

Written Copy: John 4:13-14 "What Lens Are You Using?"

The 3rd Sunday in Lent

Sunday, March 8th, 2026

Text: John 4:13-14

¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Exegetical Statement

It was necessary for Jesus to travel through Samaria and stop at this well because according to the Father's will He had a divine appointment with a Samaritan woman, who comes during the hottest part of the day when no one should be around. It started seemingly innocuously with Him asking for a drink, for the woman had a jar to draw water out of the well, Jesus did not, and there was no one else around. The woman reacted negatively to Jesus' request since He was a man and a Jew, and on both these accounts, according to culture, had no business speaking to a Samaritan woman. But the Lord saw things differently. He ignores the verbal barbs she throws at Him and instead uses the image of water from this well to move the conversation to spiritual imagery of the water He has to give which will quench thirst forever. When He has her curiosity peaked and moves her to desire such water so that she would never have to come draw water again, He then prepares her to receive it by citing the sin she carries around, the shame of multiple husbands and current living situation outside of marriage. She recognizes His prophetic ability, but rather than respect that tries to argue about the appropriate place and way to worship God. Jesus responds by foretelling how worship will soon be done, not at a particular mountain, but centered on the Holy Spirit's revelation of the truth, which is Jesus as Lord and Savior. When she mentions her expectation that the Messiah will come and reveal what is right in the disputes between Samaritan and Jew, Jesus drops the bomb that He Himself is this Messiah, the I AM. The disciples return, amazed to see their Master talking with a Samaritan woman. She leaves her water pot on a more important mission now, to tell the town who she has found. They come and through this believe in Jesus as the long-awaited Savior of the world. In keeping with their request, He graciously stays two days teaching and witnessing to them.

Focus Statement:

Jesus is the God who graciously responded to the Israelites blasphemous charges not by seeing them through the lens of judgment, but by graciously providing for them. He is the God who patiently witnesses to those who are undeserving of Him. He is the gift of God that brings to us by the Spirit the living water that is all that His suffering, death, and resurrection has to bring to us, what we truly need: forgiveness that declares us to be justified in God's sight and brings us Peace with the Heavenly Father. All these are His gift of sacrificial and unconditional love, but which He sees and responds to poor miserable sinners

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Like the Israelites we can see our God through the lens of our afflictions. Like the Samaritan woman we can see and hear God and those around us from lens of our sinful selfish heart.

What the hearer should do as a result:

See Him rightly through that gift of love He pours out upon us, and through that gift see our fellow man too, even when they are undeserving of it, just as we are too.

Subject Sentence: Jesus sees and responds through the lens of love

Introduction: The Lens of Sinful Bias We Use

A husband and wife are getting ready to go to a dinner party, and they are running late. The wife is standing in front of a mirror holding up two dresses, trying to decide which one she should wear that evening. The husband walks in looking at his watch but saying nothing. His wife turns to him, holding up both dresses in front of her and asks him, "Which dress should I wear?" He answers, "I don't know, they both look great on you. You should just pick one and let's get going." She then asks, "Which one makes me look fatter?" He responds, "Honestly, neither dress makes a difference." She begins to cry and responds, "So you think I look fat in whatever I wear! Thanks a lot!" and slams the bedroom door shut. Looking back, he realized he should've chosen his words more wisely in saying what was truly in his heart, "You look great in either one. We need to get going!"

Have you ever begun a conversation with someone you know, perhaps a spouse, family member, or acquaintance. And before you know it, they are responding with what seems in your mind to be unjustified anger? A situation where you are not trying to be mean or nasty, in fact you might just be informing them about a situation that's meant to be helpful and out of left-hand field they go on the attack?

Often, we see and hear things through the lens of expectation. If we expect someone to say something in a joking manner, we may hear it that way upon first blush, even if it wasn't meant that way. If we expect someone to make a sarcastic or mean comment, if we expect someone to be critical of us, then no matter what they say or how they say it we hear it in that fashion. We see and hear through our preconceived notion of who they are and how they feel about us. And whatever they say or do will be filtered through that lens. That's why often in arguments people are just speaking past one another, not really listening to what the other person is saying because we think we know where they are coming from.

