

Lent Devotional March 16, 2019

SCRIPTURE

John 4:1-26

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John”—² although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee. ⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. ⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” ¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” ¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

DEVOTIONAL

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In the Coptic Orthodox tradition, St. Bishoy (320-417) had two encounters with the living Christ. Once, when on a pilgrimage, Bishoy discovered an old man lying on the side of the road. He picked up and carried the old man, but his load began to lighten. Eventually Bishoy realized that he was carrying the Lord. Jesus disappeared after promising to keep Bishoy’s body from decaying. (It is still entombed today.) Later, as Bishoy washed the feet of visitors, he was amazed when he realized he was washing the scarred feet of Jesus.

Copts today still recognize Bishoy as a pure and holy Saint. Last year, with others from Pittsburgh Seminary, I visited St. Bishoy’s monastery in northern Egypt. The desert that surrounds the monastery is bone dry, but life still exists here. And now, when I read John 4 I can well imagine Jesus and Bishoy’s having some great conversations in the desert. Hospitality and love for neighbor extend fully when we find ourselves in inhospitable places.

To the woman at Samaria, Jesus gave a gift that goes beyond a simple drink of water in the desert. He gave her the assurance of life now and hereafter. As we venture through our own journeys in the often inhospitable world, let us exercise the ability and opportunities we are given to share with others this loving, living water of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Lord, when we find ourselves lost in the desert, provide for us something to drink. When we journey through life's uncertainty, grant us peace and welcoming. O God, like our brother Bishoy, find your favor in us as we continue to welcome strangers, help them on their journeys, and share the loving, living water of Christ with all we meet. Amen.