

"Show Us Your Love" // Lent week 3
Wildwood Mennonite Church // 2020-03-16

"Pandemic" - [A Poem by Lynn Ungar, 3/11/20](#)

*What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath —
the most sacred of times?*

Cease from travel.

Cease from buying and selling.

*Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.*

*Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.*

Center down.

*And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.*

*Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.*

(You could hardly deny it now.)

*Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.*

(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words.

*Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.*

*Promise this world your love —
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.*

John 4:54-42 // adapted from *The Voice* translation

Narrator: In a small Samaritan town known as Sychar, Jesus and His entourage stopped to rest at the historic well that Jacob gave his son Joseph. It was about noon when Jesus found a spot to sit close to the well while the disciples ventured off to find provisions. From His vantage, He watched as a Samaritan woman approached to draw some water. Curiously, Jesus broke the cultural taboo and spoke to her.

Jesus: Would you draw water, and give Me a drink?

Woman: I cannot believe that You, a Jew, would speak with me, a Samaritan woman; much less ask me to give You a drink.

Narrator: Jews, you see, have no dealings with Samaritans, and men would never approach a woman like this in public.

Jesus: You don't know the gift of God or who is asking you for a drink of this water from Jacob's well. Because if you did, you would be the one asking Me for a drink of something greater, and I would give you the living water that you seek.

Woman: Sir, You sit by this deep well, a thirsty man without a bucket in sight. Where does this living water come from? Are You claiming to be better than our father Jacob who labored long and hard to dig and maintain this well so that he could share clean water with his family and their cattle?

Jesus: Drink this water, and your thirst is quenched only for a moment. You must return to this well again and again. I offer water that will become a wellspring within you that gives life throughout eternity. You will never be thirsty again.

Woman: Please, Sir, give me some of this water, so I'll never be thirsty and never again have to make the trip to this well.

Jesus: Shall I also offer this water to your husband?

Woman: I do not have a husband.

Jesus: Technically you are telling the truth. But you have had five husbands and are currently living with a man you are not married to.

Woman: How could you possibly know that? It is obvious to me that You want me to believe that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped here on this mountain, but Your Jewish tradition says that Jerusalem is the only place for all to worship. Which is it?

Jesus: Friend, I tell you that neither is so. Believe this: a new day is coming—in fact, it's already here—when the importance will not be placed on the time and place of worship but on the truthful hearts of worshipers.

You worship the unknown, while we worship what has been revealed to us--we Jews believe that God's salvation is coming through the Jews. Yet Creator is spirit, and seeks followers whose worship is sourced in truth and deeply spiritual as well. Regardless of whether you are in Jerusalem or on this mountain, if you do not seek the Creator, then you do not worship.

Woman: I confess that I don't understand. But these mysteries will be made clear by the One who is promised, the Chosen One.

Jesus: The Chosen One is speaking to you. I am the One you have been looking for.

Narrator: The disciples returned to Him and gathered around Him in amazement that He would openly break their customs by speaking to this woman. But none of them would ask Him what He was looking for or why He was speaking with her. The woman went back to the town, leaving her water pot behind. She stopped men and women on the streets and told them about what had happened.

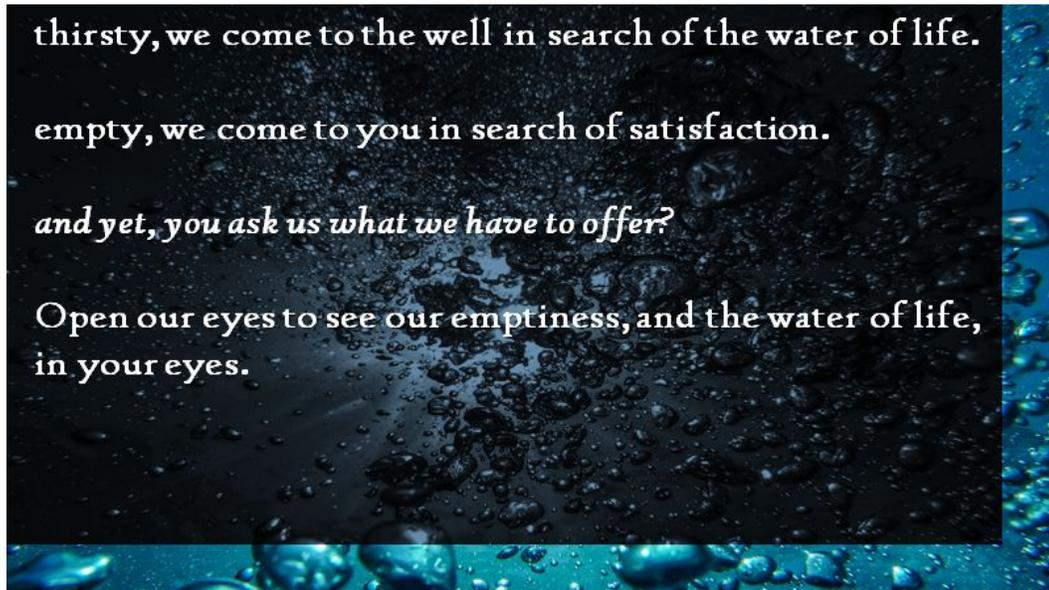
Woman: I met a stranger who knew everything about me. Come and see for yourselves; can He be the Chosen One?

