

Calvary United Methodist Church
March 27, 2011

ANYONE THIRSTY?
Rev. R. Jeffrey Fisher



Children's Sermon (Pastor Parks) Exodus 1

We welcome the children to the front of this worship space to celebrate God's good news and to care for a task that they are responsible for.

You'll have to come all the way up here today. We've got some boxes on the steps. I wonder if you remember what those boxes are for. Let's get everybody up here first and then I'll give you your assignments. Do you like assignments? Yeah, I bet you do. Assignments are great.

It's great to see everybody this morning. Last week we read a story about Moses in a place called the Wilderness of Mt. Horeb. If you remember anything at all about the story you will remember that Moses is required to remove an article of clothing. Do you remember which one it was? His shoes, exactly right. Let's kind of review the story and see how much of this you remember. From Exodus 3:

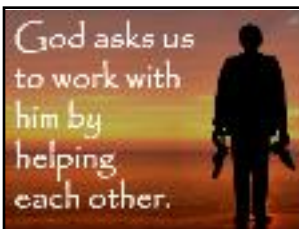


The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush. The Lord said, "Take off your shoes. This is holy ground. I know all about the suffering of my people. I have heard their cries and I'm going to do something about their situation. I'm sending you."

But Moses argued, "What can I do? I am no one special."

"That's true," the voices replied, "but I am with you."

And God asks us to work with God by helping each other.





We also talked last week about the enormous tragedy and disaster that has been part of the nation of Japan over the past two weeks. We remember that there was an earthquake and then a tsunami and they are still dealing with the aftermath of that particular event.

I showed you this picture of a young girl who was found in the rubble without a pair of shoes. I said to you that this kind of reminded me of the story of Moses having to take off his shoes because God asked him to because it was holy ground.

We decided that we were going to, in effect, since we can't send holy ground to that girl in Japan and others in need, we are going to send shoes to Soles for Souls. This is an organization that distributes a new pair of shoes every seven seconds around the world. We invited everybody to bring pairs of shoes and two dollars per pair for shipping so we can send them around the world to help people just like this girl.

What we are going to do is we are going to collect all the shoes and there are baskets right there. I want eight of you to grab a basket and the rest of you I need you to collect the shoes and bring them up here and put them in the boxes. (There are huge boxes in the front of the sanctuary). I developed this little song to the tune of *God will Take Care of You*. It's actually called *God Said, Take Off your Shoes*. It will be fun to sing while you are doing all this work.

Here's what I'm going to suggest. I'm going to suggest that you start at this side of the sanctuary. Everybody go to that side and that

you all take your shoes and pass them toward an aisle and also the two dollars per pair of shoes. If you have forgotten either to bring the shoes or the two bucks it's not a problem. Wednesday night after the meal at Faith and Fellowship we are going to dump out all of these boxes of shoes over in Fellowship Hall. We are going to pair them because each shoe has to have a mate and get them ready for shipping. So if you forgot to bring your shoes it's not a problem. If you forgot the money it's not a problem. Just try to get it here before Wednesday night where we do all this packing. I'm betting that the congregation of Calvary United Methodist will generate at least a thousand pairs of shoes. We're halfway there, judging from what my wife sent with me this morning. So while we sing those of you with baskets are going to get the money and those without baskets are going to get the bags of shoes.



*Moses saw God in a burning bush,
God said, "Take off your shoes."
You've got a job so get off your "tush."
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes.
Bring them for me to Calvary."
Folks need some help finding shoes.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
Whether they're flat or they've got a heel.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
Quickly respond to this sole-full appeal
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes.
Bring them for me to Calvary."
Folks need some help finding shoes.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
Donate your dress shoes & baseball cleats.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
We need to cover my children's feet.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes.
Bring them for me to Calvary."
Folks need some help finding shoes.
God said, "Take off your shoes."*

*Clogs, crocs & flip-flops that you don't wear;
God said, "Take off your shoes."
\$2.00 sends them from here to there.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes.
Bring them for me to Calvary."
Folks need some help finding shoes.
God said, "Take off your shoes."*

*Don't be concerned that they may not fit.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
You will be blessed if you give a pair.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes.
Bring them for me to Calvary."
Folks need some help finding shoes.
God said, "Take off your shoes."*

*Nobody cares if they're used or new.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
Giving like Christ is what Christians do.
God said, "Take off your shoes."
God said, "Take off your shoes.
Bring them for me to Calvary."
Folks need some help finding shoes.
God said, "Take off your shoes."*



A thousand—do you think that's too many? No, I don't think so either because once we find an opportunity for us to share the love of God, it's no longer a chore or a burden, it's fun. Did you have fun doing all that? Do you think we'll have fun putting all those shoes together on Wednesday night? Of course we will. Why, because the love of God is within us and this is something we are doing to share with others. We take off our shoes because every place God is is holy ground and that includes right here. Thanks for sharing in our time this morning and for all your hard work. See you Wednesday.



