

The Way x19. Sunday 12 May_2019.

Wells and water on the Way. – significant encounters.

READ: Psalm 23 and John 4: 1 – 42 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y310IR3rKlw>

EXERCISE: stop and think about a significant meeting/ **encounter** you have had at any time when you meet someone who had an influence on your life in the future.

This year through our Sunday study and reflection on Scripture we aim to see a clear thread of teaching and revelation about God showing **a way forward and a way through** that we can **follow individually and as a people**. JESUS declared himself to be **the Way** (to the Father *John 14: 6*) and his followers are described as those who **belonged to the Way**. (*Acts 9: 2*) Those who follow Jesus are on the cammino - the walk, the journey, the way – in everyday life we are on pilgrimage. (*When the road is rough and steep fix your eyes upon Jesus. He alone has power to keep...*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF7xgQwKlpc>

We have begun considering the importance of WAITING as part of journeying in life and waiting is central to a journey of FAITH. BUT so too is moving on to places of refreshment and rest at the right time and **encountering new people – new challenges and situations is also significant in life's journey.**

Easter to Pentecost In *Luke 24: 49* Jesus tells the disciples to *wait* (SIT – KATHISATE) *in the city of Jerusalem to be clothed with power from on high so that they become witnesses to him.* And in *Acts 1: 4* Luke writes that Jesus told them to *wait for the gift they had been promised* (PERIMENTO – to await an event). They were waiting to **meet the Holy Spirit in a new way.** **Are you waiting with expectancy and faith at this time?** Are you praying and longing for something to happen in your life or through this church?

Every long journey (and life is a long journey) is interspersed with **encounters with people and new challenges.**

Question: what are the significant meeting places/ events in your community?

What are the “wells” or watering holes as far as leisure and work go? Where are your front lines? Where are the places where you meet and can have conversations like Jesus did with the woman at the well in Sychar (Shechem – we’ve discussed Jacob recently and this well is part of what he bequeathed to the Samaritans)? (Recognising that Jesus broke new ground here – a rabbi talking to a woman, a Jew asking a Samaritan for a drink).

In the arid places of the world **water is as precious as gold.** **WELLS** were and remain the subject of fierce disputes for generations (*Genesis 21: 25*) They are **also the place where daily people meet and chat, and travellers and strangers arrive and seek refreshment and hospitality** – as did Jesus who visited Sychar.

John 4: 6. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus tired out by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

Water sources from rivers, wells, springs and cisterns are key places for events to happen as I have said. They feature throughout the biblical account of human history. These water sources as we see in Jesus' discussion with the woman focus on both our human physical need for water (Jesus request for a drink and the need for a bucket) but water and wells also become a discussion point about the human need of spiritual or metaphysical refreshment and satisfaction.

Water, rivers, wells, springs and cisterns become metaphors for spiritual satisfaction and indeed the work of the Holy Spirit. ***Read John 7: 37 – 39 On the last and most important day of the festival....***

And water is also used to describe the behaviour of friends and human beings: **Job (6: 14 -17) compares faithless** (lacked consistent empathy) **friends to the river and stream beds which as swollen and overflowing in the spring and vanish in the hot weather**. The Psalmist likens people who reject the advice of evil wicked people and rather choose to follow God's Law to trees planted by streams. They have fruitful lives. *Psalm 23 The Shepherd God* leads people not just through the darkest valley but also finds grazing and water feed green pasture for God's followers.

Isaiah who passed on God's promise **to make a Way in the wilderness** (43: 19) continues to describe the blessing of the Way: *44: 2- 4 I am the LORD who created you; from the time that you were born, I have helped you. Do not be afraid: you are my servant, my chosen people who I love. I will give water to the thirsty land and make streams flow in the dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your children and my blessings on your descendants. They will thrive like well-watered grass, like willows by streams of water.* (Gardens by canal in Chisenhale).

Jesus sitting by the well in Sychar shares with the Samaritan the passing of the Old Covenant and divisions between peoples and the coming of the new true worship which unites peoples and the drinking of the Holy Spirit in worship.

Sometimes we receive spiritual and inner refreshment from the people we meet at the "well" – it is not just physical refreshment or water that we need. When the disciples returned they encouraged Jesus to eat but his reply is clear, *I have food to eat that you know nothing about* **Read John 4: 31 – 34**. He was invigorated by talking with the woman at the well. He was invigorated because this was what he came to do. **HE PERCEIVED THE HUMAN HARVEST AS RIPE AND READY** – he didn't see the need to keep saying – *four more months and we'll be ready to harvest*.

JESUS saw the **NEW FIELDS as ripe for harvest** which the disciples didn't yet see. The Good News was for all peoples and ethnic groups – not just Israel – there were people of new fields and *other folds* who would come to believe and receive. **TODAY: where are the new fields in Bow, East London and Essex?**