Narrator: A crowd came out of the city and approached Jesus. Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus to eat the food they gathered.

Jesus: No, thank you. I have food to eat that you know nothing about. I receive My nourishment by serving the will of the Creator who sent Me and completing their work.

You have heard others say, "Be patient; we have four more months to wait until the crops are ready for the harvest." I say, the time is now! Take a closer look and you will see that the fields are ripe and ready for the harvest. The harvester is collecting their pay, harvesting fruit ripe for eternal life. So even now, they and the sower are celebrating their fortune. The saying is true: "One person sows, and another reaps." I sent you to harvest where you have not labored; someone else took the time to plant and cultivate, and you feast on the fruit of their labor.

Narrator: Meanwhile, because one woman shared with her neighbors how Jesus exposed her past and present, the village of Sychar was transformed—many Samaritans heard and believed. The Samaritans approached Jesus and repeatedly invited Him to stay with them, so He lingered there for two days on their account. With the words that came from His mouth, there were many more believing Samaritans. They began their faith journey because of the testimony of their neighbour beside the well; but when they heard for themselves, they were convinced the One they were hearing was and is God's Chosen One, sent to liberate the entire world.



Congregational Prayer: Adapted from [“Living water congregational prayer”](#) by Carol Penner

*We come with prayers today for our global village,
we need your spirit of healing in our lives.*

*There are people here grieving loss- loss of loved ones, loss of feelings of security and
safety,*

comfort them with visions of eternal streams.

Where we have given up hope,

Where we are lonely,

Where we can find no love in our hearts; fill us now.

Forgive us for living parched lives,

wastelands where we think only of ourselves,

and spare no thoughts for those around us.

*Thank you for your presence, which bubbles up,
refreshing and enlivening our hardest places.*

Offering Prayer: adapted from a prayer written by [Jennifer Henry, KAIROS Canada](#)

*Let us pray for an abundance of kindness in this time of uncertainty. Let us pray for an
abundance of awareness and action for oppressed people and vulnerable places at greater
risk. Let us pray for an abundance of support, for first responders and health care workers,
doing impossible jobs. And for decision makers and scientists striving to do their best. An
abundance of "we," an abundance of "in this together," an abundance of reaching out (virtual
and voice), an abundance of global community.*

We thank you for our ability to give what we can.

we know you want justice rolling down like water.

Accept these gifts from our hands,

which we cast upon your love,

a generous ever-flowing stream

feeding the hungry and

helping those in need.

Help us to live in an abundance of togetherness, an abundance of global community. Amen.

Sermon: "More To This Life" from Joe Heikman

I gotta say, when the Lent Planning Team organized this season around the theme of Lent as a journey into darkness, a global pandemic was not exactly what we had in mind.

But now that we're here, I'm grateful that last week the preacher reminded us [that God is present even in our shadows](#), so a journey into the unknown is also a journey towards God.

My message this morning is pretty simple: Remember who you are.

In crisis, when we're in pain or facing a threat, our vision narrows. We get myopia, tunnel vision. Survival, disarming the threat, alleviating the pain, that's the only thing we can see, the only thing that matters.

That's natural, and actually a very healthy and productive response, most of the time. If our body doesn't call attention to an injury at the expense of other sensations, the injury doesn't get the treatment it needs to heal. If we don't focus on the crisis enough, it spreads.

So it's a good thing that our global self-preservation instinct has grabbed our attention, if too late for the good of so many.

The danger moving forward, for a lot of us, is getting stuck in that hyper-focused survival mode.

I don't have to tell you about the high level of anxiety and suspicion in the air. In survival mode, everything is viewed through the lens of threat assessment.

Which is good, again, for dealing with the crisis at hand.

But it also creates the perception that Survival is the only thing that matters.

For some of us, the worry is about the health of ourselves and our loved ones. For others of us, it's also about our responsibilities at work, or the survival of the economy, a certain way of living, even our plans for the summer. Same game, different levels - whatever your focus point, the perception is that preserving that is what counts, to the exclusion of all else.

