

## Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026; Lent 3. Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling.

Last week, as we continued through Lent, I challenged you with a question, “Do you believe?”. On Ash Wednesday we were reminded that Lent is not about giving up things like chocolate, but for self-examination and seeking a deeper understanding of our relationship with God through prayer and study. Today I have another question – “How do you treat what you might consider to be outsiders, not just personally, but as a church, as a community as a denomination?”

Today in our Gospel we have a powerful exchange between Jesus and a Samaritan woman that has much to teach us, not just about Jesus’ love for outsiders, but also about our attitudes too. Because, in a way, we are all outsiders, until we are, as Paul puts it in our first reading. “Reconciled to God through the death of his Son”.

We are told the Samaritan woman approaches the well in the heat of the day, probably to avoid seeing other people. She probably felt she was an outsider in her own community, no doubt because of the gossip and bad mouthing that went on about her life. Just an example of the isolation, rejection, and hurt that comes about because of gossip. Things never change....

But, when she arrives at the well, she must have been crestfallen as she sees this Jewish rabbi, Jesus, who quite unexpectedly, asks her for a drink. This would have surprised her greatly because according to the Law, a Jewish man should not be talking to a woman, and certainly not a Samaritan woman, who would be considered an outsider, but as was the case so often, Jesus reaches out to the outsider.

Immediately in the story, we are reminded that Jesus does not care what country we are from, what group of people we belong to, or even what we say we believe, but, as he tried to explain to Nicodemus in last week’s Gospel, if you are a child of God, He cares about you. Consequently, Jesus cares about all of us, whether we accept Him or reject Him, because every one of us are created to be a child of God, we just need to realise it. Today at this encounter with this Samaritan, he looks at this woman, a child of God and he sees someone who is not just physically thirsty, but spiritually thirsty because she too needs to realise that God loves her.

He says to her: “*Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.*” In other words, this is the water that will satisfy her spiritual thirst, the thirst that only Jesus can quench.

It is the same for us. Whatever we might think about our faith, our place in the church or community, we all should still thirst for God. We must never stand still in spiritual self-satisfaction and complacency and think we have made it, because

we haven't. Each day we should go deeper into the waters Jesus offers us and drink.

Lent is a time to realise this and go to the well that gives the water that can quench our thirst because until it is quenched by God, we will go in vain from well to well found in this world: food, money, pleasure, power, wealth, security and our church or religion and we will still find ourselves thirsty.

Jesus promises, "*but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.*" This is the theme of our song today during communion.

To receive that water, we must first repent and examine ourselves, like the Samaritan woman needed to do. Then our lives will be changed with the new life the water brings, and we will want to tell others about it. The Samaritan woman goes back to her home community and says to everyone: "*Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!*" This woman who was avoiding people because of her history which Jesus revealed to her and forgave, is now a missionary for Jesus. Now, she is seeking the same people out, because she has found the living water, and she is eager to share it with them all, even the people who made her an outsider.

Now, if God can use her testimony to bring such amazing results, what do you think He can do with ours? If we yearn to receive the water and be Jesus' disciples. Whatever attempts we then make to share our faith, to serve others in Jesus' name, to love and bless those whom God created and are His children like us, God is going to use and bless. It doesn't matter whether we think we are any good at it or how new we are to it, or what kind of life we have lived, because it never was about us; it was, and is, always about God's saving power and grace. The Samaritan woman simply shared, in her own way, her encounter with Jesus and many came to believe because of her testimony. We are called to do the same in all our encounters not just amongst ourselves but also when we encounter someone, we might once have considered to be an outsider. So, as we go into this week let us consider who we think to be the outsiders in our lives and pray that Jesus will give them the living water through us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.