in Jesus. He didn’t care about her past. He didn’t ask why she was fetching water alone at noon. He didn’t focus on their differences, but on the thirst that brought them together. The deeper longings... and we too can come to Him with our deepest needs, fears, hopes, dreams, disappointments and regrets and know that He is waiting to fill us, to satisfy our thirst with the living water of God’s life and love.

You might know that Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama had a close friendship. They collaborated on “The Book of Joy” and other projects. Speaking about their spiritual friendship, Archbishop Tutu said:

“I don’t know that you wake up in the morning and say ‘I am going to become a friend to the Dalai Lama. It just happens. Scientists will come afterwards and analyze it. But I don’t think that he woke up either and said, ‘I think I’m going to be friends with that long-nosed black man from Africa. I think it was a communication of the heart. When we kept quiet, our hearts discovered that they were kindred spirits.”

“A communication of the heart” Kindred Spirits – Jesus and a Samaritan women –

I love the thought that Jesus’ heart, filled to overflowing with love, encountered a wounded heart, a broken heart, and that they came together to satisfy the thirst that brought them to the well that day. Kindred spirits, these two people who could not have been more different on the outside, like Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama.

In one of his last public addresses, Bishop Tutu called on the audience to be the means for others to realize the goodness and beauty within them, to be “agents of transfiguration.” He said:

“We must work with God so that injustice is transfigured into justice, so that there will be more compassion and caring, so that there will be more laughter and joy, so that there will be more togetherness in God’s world.”

More togetherness in God’s world. Yes. Like the Son of God and an outcast woman meeting at a well.

I believe that kind of togetherness what God is calling us to embrace and live out today and every day. Amen