

## **“Hungry and Thirsty”**

**First Presbyterian Church  
Pastor Dave Carlson  
March 15, 2020**

**New Testament Lesson: John 4:5-9, 27-35**

**Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 55:1, 3-5**

Terry Fossum is an Eagle Scout, author and winner of the reality TV series “Kicking and Screaming,” a Fox TV show that pitted 10 of the nation’s top survivalists against each other in a jungle, while dragging along a novice kicking and screaming. Drawing on Terry’s wilderness skills, he and his partner Natalie Casanova won the grand prize of \$500,000. But – as Terry told a group of more than 1,000 scouts and supporters at this year’s Heartland of America Patron Luncheon (Bill Esry, Zach Walker and me among them) – Terry was not supposed to amount to anything.

Terry and his brother, Mike, grew up in one of the poorest, drug-ridden, gang infested cities in America, and both credit scouting for their incredible success – Terry, as a retired Air Force commander of our country’s Nuclear B-52 Bomber program, and Mike Fossum, a retired NASA astronaut who made three spacewalks, logging more than 194 days in space. And they were not supposed to amount to anything because they started out without a supportive community, until the Scouts came along.

In today’s New Testament lesson, we meet a Samaritan woman who was not supposed to amount to anything, because her community was cut off from the Lord, until Jesus came along. After meeting Jesus, she becomes the one who introduces the Samaritans to all that Jesus has to offer. Jesus and his disciples are traveling through Samaria when he comes upon the Samaritan woman. She’s drawing water from a well.

Both Jesus and the woman are thirsty, but Jesus even more so, after walking the 65 wilderness miles between Jerusalem and Samaria. Jesus says to the woman, “Give me a drink.” She answers, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” She asks this because Jews did not share things in common with Samaritans, cutting them off from the larger faith community.

But Jesus is thirsty – thirsty enough to set aside such reservations. And as we’ll see, he’s not actually thirsty for water. He’s thirsty for people – people who would come to know him as Lord and Savior, people who need the reassurance of the Lord in a time of political and social uncertainty.

People across the country today are beginning to feel cut off from their communities – from school and work and even church. Now more than ever, they need a trustworthy, faithful, time-tested source of reassurance. Well, it was for moments like this that Jesus reached out to people, gathering them to himself.

We as the church embody that trustworthy, faithful, time-tested Spirit of the Lord, and we too, are called to reach out to those who are hungry and thirsty for what Jesus has to offer. I know there are fears and concerns about people gathering together, even in churches. And we do have to follow the guidelines of health and safety officers – locally, nationally and globally. But this does not mean we stop being the church, even if all that's available to us is online worship and reaching out by phone, text, and email, all important ways to connect particularly with those who are quarantined or needing to self-isolate. This is not only important among our church members and friends, but also for those who have not yet come to know the true blessings and reassurance of a faith community such as ours, people who feel they have no one to turn to.

And yet, it can be difficult for us to reach out to folks. It's not easy to stay connected with those who no longer come to church or make a connection with those who never have. Our lives are full of people who have no idea that a wellspring of Jesus' love and care and provision can be found through this community of faith. We are all called to bring others into relationship with the church, to welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In today's lesson, Jesus shows us how to do just that, how to reach out on his behalf. His encounter with the Samaritan woman teaches us how to be that drink of cool, lifegiving water for those who are truly hungry and thirsty in this world, those whose deepest needs could be met through a family of faith like this one.

Jesus is teaching us how to reach out to people – maybe people we don't even know all that well – to reach out to them and reassure them of the unwavering care and concern of the Lord, which this church seeks to embody through all that we do.

For instance, our next Open Table presentation is designed as just such an outreach to people whom drifted away or never come to church is scheduled for April 15, or we'll reschedule it, if needed. Our next Open Table is on how to help people protect themselves from telephone and internet scams. We want to help people address this real-life frustration, as an expression of our care and concern.

Remember when our biggest frustration was an endless series of unwanted phone calls, and the virus we worried about came in an email? Remember, last week. How things change, right?

But not everything changes. The Lord is steady, trustworthy and true. We as a church are called to be steady, trustworthy and true. We want to let people know that. We want to reach out to people in Christ-like fashion.

Notice that in reaching out to people, Jesus doesn't start out by declaring himself Lord and Savior. No, the first thing he does after meeting the Samaritan woman is ask her for a drink of water. Jesus engages her in something she's already doing, drawing water from the well. Just like our common need for water, we all have a common need for safety and protection, whether it's from the many scammers out there today, or the quite -understandable fear of illness that has gripped our nation, and all the world. This would be a great time to reach out to folks you haven't seen at church for awhile. Check on how they're doing. Let them know we as a church care about them.

We see Jesus model this outreach for us when he meets the Samaritan woman along his way. First, he engages her in something she's already doing, and then he uses that encounter to show just how much he cares about her and her loved ones, by meeting a deep need of hers.

Next, we see this care and concern flow throughout her community, as she reacts to meeting Jesus along her way. John tells us, "... 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?'" And with that, all the Samaritans leave the city and go to see what Jesus is all about.

Without the Samaritan women reaching out to them, those in her community would never have come to know the love and care of the Lord. And so it is with us. If we don't reach out to others, how will they ever come to know the love and care of this church? We are called to meet people where they are, engage them in what they're doing, and then invite them to come and see all that God has to offer.

We as a church have something that people need, particularly in times of frustration and uncertainty. We have the love of Jesus, the provision of God, the reassurance of the Holy Spirit, all of it wrapped up in the ministry of this church. There are people all around us who are hungry for what the Lord has to offer them, and we are called to extend it to them, through our ministry outreach. "... Look around you," says Jesus, "and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting." Look around you, and see how people are in need of a church. Your faith community cares about them just as much as it cares about you. Let's all take time this week to reach out to those in need, to assure them of God's steadfast love and provision, and to help them feel connected connect in this time of uncertainty to this community of faith and reassurance. Amen.

## PASTORAL PRAYER

Let us pray:

Holy and merciful God, we thank you for the gifts of the season of Lent. Thank you for the call to slow down, to quiet the voices that vie for our attention so that we may be still and enjoy the deep communion of your Spirit.

We pray your Spirit of healing and protection for those who are sick, and your spirit of peace, wisdom and faith for those who are panicked.

We pray especially for those we have been keeping in mind and lifting up in our hearts.

We pray, too, O Lord, that you would guide our leaders – local, national and global – to make wise decisions for the health of all people – physical, social, financial and spiritual.

Thank you, Lord, for this Lenten invitation to examine our hearts and lives, to take stock of our relationships, our loves and our fears.

Grant us courage to name the idols that hold sway over us, and to confess the desires that distract us from your higher purposes.

Thank you for a season of repentance and of preparation. Give us the grace to forgive and accept others whose views are different from us, and let us use this time to draw closer to Jesus, mind, body, spirit – Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**