



January 21, 2018 Sermon for ThankOffering Service

Refreshed and renewed. That's the theme of this year's Thankoffering service.

What does it mean to be refreshed and renewed? Perhaps we are thinking of a day at the spa, or a day on the boat, or a day at the beach? Is this the kind of refreshment that was being sought at Jacob's Well? If not, what was?

Two people alone at the well. One, Jesus. A man. A Jew. The other, a Samaritan woman. Neither belongs. Men don't go to the well. That is the job of women. And he is unprepared to get refreshment from the well – he has no bucket. So what is he doing there? The woman has come at a time when she is less likely to meet others at the well. She is a Samaritan. Jew and Samaritans do not mingle. She does not belong. An unlikely meeting.

And then Jesus, this Jewish man, asks this Samaritan woman to give him a drink. The two who don't belong here – who certainly shouldn't be conversing – do just that.

And Jesus offers something to the woman – something she doesn't understand:
Living Water.

Jesus is offering refreshment and renewal. Not a day at a spa. Not time out on the boat. Jesus is offering something so much more than that! Jesus is offering a refreshment after which we will never need a spa day again! Jesus is offering a renewal that is everlasting that is started right here and right now. That feeling of a fresh, cold drink of water enveloping us. Always. Not just physically but emotionally and spiritually.

But Jesus does not offer this gift of Living Water so that we may just be refreshed and renewed as we would after that spa day. No, Jesus calls us to DO something more. Jesus calls us to go out and offer that refreshment and renewal – that same living water – to others.

How do you feel when you come to worship? Have you ever felt like the Samaritan woman? Feeling like you don't belong, your baggage including guilt and shame, following you around weighing you down?

Or at times are you like Jesus offering living water through the gift of hospitality including genuine welcome and not judging our visitors and guests who come to our place of worship? Do we welcome the other? Those who may be different

from us? Different in appearance, political connections, sexual orientation, social status, or any other way that creates a difference between people..... or have you ever thought, "At least I am not like her... I would never do what she does."

We are called to act like Jesus, to offer living water, to offer the gift of new life, without judgement. Depending on the circumstances of your life, you may come in need of renewal and refreshment and other times you are the giver. That is what we do here in this community. That is hopefully what happens, that no matter how we felt coming in we leave better.

Jesus did not judge the woman. In fact, she was REFRESHED AND RENEWED!

When she left the well, she went back to her city to share her experience. There is no better testimony than that coming from one who freely received the gift of life.

This quote by Mother Teresa states very well our call to offer hospitality: "Spread love everywhere you go: First of all in your own house...let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile." Consider Nativity your house, it is your house of worship so when

someone comes and is in need, remember this quote and how we are called to respond.

As you look around this worship room, you can see gifts of refreshment and renewal that are being blessed and sent out from this place: Quilts that will be going across the world, or perhaps just around the corner. They will be used not just for warmth, but for shelter, for carrying one's worldly possessions, for insulation between the hot sand and one's skin... so many uses that we can only imagine; Prayer shawls that can be given to anyone in need of prayer: an illness or surgery or loss of a loved one, a loss of ability, a loss of self, a life change; Stuffed toys that will be utilized for our local first responders to help comfort children when tragedy strikes. These are Living Water. It is alive because of the heart and soul that goes into providing it. These are alive because they are shared.

But beyond these tangible things, we are constantly asked to provide Living Water to others: a word of comfort, hospitality and welcome, renewal and refreshment... Living water. Life-giving encouragement.

Yes, sometimes we want to sit and enjoy our own gift of living water. We want Jesus to renew and refresh us. But this is only the beginning. How can you offer Living Water today? Amen.