Message

(Pastor Fisher)

John 4:7-11

I am not sure when you experienced the last time you were thirsty but I remember lots of days in my life when you are trapped somewhere, you are working, or you are someplace and you would just love to have your thirst quenched.

The story today is about a woman who is at a well. She was drawing water, probably not only for her thirst and the needs of the day but probably for working and cleaning around the home. But she ended up leaving the well with a lot more than something that was just quenching her earthly thirst: the thirst for the soul, the thirst for life, the thirst for hope in the world. I would like to share with you these words from John 4.



A woman, a Samaritan, came to draw water. Jesus said, "Would you give me a drink of water?" (His disciples had gone to the village to buy food for lunch.) The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked "How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans.) Jesus answered, "If you knew the generosity of God and who I am, you would be asking me for a drink and I would give you fresh, living water." The woman said, "Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'?"

Congregation sings, *Freely, Freely*



God forgave my sin in Jesus' name, I've been born again in Jesus' name, and in Jesus' name I come to you, to share his love as he told me to. He said, "Freely, freely you have received, freely, freely give. Go in my name, and because you believe, others will know that I live."

All power is given in Jesus' name, in earth and heaven in Jesus' name, and in Jesus' name I come to you, to share his power as he told me to. He said, "Freely, freely you have received, freely, freely give. Go in my name, and because you believe, others will know that I live."



There are ways that we find quench for our souls, not always of water. I would imagine that some point of your life you wanted to escape. You wanted to go somewhere to replenish yourself. For some people it might be the beach, for others the mountain. But have you ever gone out like that and you have been so busy that you just almost want to disappear whether by yourself or whether with your family. You don't want anyone else to come around. Not that you are going to do something wild and crazy. You just want a time apart. You are resting in this non-crowded area and you are trying to rest and lo and behold somewhere in the midst of your privacy someone shows up and says, "Pastor Jeff, it's so good to see you today." Has that ever happened to you? It's a terrible feeling, isn't it? It's not that you don't care about the other people, but it's like can't I have a few moments to myself? Can't my family just be apart a little bit? Sometimes it happens when you least expect it, even in the midst of huge crowds you run into someone.

That's the story of what takes place today of this woman who went to the well. She was trying to escape. She was a Samaritan woman, a woman who was despised by many others. The Samaritans were a mix of tribes. As like today there are many people who are refugees of many nations because of rulers. They leave their home countries and leave their own people and they find a new people. They mix religions, they mix race and they mix all kinds of culture things together. The Jews of the day couldn't understand that some of their own sisters and brothers had mingled. The people mingled not only with race and culture but they gave up some of their religious practices.

So the Samaritans were those who had other gods more than those that the Jewish folks wanted to follow. They didn't want to be caught dead with them. And that's the reason this woman said to Jesus, "I can't imagine you would find time to talk to me. Most Jews wouldn't even be caught dead around me." And here she looks up in a place where she tried to escape all these other people, not only because she was a Samaritan, but because she had a reputation—sort of like everybody in this house. We all have reputations and some parts of them aren't what they ought to be. So she thought rather than be there in the morning which would make sense, it's cooler in the morning and

you get your chores done so in the heat of the day you don't have to be out, she wanted to get rid of those gossipy folks, those who were very critical of who she might be. You've met them—right? Some of them are us as well.



Here comes this man named Jesus who might as well have been her family physician. He looks at her and he starts talking to her and she says this man knew everything about her. It was like he pulled out a chart and he could tell her whole history: who she was, what she had done. He knew about her life, her broken marriages and the life that was torn and battered and broken in ways she wished she didn't have such a history. All of us in this room have histories, some of which if we could redo it we would have a different ending—right?—a different happier ending. Jesus didn't care a bit. This great physician didn't care where she was, what she had done or what other people said. Jesus came to her saying basically, "I love all people."



