

“The well that never runs dry”

February 24, 2008

Text: Jeremiah 8:18-9:1, John 4:7-15

I.

When I think about this *woman at the well* in John 4, immediately I have compassion. She'd had a tough go; years, no doubt, of being put down and marginalized.

Don't we all long for a glimpse of heaven ... for a glimpse of HOPE that can fill our every emptiness, heal our every wound ... reassure us about tomorrow??

Jesus goes to the well one day around noon. As it happens, he is in Samaria ... and soon a Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water ... and Jesus says to her, ***Give me a drink!***

Now, to the Jews, the Samaritans were outcasts. They were impure, defiled. And so the woman was a bit startled at Jesus' request. ***Give me a drink***, he had said.

And soon they're talking about things spiritual ... and Jesus starts talking to her about *living water*, the water of eternal life. Understandably, the woman is curious, wondering what it all means.

- Is this guy some sort of seer ... or prophet ... or, could he be ... ***the Messiah?*** What's with him?

And then, to confound her even more, Jesus says to her, *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 give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.*

- And immediately the woman says, *Sir, give me this water so that I may never thirst again.* Wouldn't any one of us want to drink from that well?

The well that never runs dry. The well whose waters give us a taste of eternity, along with a new sense of well-being and promise about tomorrow? It's the well of human compassion, the well of love and forgiveness.

II.

There's a hunger sweeping across America. In my life time, I've never seen anything like it. It's a hunger for change ... for a new beginning, a new day. It's a hunger that links the infinite possibilities of tomorrow to our highest ideals. Ideals given to us by our

forefathers and mothers; ideals of justice and fairness ... not just for us, but the sister and brother down the street, in another state, or beyond our nation's borders to the far reaches of the world.

With this hunger is a real sense that—as a nation, as a planet—we can do better. And now, this hunger is finding its voice; and the voice is saying: *not only can we do better; we **must** do better.*

With all of the contentious divides that are upon us. Think about it.

1. It's not just **global warming** and the sense that time is running out and, quickly, we need to see the BIG PICTURE of our global situation as it relates to the environment. It's not just that.
2. And in the grand scheme of things, it's not just the **ill-conceived war in Iraq** and the nightmare that has become—economically, spiritually and strategically around the world.
3. And it's not just the **economy** that is staggering, now, into recession ... due, largely, to greed and our incurable *immediate gratification* impulses.

III.

It's more than all of this. Our problem is that we're still locked in the **old paradigm**, the OLD way of doing things, the OLD way of seeing the world ... of embracing relationships.

I'm talking about an outdated mentality; a mentality that, right away, wants to divide us all up into *good guys* and *bad guys*, as if the world were ever so easily sorted out.

There's a whole legion of *fear mongers* out there who are quick to divide us up. Just like in Jesus' day with the *purity system* of the Jewish elites, and the too-strict obsession with the laws of Moses.

Today, we've got *conservatives* and *liberals* ... **red states** and **blue states**. We've got *patriots* and those labeled *unpatriotic*.

According to this OLD mentality, this is the world we live in. **Good guys** and **bad guys** all about. A black and white world. You're either with us or you're against us.

It's this penchant for demonizing those who are different from us and then, quickly, casting them as **enemies**, that continues to plunge our world into even greater polarization, antagonism and potential conflict.

Enough already. We can do better. We *must* do better. And we know it. And thus, the hunger that's sweeping across our land. You can feel it ... the hunger for a new day.

IV.

Jim Wallis, the editor of **Sojourners**, a magazine on *faith, politics and culture*, wrote a best-selling book a few years back called ***God's Politics***. Wallis is a rare breed of Christian. An ordained minister, he's an evangelical, but at the same time, he's outspokenly progressive on social issues, particular advocacy for the poor.

Wallis has a new book out entitled ***The Great Awakening***. One of the chapters begins, *Something is happening*. And by that he means, across our nation, *something is happening* in the American spirit.

What's happening is a hunger from within that is building up.

