

**Lent 3 - Year A**  
**John 4:5-42**  
**Pastor John Wertz, Jr.**  
**St. Michael Lutheran Church**  
**March 27, 2011**

Kris and I went to a new restaurant for dinner last week in Roanoke

- we were meeting some friends

- and when Kris said -

- Where should we meet?

- They had an instant recommendation -

- It was one of their favorite places to eat.

- Trusting their wisdom -

- we agreed and met them in downtown Roanoke for a meal.

- Now -

- I don't go to downtown Roanoke very often -

- the mall - yes,

- other churches, certainly -

- the hospital, frequently -

- but I don't spend much time downtown -

- and I certainly am not the type of person who would go downtown

- drive around and pick out a restaurant

- and walk in for dinner.

- So without this recommendation

- I would probably have never eaten there,

- but now that I have been,

- I look forward to going back.

- The food was delicious.

- The prices were reasonable.

- And at least on a Tuesday night at 5:30 PM,

- it wasn't crowded and it wasn't hard to find a parking place.

- A friend made a recommendation -

- we checked it out for ourselves -

- and now we have come to believe that this is an excellent place to eat.

Very often things work this way -

- an individual has an experience -

- shares that experience with someone else,

- they check it out for themselves -

- and then form an opinion based on the recommendation -

- and their own experience.

- It happens for restaurants -

- It happens for stores -

- and in our reading today from John -

- it happened for a matter of faith -

- The Samaritan woman -

- had an amazing experience with a man at the well.

- She was making her daily trip to retrieve water.

- She went in the heat of the day -
  - perhaps to avoid the rush -
    - perhaps she had just gotten off to a slow start that day -
- but when she arrives at Jacob's Well
  - around noon,
    - she finds a strange man resting there
      - and as she approached the well -
        - this man asked her for a drink of water -
- Needless to say -
  - she was a little surprised -
    - "How is it"
      - she said,
        - "that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me,
          - a woman of Samaria."(Jn 4:7)
- This shouldn't have been happening -
  - he was a Jew -
    - she was a Samaritan -
      - despite a common heritage
        - the groups didn't get along -
- Each group had their own way of believing -
  - their own opinions about the proper way to worship God -
    - and their approaches were mutually exclusive -

- So even though they were neighbors,
  - they weren't very - - neighborly -
- And if the cultural differences weren't enough -
  - it just wasn't -
    - proper - -
      - for a man like this to be engaging a woman in conversation -
- But Jesus isn't one to let a few cultural taboos get in the way -
  - as he would say later -
    - "those who are well have no need of a physician,
      - but those who are sick" (Lk 5:31)
- So instead of being put-off by the woman's response,
  - Jesus forges ahead with the conversation -
    - forgetting about his own need for a drink -
      - and offering instead to share the gift of living water -
        - with this Samaritan woman -
- And while she doesn't quite understand what he is saying initially -
  - as the conversation unfolds -
    - as Jesus addresses issues of worship and faith -
      - as he talks with her about her life and her relationships -
        - as they discuss the coming of the Messiah -
- this woman -
  - is so moved by his words -

- so moved by her experience of Jesus -
    - so moved by his knowledge of her life -
      - that she leaves her water jar -
        - she abandons her task -
          - and heads back home -
  - to share his story with her community -
    - to invite her friends and neighbors -
      - to “Come and see a man
        - who told me everything I have ever done!
          - He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” (Jn 4:29)
- Like Mary Magdalene following the Resurrection -
  - this woman
    - who meets Jesus at the well -
      - and doesn’t keep her amazing news to herself -
        - but rather shares her story of the Messiah -
  - and in the process she invites others
    - to know the good news of hope and help
      - forgiveness and love
        - that Jesus is bringing to the world.
- And just like Peter running to the tomb -
  - the woman’s friends and neighbors
    - are so moved by the story -

- that they decide to go and see for themselves
    - if this amazing good news -
      - could actually be true -
  - So this community of Samaritans came to Jesus -
    - and he stayed with them for two more days -
      - preaching -
        - teaching -
          - sharing the good news of God's love -
  - And at the end of those two days -
    - the woman's friends and neighbors
      - had formed an opinion about Jesus -
        - based not only on her recommendation -
          - but also from their own experience -
- “They said to the woman,
- ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe,
  - for we have heard for ourselves,
  - and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.’” (Jn 4:42)
- Now for many people -
    - a relationship with God -
      - an understanding of who Jesus is
        - and what Jesus can mean for our lives
          - develops in much the same way -

- an invitation is made -
  - a recommendation is given -
    - an experience is shared -
      - and a seed of faith begins to grow -
- And at times -
  - we may find ourselves in the role of the woman -
    - racing out to share the good news -
      - through an invitation to worship -
        - or an invitation to participate in a mission project -
          - or through simply through telling our story of faith -
- and at other times -
  - we may find ourselves in the role of the neighbor -
    - sitting at the feet of Jesus -
      - engaged in study of scripture -
        - spending time discussing our questions and ideas
          - with our community -
            - listening to what God has to say through prayer
- but just as it was for the woman and her neighbors -
  - when we encounter Jesus -
    - it can be a powerful, -
      - life changing experience.
- an experience that can quench our thirst for hope -

- our thirst for love -

- our thirst for compassion -

- with the living water of Jesus -

- with the good news that

- while we still were sinners,

- Christ came to us -

- to preach and to teach -

- to die and to rise -

- to give us guidance for today -

- and hope for eternal life with God. -