

March 8, 2026

Thirsty for Connection

By Pr. Beate Chun

The Walk to the Well

Grace to you and peace
from the one who is
and the one who was
and the one who is to come.

It is morning.

There is a woman.

Through the open window she hears
a group of women passing by.

They are on the way to the well.
They are laughing together.

Their voices drift down the street.
The sound of sandals on the dusty road.
A clay jar knocking gently against another jar.

She wishes she could be among them.
The times at the well are always so special.

Exchange of news.
Sharing joys and sorrows.
Stories about children.
Stories about harvests.
And yes—sometimes a bit of gossip.

The well is not only a place for water.
It is a place for community.

But she cannot leave the house.
Her little boy is sick.
She has to wait until help arrives.
She wipes his forehead.
She listens to his breathing.
She sits by the door and waits.

Finally, around noon, her neighbor comes.
The neighbor will watch the boy.
So she hurries to the well.
Now the sun is high in the sky,
burning down mercilessly.
The stones are hot beneath her feet.
The air shimmers above the road.
It will be difficult to carry water in this heat.

Finally she arrives at the well.
But someone is already there.
A man.
A stranger.
Should she wait for him to leave?
That might be the safer choice.
But she needs to get back to her little boy.
So she hurries on.
She wants to get home quickly.
But suddenly the stranger speaks to her:
“Give me a drink.”

A Stranger in the Heat of the Day

The woman is startled.
He does not sound like people from Samaria.
She takes a second look.
Sure enough.
He is a Jew.

A Jew—here at the well.
All by himself.
And speaking to her.

So she has to ask.
She just can't help it.

*“How is it that you, a Jew,
ask a drink of me,
a woman of Samaria?”*

And then comes his answer.
Stranger than strange.

*“If you knew the gift of God...
and if you knew 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.”*

What is that supposed to mean?
He wants to give her living water?
How?
He doesn't even have a bucket.
And the well is deep.
What is he talking about?
Again she has to ask.
She just can't help it.

*“Sir, you have no bucket,
and the well is deep.
Where do you get that living water?”*

*Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob,
who gave us the well
and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”*

Now comes another answer.
Even more puzzling.
This stranger really loves to talk in riddles.

The stranger says,

*“Everyone who drinks of this water
will be thirsty again,*

*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.”*

The Gift of Living Water

And with this back and forth
they have launched into the longest conversation
that Jesus ever had with another individual.

Or at least the longest one recorded
in the gospels.

It is a conversation
full of courage,
tenderness,
and curiosity.

One could easily preach
five sermons
based on all the rich nuances
of that conversation.

But today I want to stay with the beginning.
The beginning of this conversation.
And how it was
that these two strangers
made a connection

across gender,
across ethnicity,
and across faith traditions.

Two people
who by every social rule
should not even be speaking.

And yet they do.

And everything begins
with a simple request.

“Give me a drink.”

Jesus and the Practice of Hospitality

Hospitality was important to Jesus.
Not just as a social nicety.
But as a core expression
of his mission.

Jesus consistently used meals,
homes, and shared tables
as places of revelation,
healing,
teaching,
and belonging.

Jesus frequently accepted invitations
into other people’s homes.

Often from people on the margins.
Or from those socially suspect.

His willingness
to receive hospitality
was itself a form of grace.

He was also eating with friends.

We have stories of visits
in the home of his friends
Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

He shows up in front of the home of
Zacchaeus and says,
“I must stay at your house today.”
Sometimes the fellowship is small.
Just two or three people.
And sometimes
it can be vast crowds.

Such as the time when Jesus provided
a meal for five thousand people
at the lakeshore.

And after his death and resurrection
the risen Christ suddenly appears
almost out of the blue at the lakeshore.

Then he prepares a charcoal fire.
He cooks fish and bread.
And then he invites the disciples
to eat breakfast.

And then, of course, let us not forget
that on his last night on earth
he had one more meal
with his disciples.

It was a Passover meal.
And he said,
“I have earnestly desired
to eat this Passover with you.”
And then he told them
to keep eating together.
To break bread together.
To drink wine together.
As a way to remember him.

Sharing table fellowship
was such an important part
of Jesus' ministry!

The early church understood this well.
And they began practicing
continued fellowship.
In fact, the first followers of Jesus
built their entire communal life
around shared meals.

What Jesus did with meals, homes,
and shared tables
became the blueprint
for Christian identity.

From the beginning
hospitality was mission,
worship,
justice,
and survival
all at once.

Our Thirst for Connection

In our own times
it seems to me
that we struggle with hospitality.

Many of us
are hungry for community.

In fact, we are living through
what many sociologists call
a loneliness epidemic.

People are connected online.
But they eat alone.
They scroll through messages.

But rarely sit face to face.

Fostering community
and shared meals
does not come easily to us.

It is not really part
of our current culture.

We tell ourselves,

“One of these days
I will have my friends over.”

But first I must clean up the house.
And organize the closets.

And then when the event
actually gets underway
we worry about the appearance of things.

The napkins matching.
The décor just so.
The menu just right.

And with all these worries
we overlook the central truth
of the mission of Jesus:

The surroundings do not matter.
They do not matter a bit.

What matters
is that we speak
heart to heart.

That we listen.
And that we hear.
And that can happen anywhere.
On the beach.
In a park.

Under a tree.
At a kitchen table
with a scratched surface.
At a café.
Over coffee.
Over tea.
Or just
a cup of water.
As in the story today.
Hospitality can be so simple.
And yet it is often so hard.

We have now completed
two and a half weeks of Lent.

And we have four more weeks to go.
Have you adopted
a Lenten practice?
If so, how is it going?

Some people set aside time
for prayer and Bible study.
Some people abstain
from alcohol
or from sweets.

I myself decided
to try something special this year.

I decided not to eat alone.

I am married, so that helps.
I can share some meals
with my wife
when our schedules coincide.
In the mornings.
In the evenings.
We can often make that happen.

But then there is lunch.
I often eat lunch alone.
So I decided
to do something about it.
To connect with others
for lunch.

And I wish I could report
that it has been
a great success so far.

But honestly
it has been challenging.

People are busy.
Schedules are full.
Sometimes invitations fall through.
Sometimes the timing just does not work.

And sometimes
it takes courage
simply to ask.

But it has also been rewarding.
A sandwich shared.
A short conversation.
Ten minutes of real attention.
A moment
of human connection.

Today's story
helped me refocus.

To keep it simple.

Even a cup of water
can become an occasion
for sharing from heart to heart.

And that is how the story begins.

Jesus does not start with a sermon.
He starts with a request.
“Give me a drink.”
A simple moment.

A small act of hospitality.

And from that small act
a whole town is changed.

Because sometimes
the kingdom of God
begins not with a miracle
but with a conversation.

Not with a grand event
but with a cup of water.

So perhaps this week
we might try something small.

Invite someone for coffee.

Share lunch with a colleague.
Sit down at a table with someone
who might otherwise eat alone.

Open the door just a little.

Because when we do
we may discover
what the woman at the well discovered.

That Christ is already there.
Waiting.
And offering us
the living water
we did not even know
we were thirsty for.

Amen.

**Sermon for Sunday, March 8, 2026
Lent 2 Year A**

Presented at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church San Francisco

Texts: [John 4:5-42 NRSVue - So he came to a Samaritan city called - Bible Gateway](#)

Tags: Lent 3 Year A | John 4:5-42 | Woman at the Well | Hospitality | Living Water