1. A hunger for a better, more just and responsible world order.
2. It's a hunger for what Wallis calls **a moral center to our public life and political discourse, with a fundamental emphasis on the common good** (sure sounds Christian to me).

Later in this same chapter, Wallis identifies SEVEN principles for Christian involvement in the world ... principles like: *God hates injustice ...or, the kingdom of God is a new world order ...and, the church is an alternative community.*

But the last two *really* resonate with the hunger I'm talking about this morning ... CHECK IT OUT ... the last two principles are:

1. ***Take a global perspective ...***
2. ***Seek the common good ...*** the common good that rises above barriers and differences that might otherwise divide.

Friends, these are values that reflect the best in our spirit, both as Christians and as Americans. The hunger that is sweeping across America ... across race and ethnicity ... across gender ... across the generations ... is a hunger that appeals to our highest ideals.

1. *We hold these truths to be self-evident ...that all persons are created equal.*
2. **I have a dream today ...** we remember the words, as we recall the moment. **I have a dream that every valley shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low ... and the truth of God shall be lifted up and all humanity will come to know God's justice ...**

Throughout our history as a nation, these lofty ideals continue to lift our spirit as they point us beyond ourselves ... *something is happening* ...

V.

Having said this, let us dare to ask ourselves, **How does the God of Jesus feel about all this?** About the state of the planet?

1. About the war that we do ...
2. About the *lingering inequities* ...the widening gap between rich and poor, both here and abroad ...
3. About the state of the environment ...
4. About the ethnic violence and strife in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere ...
5. About religious extremism that, everyday, violates the holy ...
6. About the maddening violence erupting in our schools (i.e., at Northern Illinois University this past week) with increasing regularity.

How does the God of Jesus ... the God of Abraham and Sarah ... the God of Islam, the God of all faith traditions ... how does God feel about things?

Is not God grieved by it all—the senseless violence and death ... war ... disease ... injustice and greed?

Our reading from the prophet **Jeremiah** gives us wrenching insight into the turmoil in Gods' heart.

Listen to Jeremiah—God's prophet, God's voice and conscience:

My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick ...this is in response to Israel's sinful ways ... Why have they provoked me to anger with their idol worship and endless sin?

And then, a verse later: *For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt ... I mourn ...and dismay has taken hold of me.*

We can feel the pathos, the deep feeling of grief and sadness building up in the spirit of God.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? And then, O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears ...

Wow! The deep pathos of GOD. The pain in the very center of God's own, fractured heart. The deepest horror of **Jeremiah's** existence is that he *feels*, with deep compassion, the immensity of God's own grief.

VI.

These words are for us, too, friends, as we seek to sort out our lives and nurture our families into the future. As we seek to resolve conflict, rise above tensions and heal old wounds.

The *tears* of the Almighty are a reminder to us all of our vulnerability ... and of ***a common suffering***. God's tears stir every living soul to some new level of compassion. They shame us all into doing better ... calling us, again and again, to higher spiritual ground.

On the high ground, the deep well of God's love never runs dry. On the high ground, the well of God's *saving grace* flows forever.

The well of God's love and saving grace is the well of HOPE, friends. In **Romans 5**, Paul talks about *suffering and hope*.

Suffering produces endurance ... and endurance produces character ... and character produces HOPE ... and HOPE lifts the spirit.

Hope is the essence of our Christian faith. It's what we *dare to believe* about tomorrow.

- That, together, we can find **common ground** as we lift up the **common good**.
- That yesterday is powerless along side the possibilities of today.
- That no matter what you were, you don't have to stay there forever.
- That if we dare to seek the common good for those who are different from us that we will find the common good for all of us.

In closing, don't we all long for the day when we can say, *with the Samaritan woman at the well*: **Give me this water, too, so that I may never thirst again?**

Come, O Holy One, come! In compassion and truth, come ... come and lift us each one into the glow of your purposes.

All praises be unto God! Amen!

Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz
Miami Lakes Congregational Church, *United Church of Christ*
6701 Miami Lakeway South
Miami Lakes, FL 33014
On the web at www.mlcchurc.com