Into that cycle, particularly as this survival mode thinking extends into weeks and months, we need to remember who we are.

And who are we, exactly?

Simple. We are people who believe that there is *more to this life*.

Anyone else remember that song from Christian Contemporary Music back in the early 90s?

*There's more to this life, than living and dying,
more than just trying to make it through the day
More to this life, More than these eyes alone can see
that there's more than this life alone can be.*

[Steven Curtis Chapman](#). While you all were rocking out to Bryan Adams, I was hooked on SCC!

For whatever reason, that song has been floating through my head this week.

More to this life than living and dying, more than just trying to make it through the day.

We are people who claim that truth. People of Hope. Easter people, you might say. People who recognize that life is not the only thing. People who try to see with more than our physical eyes. People who measure the goodness of existence as more than this life alone can be.

There's more to this life.

Now, this morning I'm not going to define what that *more* might be. Of course, I have my ideas about what that is, and I suspect that you do as well. Whatever gives you meaning, purpose and belonging, whether that is a belief, or relationship, or lifestyle or worldview, that's the something more. The specifics of what that is and what I think it *should be* is another conversation for another time.

My reminder this morning is that we are people who believe that there is something more to this life, more than life and death, more than our families, more than the economy, more than whatever it is you're most afraid of losing.

In the uncertainty of covid-19, that remembering of the something more is vitally important. The crisis is operating up here on one level, occupying our brain space and conversation space and relational space. And because of our crisis tunnel vision response, it's easy to forget that that's not the only thing.

The something more is the level underneath the level of the crisis, and staying connected to that deeper level is the key to not getting lost.

That's the level that Jesus was drawing on when he offered a stranger a drink of "Living Water" that would quench her existential thirst.

This woman had a lot going on at that surface level. She was a social outcast, alone at the well, instead of having gone to draw water with the typical group of women. She was probably rejected as a harlot or at the very least seen as cursed for having gone through so many husbands. And she was desperate enough to be with a man now who was not her husband.

Apparently Jesus somehow knows all of that about her. But he doesn't address it. He doesn't criticize her impurity or question her parade of husbands. He doesn't offer any advice on how to clean up her reputation and get back in with the town ladies. He doesn't tell her to get her sh...tuff together. He doesn't correct her theology or tell her to go to the right church. He doesn't even tell her to repent and sin no more.

Instead, he mostly ignores what's happening at that level, and calls her attention to what's going on one level down. He tells her about "Living Water," that can quench her thirst on this whole other level. He tells her that what matters is her Spirit, her Truth, that which flows out of her heart.

That other stuff matters, but it's not the real thing. Because there's more to this life than living and dying, more than just trying to make it through the day.

Ground yourself in that level and the rest will take care of itself. Remember who you are.

What does that look like in the midst of a pandemic? Three reminders.

#1: Seeing and Seeking out the More.

Even in our isolation, most of us are still hyper-connected. What will we choose to stay connected to?

Seeking the More means being intentional about turning off the tv, putting down the phone, and paying attention to something else for a while. I'm not talking about distractions, though we will need those sometimes for sure. I'm talking about seeking out that which gives you life, in simple, intentional ways.

Yesterday, my family went for a walk at Beaver Creek. It was good to breathe the fresh air, to see evidence of the changing seasons, and to feed some chickadees. I asked them--they are not at all worried about covid-19. They'll have to adjust their diet a bit if there aren't humans coming to feed them directly all the time, but they're not overly concerned. There's more to this life than what's going on with humanity, apparently. A healthy reminder.

As the writer of [the letter to the Phillipians](#) puts it:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Whatever things gave you life last week will still give you life this week. You might not have access to the exact thing, but there's something there that you can access even if it's just the memories of the thing. It might not feel the same as it usually does, but the purpose is to draw your attention a level deeper than the attention to the crisis.

There's more to this life than living and dying.

#2, we can make the more.

The most obvious evidence that there's more to this life than living and dying is the person sitting beside you, the neighbour across the street, the person serving you at the grocery check-out. More than me "just trying to make it through the day," there's also all these others livin' and dyin' along with me.

You can make your life matter, simply by making your life matter to someone else.

I catch a glimpse of that with Jesus' approach to the woman at the well. He doesn't just offer her what he has to give her, he begins by asking what she can do for him. "Draw some water for me, would you? Give me a drink." Which, for a person who feels like people are always judging her, telling her what she can't do, well, here's someone who thinks she does have something to give.

You have something to offer in this crisis. (Something more than your secret stash of toilet paper)

You can call someone who maybe feels alone. Most of us have access to a bunch of phone numbers through the church directory--pick someone who isn't here this morning and call them, hey, we missed you, I hope you're doing alright. Voila, that's more than living and dying.

