

Over the last several weeks on your Lenten journey, you've been talking about the Scripture texts through the lens of several themes: themes like transformation, and being raised up. Last week Nicole talked about Jesus and Nicodemus, and she reminded us that it is God who saves, it is God who transforms, it is God who raises up. We are invited and encouraged to participate with God in his work, but we don't have to be burdened with the salvation of the whole world. That is God's task. Sometimes our part is to just bear witness to the life God brings to one or two people, or to our community - as did the woman at the well in today's story.

We've heard two texts today that talk about water, and it seems to me that our two texts have another element in common – misunderstanding. The Samaritan woman misunderstands Jesus' words about living water. The disciples, as they – and we – so often do, misunderstand Jesus' words and his mission. The Israelites in the wilderness misunderstand the provision of God. They've had a taste of freedom, they've seen the provision of God through the exodus, and suddenly this provision seems to vanish. Things get difficult. There is no water, and where there is no water, there can be no life. But through Moses, God transforms this dry ground into a place of new creation, a place from which life springs for the Israelites again. In this story, and in the story in John, water is a central figure. Water is essential for life, and we need it not just to satisfy our physical needs, but because it points us to the life-giving power and word of the Spirit.

When we find ourselves in our own wilderness, we often get discouraged, because we too misunderstand God's provision. We expect God to act in certain places and at certain times, because God has acted so in the past. We feel thirsty and dry and we complain that there is no water, that we feel no relief. But as Nicodemus heard, "The Spirit moves where it wills." It is not ours to command at will. God is in the business of giving life, and his transforming work happens even as we journey through the dryness and trouble of the wilderness. God raises up living water when we need it, and raises it up in abundance. It may not be how or when or the way we would like. God does not always answer our prayers the way we think they should be answered. But God made a covenant with his people to be with them, to remember them, and to save them. God did not simply lead his people out into the wilderness to die of thirst. God hears their cry and stands before them on the rock in order to raise up the water of life.

Jesus tells the woman at the well, "The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." This gushing spring, this cup overflowing, impacts more than one life. The Samaritan woman's experience and her testimony affect her whole village. The living water that Jesus gives is more than just personal refreshment and life for you and for me as individuals. It overflows like a swollen river and rushes to transform everyone who receives it. Jesus' words give life to those even outside of Israel – he indeed is the Savior of the world. The prophet Isaiah speaks frequently about living springs which will make the wilderness burst into bloom. Through this living water, God creates life where there was little hope before.

Several weeks ago you planted seeds here. These seeds grow with the help of water and light. The water and the light we see and use point the way to Jesus, who is the living water and the light of the world. The dry ground is fed by the living water, and a tiny seed is transformed into a new creation. This is the gift of God, the Savior of the world.