Some of you remember this character from a Christmas program some years ago. It was one of my favorites when I was growing up: Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. He had a problem. It was a nose job. It didn't work, at least at first. He had a friend, Hermie, who felt like he was a misfit. He always wanted to be a dentist and other kinds of things. He didn't fit anymore than Rudolph who wasn't allowed to play in all the other reindeer games.

This woman this day felt like a misfit. If I were to ask how many of you have ever felt like a misfit, I would probably expect every hand to go up at some point, especially when you were young. We had buck teeth. We wouldn't get picked for the ball game. We were the last person always picked for every sports team. We knew we didn't fit in. We couldn't go with those other people who were so cool because we weren't so cool. We couldn't do the things we wanted to because we didn't have the skills or the talents or the gifts but we somehow wanted to be like someone else versus who we are as a wonderful creature of God.

This woman that day was feeling like a misfit. People like her, people like us gather in God's house and God sounds out across our crowd and simply says, "You are not misfits. You are my children who



I created. You are wonderfully created. You are a gift to someone. You are not like everyone else. You are unique.” God would probably not want to hear that word misfit coming out of our lips. Even though there are days that we feel like that. And this woman was feeling like that so much that she wondered why this man seemed to care so much about her and what in the world he was going to be able to do. He started to talk to her, not about the water in the well of which she was drinking and pulling water, he talked to her about living water.

Some of you probably remember real hot days. I remember a couple years ago when the summers were so hot they were showing photos of Harrisburg City and New York other cities where the fireman would come around and unhook the fireplugs and let the water come out and let the kids run under it. Do you remember seeing those? I remember days as a youth growing up on the farm and being out on the farm bailing hay and the first thing you literally wanted to do was jump in the river. You wanted to cool off. When I see waterfalls like this I think how wonderful to feel not just water but in the sense of this woman having the cleansing feeling of God’s spirit coming over her, making her whole and saying: “Don’t worry about your sins of the past. I’ve already forgotten them.” The scripture says I threw them as far to the east and to the west and I remember them no more. Don’t worry about what those other people say about you. Don’t worry about your past sins. I wish you won’t repeat them and I wish you could overcome them but I want you to be refreshed. I want you to be renewed and to find new life.



I grew up around my grandparents’ farm that wasn’t far from where I lived. They didn’t have a well from which we drew but they had a cistern. There is a huge difference between a well and a cistern. Cisterns were holes often lined with stone and they would catch the rain water off the spouting. But cisterns contained stagnant water.

Jesus was talking about living water; about that which would give life and hope and would be refreshing. That’s why she went to the well and that’s why we go to the well of Jesus Christ so that he might fill our souls and be made new. When he came to the well she was concerned that he didn’t even have a bucket. Jesus basically said that’s not what I’m talking about here. But you and I have a bucket.

We come here and we try to fill it week after week. I'm not sure what you fill it with and I'm going to talk to you about things that I fill my life with and all of us as Christians do from time. There are days I forget and I'm suspect there are days you do as well.



We just heard a series from Dr. Parks on prayer. We talk about prayers of thanksgiving, praise for all that God has done. We talk about prayers of confessing where we tell God who we are even though God already knows that. We speak to God about who we are, what we desire in life. There are prayers of supplications where we pray for others around us. All of this prayer life intends to fill us up. Sometimes when we take that time to pray God speaks to us if we give God a few moments to listen and to hear the voice of God, maybe not audibly but something starts to make sense in our life.

I saw a little cartoon yesterday in my office that was left over from Thanksgiving. It was a turkey walking across and it had a prayer that said: "Sometimes we are thankful for those things that didn't happen." Are you thankful for the life you have? Sometimes as much as we pray for things to come, sometimes we ought to pray for those things that have not occurred in our life.



When we come to God in prayer that is one way that we fill our lives that we can flow over, that we can give life and hope to other people. There is another thing that I know and I try to do but there are days when I get so busy I'm not faithful at it: that's reading God's word. There is a huge difference in my days, whether it's reading a devotional Lenten Book or whether it's reading The Upper Room or Out Daily Bread or whether it's taking a Bible first hand and looking at some of the stories and the people. There is something that I find when I read some of the stories. I realize that I'm no better and I'm no worse than all of God's children. When you look at the stories of the disciples you realize they were all very real, genuine people. Sometimes they insulted Jesus himself. "Can I be the one that sits next to you, Lord, at the seat of honor?" But Jesus is saying I'm talking about leaving here and giving my life and you are worried about being the best.