As a church, we're fairly well organized to make sure the folks in our congregation are being looked after. But what about those beyond our congregation?

I read an article on CBC Saskatoon last night about how Saskatoon's Iranian community [has organized support for Iranian newcomers](#) who are self-quarantined, bringing them groceries and supplies. Certainly that's not the only case of this happening locally. If you know of people who are vulnerable, ask what help they need. Maybe you can organize something with your neighbourhood.

I've heard that the Friendship Inn is [looking for specific donations](#) since they're not able to open their doors to large groups of people as they usually do. I'm sure there are lots of other organizations caring for vulnerable people made even more vulnerable by this crisis. Find out what is needed and be part of the caring team.

Maybe there are things we can do as a church to be a support to our community? We certainly have access to resources that we could share. I don't know what that looks like, but if you have an idea or would like to be part of organizing something, send me an email, text, or phone call.

As [writer Anne Lamott puts it](#),

“By showing up with hope to help others, I’m guaranteed that hope is present. Then my own hope increases. By creating hope for others, I end up awash in the stuff.”

I'd say that also goes for compassion, for joy, for faith. Sometimes the something more is self-generated, and that is good.

Finally, #3, *Choose, believe, trust the more.*

The last two Sundays, I've talked about shadow work. The idea from Carl Jung, via Richard Rohr, is that there's a dark part of our personality that we try to cover up with a persona, a mask that hides the part of ourselves that we've learned to be ashamed of. The idea of shadow work that I've been talking about is about learning not to hide our shadow, but to acknowledge and embrace it. In stepping into the darkness, we paradoxically find that we're actually moving towards the light.

As people of faith, a lot of us have been taught that fear and doubt are the opposite of faith, that we are to be confident, secure, certain of what we believe.

And so we hide our doubt with “proof,” with bold statements and creeds, with shiny happy proclamations of trust in God's promises. ([“Standing. Standing. Standing on the Promises of God My Saviour!”](#) or maybe you prefer [“Leaning. Leaning. Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.”](#) Up or down, we've got you covered!)

Not that there's anything wrong with encouragement and comfort, those are good things. But when that comes as a denial of fears and doubts, it's problematic.

It would be tempting today to reassure you that God will protect us and our loved ones from Covid-19, or that those who die will someday be reunited with us on the other side of the grave.

The reality is, I simply don't know what's going to happen with the virus. And I am not certain of what, if anything, exists beyond the grave.

I have my doubts about what I've been told. I'm very much afraid that everything will not turn out as I would like it to.

And yet, as I'm learning to live out of my shadow, once again, in naming and accepting that reality, I'm finding that the shadow does not have the last word.

Even as I name my fears out loud, I can hear that those are also hollow. I'm not any more certain of the negative outcome than I am of the positive outcome. We humans are simply bad at predicting the future. We are afraid of things that aren't really harmful, and we are skeptical of things that turn out to be true.

In reality, my doubts and my hopes are made of the same stuff; sincere, but limited. When I can see them both in their limitations, again, that is operating at this deeper level. That I can see my hopes and my fears at the same time, that speaks to a deeper *something more* beyond both of them. That I can express doubt and my desire to trust says that I'm not bound by either of them.

Moving from the mask into the shadow moves me towards the light of my True Self, the Spirit of God. By embracing the shadow, I can see more of the light.

In this case, naming my fears about the pandemic and all its fallout, acknowledging my uncertainty, allows me to see the reality that I simply have no idea what's going to happen.

And from that position of enlightened ignorance, I can choose to be guided by fear and doubt, or choose to be guided by hope and trust.

Our fears need not overwhelm us, because we could be wrong. Our doubts are manageable, because those are also a limited perspective on a whole of reality that is beyond my view.

So we can choose hope, we can choose trust, we can choose to believe that there's more to this life. The choosing *is part of* the something more.

That's not blind faith, that is eyes-wide-open faith.

So that's what I'm leaning on this morning. The reminder that there is something more, something I can choose to see, something I can choose to make, something that I can choose to trust in.

I'll close with a reference to one more song, "[I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say](#)"

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me, and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water: thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that Light of life I'll walk
Till trav'ling days are done.*

Tension:

Leader: What is your longing?

People: We want reassurance, understanding, connection.

Leader: What do you crave?

People: We long for redemption, for grace, to be made whole.

Leader: Jesus offers the "water that brings life"
Could that be enough?

People: Come and see!

Promise:

Leader: God recognizes and meets us in our place of
deepest need.

Christ with you,
Christ before you,
Christ behind you.

Christ in our solitude,
Christ in our sharing together,
Christ in our coming home.