

+ J. M. J.

We've all had the experience of prayer where what we ask for is not necessarily what God gives us. We also can come to realize that the answer to our prayers far exceeded our expectations, but it took a little while to see the grace in the answer to that prayer. God is not a big brother that someone does our bidding whenever we ask. Instead it is we who get changed through our prayers.

The words of Psalm 95 are **"Oh that today you would hear his voice: Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on the day of Massah in the desert."** The reference is to that scene we heard about in the first reading. The people quarreled and tested the Lord because they did not trust even after all the miracles God had wrought in their presence. They were basically saying they would rather be in slavery than in the providential care of God.

The reading and the Psalm set the backdrop for the favorable reaction of the woman at the well. Jesus begins this dialog with the woman with the command **"Give me a drink."** We know that Samaritans and Jews did not get along, but this woman listens to Jesus and responds all the while Jesus is leading her deeper and deeper in faith. At first she recognizes Jesus as "a Jew" then "Sir" then "a prophet" then "Christ" and finally the whole town recognizes Jesus as "savior of the world." This comes amidst Jesus challenging the woman on moral grounds regarding her relationship with the five husbands and the one she is with now.

At any point this woman could have dismissed Jesus, or she could have gotten offended at Jesus calling her out morally. She does not. She allows Jesus to explain that he will give her living water which is the Holy Spirit, and after the dialog concludes she indeed leaves her water jar behind because she has received that divine life.

We find a similar situation in our life of prayer. If we consider all the circumstances of our day whether they be good things, frustrating things, even weird things we probably have an encounter with the Lord and he extends an invitation to us "Give me a drink." When we take those things to prayer we have a

conversation about our life and the Lord leads us to somewhere we didn't expect. Our mundane circumstances and worries can teach us about eternal things.

In all of that eventually we will come to a point where we are challenged because we are all in need of repentance. For example, many of us are faced with the temptation to be quick in judgment of others. We can be easily offended by the littlest things or how someone perceives us. Instead of complaining it is a far better thing though to take our conversations back to God and ask where can I improve, how could I have brought Jesus into a particular situation, or is this a cross Jesus is asking me take up. Our question this week in regards to gracious living involves recognizing the presence of God in other people. Can we see Jesus in all moments of our lives perhaps even challenging us to grow in prayer and faith? That woman at the well when she was challenged realized that Jesus was prophetic. Those must have been tough and shocking words to hear, yet her humility and acceptance led her and the town to realize that Jesus heals, Jesus forgives, Jesus is our savior.

Lent is about letting Jesus heal our wounds of sin and selfishness because we want to become like him in every way. The only way he can do this is if we allow Jesus to show us those ways that we fall short because in this way we also see how generous and merciful God is and we begin to see what that kingdom of heaven should look like in our lives. In humility we realize that even the truth can come from the mouths of others we might struggle to get along with.

In three weeks we will hear the passion. It is in the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John where Jesus says from the cross **"I thirst."** As we continue on this Lenten journey we allow Jesus to say from the cross to us these words. We then ask him for that living water which flowed from his side along with his precious blood, that blood and water which is none other than the sacraments which give us eternal life.