There are so many other times we hear stories like the little boy

who had to climb up the tree because he wanted to know more about God. It could be something like Lord; I just don't understand you any more. It could be days like Moses walking on holy ground who realized after about giving praise. There are so many living examples in the scripture that as we read them we come to life that God has so much to say to us if we are but willing to listen.



And then there is this fellowship. I say this fellowship because we are the family of Christ at Calvary. But this is not just the fellowship here. Our fellowship goes far beyond these walls to brothers and sisters, some of who you have yet to meet. They are those who love us unconditionally. They are the people who surround us, not like that woman at the well and those who were critical of her. We are the fellowship that when you are in trouble we are here to say, "Can we be some kind of a comfort to you? Can we encourage you? Can we help life you up when you are down?" We are asking of one another, "Can you help me in my days when I'm down as well?" Can you reciprocate? Can we present for one another? Can we be that living well? Can we be a living Christ for those around us who need someone, those who don't have what everyone else has? Those who can give hope and peace to others around us.



Then it's this daily walk thing. How do you have a daily walk with God? How do you remind yourself during the day that I'm not just Jeff walking around these streets, I am an ambassador for the Kingdom of God. That doesn't mean I'm puffy and I'm stuffy and I'm better than anyone else. It's just a reminder when I'm in my car and someone cuts me off that is a reminder of how I react to that. It's a reminder when someone isn't treating me so nice, how I in my mind should think about treating them even though they have not treated me so nice. Something in scripture tells me I should treat them the way I want to be treated even if they have been unkind.

Walking the daily life is not an easy journey but in the prayers and scriptures and fellowship it's much easier. I worked construction jobs for about seven years between college and seminary every summer with my father but with hundreds of other men. There were times when you get with other construction workers that I wasn't always the same Jeff that I was standing in the pulpit. I had to literally ask myself



at times, how can I act this way here and a different way there? You know what; I'm no different than anyone in this room. Why is it that we can act a certain way here, our daily walk in the sanctuary in a place called Calvary, is one way but when we go to our work site how we treat others, the stories we tell and how we relate to others isn't always the same way daily walk that we would want to pronounce as Christians. God invites us to be true to that daily walk wherever we are going to be. In so doing God wants to send that spirit, the spirit of God within us, that we might live for him. We can't do it alone. If it is not God living through me people will not see Christ in me. But if I invite God into my life and I'm willing to walk with him, God will be with me.



You heard a little about this story earlier about Moses and the burning bush. His daily walk started when he was about to look and see the living God. People are looking for the living God not in a bush. They are looking for the living God in you. We are the only bucket that's going to pour out on other people. Like that woman at the well who was thirsty there are people all around us and we are the bucket. We are the ones who offer life to new water, not that cistern, stagnant old stuff, but new and living water that can be found only in Jesus Christ.



Sometimes we sing a song that goes "I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together." But a lot of times when we talk about the church we think about it as being some building. It really isn't. We are the body and those who are outside that well gathering; all the people who were near where that Samaritan woman lived were looking for some place where they could find someone like she could find that would accept them the way that God through Jesus Christ accepted this woman.

There are people around us every moment of our day who are looking for unconditional acceptance to be loved and cared for and nurtured and to be told clearly that God loves them and accepts them just the way they are.

There have been a variety of times in my life when I have invited people to worship. People say, well, pastor, as soon as I clean up



this little problem in my life I'll be there. I need to get rid of this habit. I need to get rid of that habit. I need to get rid of some other business in my life, as if to say they couldn't be acceptable to God the way they are. If God waited for us to all be cleaned up, the church would be empty because none of us are quite ready to appear before God in our present state. That's why he accepts us just as we are. And God invites us today to give our life to him that we might come and know through the prayers and the word and the fellowship to walk with him daily so we might learn to live the way God would have us live, to be a living disciple. That we can go into the world telling other people the same words that Jesus Christ told that woman: "Come to me to a place where the burdens are light. Come to me a place where you will find living water."

My prayer today is that all of us will be those folks who will pour out the love of God upon everyone they meet.