The Lens Through Which the Israelites See Moses and God

The Israelites in our Old Testament Lesson are looking at their current situation through the lens of a lack of faith in Moses, and in God's provision. In this lens they have conveniently forgotten all the ways the LORD has provided for them through Moses' leadership. When the Israelites appeared to be cornered at the Red Sea by the Egyptian army that chased after them after letting them go, they accused Moses and God of leading them out only to be slaughtered. How did God respond? Lovingly and caringly. Through Moses the LORD supernaturally made a way through the Red Sea, then used the water crashing back into place to exterminate Pharaoh and his army so they could never bother His people again.

When they came to a place where the water was bitter, they grumbled about Moses leadership, yet through Moses the LORD supernaturally made the water sweet enough to drink. When the people cried out that they were going to starve in the wilderness without food and it would've actually been better to remain as slaves in Egypt, the LORD responded graciously through Moses by providing Manna, the bread from Heaven daily.

Right after the Manna incident comes the incident detailed in our Old Testament Lesson. After all that happened, they should've seen their current affliction through the eyes of faith in the God that responds to their cries and needs. **Exodus 17:3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"** Instead of turning to the LORD in faith or beseeching Moses to pray for them, they accuse him of willful negligence and the LORD of abandoning them. It gets so bad that Moses fears for his life.

The LORD would have every right at this point to abandon these whining blasphemous people, if not do worse. Instead, the LORD looks upon them through the lens of His unconditional care and love. Regardless of how they are acting, they are His special people and He responds as such. Through Moses He supernaturally provides water from a rock, showing both His mighty working and His loving care for them. And He lifts up Moses as His chosen prophet and leader whom they should follow as such.

The Lens Through Which the Woman at the Well Sees Jesus

Then there is the account of Jesus and the Woman at the Well. She comes to draw water during the hottest part of the day because she is a woman who carries a burden of guilt and shame over her current and past life situation. She doesn't expect to or care to encounter anyone. Yet here is this man, a Jew of all people. Women in that culture were often regarded as less important than men and sometimes taken advantage of as such. On top of that this is a 'Jewish Man'. Most Jews would not associate with Samaritans seeing them as something less than human. They wouldn't associate with them let alone use one of their utensils to drink water from.

So, it must've been a shock when Jesus asks her for a drink. She responds with indignant refusal: "***How is that you, a Jewish man think it appropriate to ask me, a woman, a Samaritan for anything, let alone a drink?***" She obviously doesn't know who she is talking to like we do. Jesus certainly could've put her in her place.

But instead, He responds telling her about the gracious gift of God that is “Living Water”, which He is able to give. “Living Water” was a term in that day that referred to water flowing from a stream or an artesian well: clean, clear, cold, fresh water that one did not have to be drawn up in a bucket, nor did one have to clean the debris off the top before drinking. Jesus is turning the conversation to the spiritual realm, but through her lens of unbelief and sinful bias she cannot see it. She questions who He thinks He is. He doesn’t have a bucket; there are no streams running in the vicinity. Patriarch Jacob considered this well to be good enough for his family and flock. She is saying, ***“Hey, Jew; are you saying this water isn’t good enough for you?”***

Once again Jesus could’ve said a lot of things. Perhaps you could think of some choice things you could’ve said. Instead, Jesus continues to reveal what this gift of “living water” really is. **John 4:13-14** ¹³ **Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”** This catches her attention: never be thirsty again, never have to labor to draw water up, never have to come out to this well again and be confronted and judged by others. **John 4:15** **The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”**

Now that Jesus has got her interested, it’s time to prepare her heart and mind to receive this gracious gift. **John 4:16-18** ¹⁶ **Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”** ¹⁷ **The woman answered him, “I have no husband.”** **Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”** To receive this gracious gift of living water Jesus must point her to the sin she has been hiding and the guilt she has been living in.

