

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent - John 4:5-42**

A man was flying his private plane and was forced to make a crash landing out west in the middle of nowhere. Although he was able to parachute to safety, he found himself without any means of communication or provisions. His only option was to walk to civilization.

He walked for hours, and after awhile he was unable to even stand on his feet. So, he started to crawl across the desolate terrain. Then he ran into a necktie salesman. The salesman said to him, “Good morning! Would you like to buy one of my beautiful new neckties?”

The man said, “Are you out of your mind? I’m dying here of thirst; I don’t need a necktie!” So the salesman shrugged his shoulders and went away. The man continued to crawl across the ground knowing that if he did not find something to drink soon, he would die.

As he crawled to the top of the hill he saw an unbelievable sight. There down below him was a posh restaurant, in the middle of nowhere, with neon signs and a big parking lot filled with cars. Quickly he crawled up to the doorman and said, “Please, I’m dying of thirst. I need something to drink.” “Sorry, sir,” the doorman said, “gentlemen are not admitted without a necktie.”

Now who would have imagined that survival depended on a necktie? But such an improbable connection was the experience of the Samaritan woman in today’s gospel.

As she approached the well to draw water, she saw a man sitting there. She recognized that he was a Jew. There was no love lost between Jews and Samaritans.

So, she probably said to herself, “The last thing I need in the middle of a busy day is to deal with one of *those* people.” As the woman approached the man there was little expectation that the encounter would be anything other than a nuisance. Little did she think that this meeting at the well would change her life. But it did.

As they talked together about water and worship, she came to see that this Jew was the Messiah, the one she had been waiting for her whole life long. What began as an unpromising encounter, turned out not only to be a blessing, but indeed the way to her salvation.

God can be present in any person and in any circumstance. Even in those circumstances which at first seem quite unpromising.

It is the point of the story of the Samaritan woman to assert that truth. Therefore, the story asks us: How often do we miss the presence of God because we presume that God cannot be present in this person or in this situation?

How often do we rush by people and opportunities because we are convinced that we have something to do which is much more important? How often do we brush people aside because we have already prejudged that they have nothing to offer us? How often do we push forward toward our goal or agenda and in the process, leave Christ behind?

The story of the Samaritan woman does not guarantee us that we will find Christ in every place. But it tells us that we will find Christ more often, if we look for Christ in every place, if we live our lives with expectation that we about to meet the Lord.

If we live with that expectation, it changes the way we approach every situation. We begin to act less out of duty or responsibility and more out of the anticipation of being blessed.

Parents begin to help their children with homework, not simply because that is a parent's responsibility, but because they believe that in such an encounter Christ could teach them something, Christ could touch their hearts.

Co-workers begin to listen and be attentive to another not simply to help another but out of the belief that in such an encounter Christ could help them, Christ could show them something about themselves.

We begin to address a problem in our family or a misunderstanding in our marriage, not simply because that problem **needs** to be addressed, but also because we expect that in such an encounter Christ could bless us—Christ could give us reason to be thankful.

Christians do not dismiss any person or opportunity, because they know that Christ can be present anywhere. As preposterous as it might seem to have survival depend on a necktie, or salvation depend on speaking to an enemy at a well, we believe that such connections are possible.

We believe that in the course of an ordinary day, God is always capable of touching our hearts. We believe that in the most unpromising situations, we can encounter the Savior of the World.