All that Jesus said is true, which forces her to see Him as a prophet, someone with the prophetic insight of God. Yet He has just pointed out something that is condemning to her, and she doesn’t like it. So, she renews her subtle attacks on Him, no longer going after Him as just a Jewish man, but a Jewish prophet. She goes where many people who want to argue go, to argue about religion. ***“Hey Jewish prophet: our Scriptures say the place to worship God is here on Mount Gerizim, while you guys’ demand worship be done at Jerusalem, a place where we Samaritans aren’t really welcomed. What’s up with that?!”*** Once again there are many things that Jesus could’ve said or done, but He ignores the barb and responds with truth in love.

John 4:22-23 ²² **You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.**

He gives her loving correction: the Scriptures that the Samaritans have were a corrupted translation of the Hebrew Bible. To Moses and the Prophets the LORD had given the revelation of His Word, and it is from the Jews and not the Samaritans that the Messiah would come. Jesus does not tell her what she wants to hear just to placate her. But He goes on to give her a greater truth, a Gospel Truth. There is coming soon a time when worship of the LORD will not be about the physical location. Instead, worship will be done through the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the truth He brings to bear upon hearts and minds.

John 4:25-26 ²⁵ **The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”** ²⁶ **Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”**

Bingo! There it is, there is the Gospel truth Jesus has been leading her to, oh so lovingly and graciously. The Son of God ignored her insolent barbs and disrespectful attitude all to prepare her for a confession that He had not yet given any Jew up to this point. ***“You are looking for the Messiah? Good. Because I AM! I AM the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. That is the lens I want you to see me through. That is the truth through which true worship happens. That is the truth by which you will receive the living water of eternal life.”***

The Lens Through Which Jesus Sees Us

The Woman at the Well saw Jesus through the lens of hatred and distrust and bigotry. But Jesus saw her through the lens of grace, mercy, and love. It's the same lens through which He sees us.

We are just as blasphemous and accusatory as the Israelites when things go wrong in our lives. When affliction comes, which God promised it would, we sometimes accuse Him of abandoning us in our hour of mercy. When His Word comes to accuse us of our sin, or a brother or sister comes to us with words of caution we can respond with bitterness and barbs of attack like the Woman at the Well.

How does Jesus see us and respond? Through the same lens through which His eyes looked upon Israel with, the same lens through which He saw the Woman at the Well, through the eyes of His sacrificial and unconditional love. Instead of condemning us in our sin He brings to us the truth of the Gospel. Out of the greatest love He has done all that is necessary to declare us to be in right standing before God, justified: declared to be just as if we never sinned, never turned away from Him, never accused Him, or doubted Him. He declares us to be forgiven because He took our sin and it's punishment by taking our place on the cross. By the gracious gift of faith from the Holy Spirit all this has been delivered to you and credited to your account. This is the loving gift of the Living Water that Christ has to give: salvation, forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting. And it's yours as His gift of love to you by faith.

The Lens Through Which We Should See One Another

By faith you have received that gift of love by which is the lens by which God sees you. And through that gift of faith the Holy Spirit works in us to see one another through the lens of His love. It's a lens that moves us to be slow to anger and abounding in patient endurance, even when times of affliction come. It's the lens that helps us see the person the LORD has set in front of us as someone He loves just as much as He does you. It's the lens by which we can see people as divine appointments from Him through which we can share His love, His patience, and His understanding, remembering how forgiving He is when we are less than loving toward Him.

Conclusion

At times we hear and see one another through the lens of bias that may or may not be appropriate or true. At times we react in ways that are less than loving and caring towards one another. At times we react to the problems in life by doubting or accusing God of abandoning us to our suffering. At times we turn away from Him rather than confront our sin. But the LORD will never abandon you. He is always regarding you through the lens of sacrificial and unconditional love that He has for you. And He always keeps His divine appointment with you here in Word and Sacrament to call you back to receive that living water that is all the gifts of grace you receive through faith in Christ. And He gives you a new lens, His lens, by which we begin to see others the way He sees them, by the same loving lens through which He sees you and me. Amen.