

YAV Opening

Have you ever been really thirsty? On a hike, under the hot sun, after playing sports or exercising, or maybe you realize you've barely had anything to drink all day without even noticing. Even as I talk about it, I can feel the sensation: parched lips, dry mouth, a throat that feels like it is closing up for lack of moisture.

Working as a YAV along the US Mexico Border in 2006, I learned about thirst in a whole new way. How the natural elements can suck moisture from your body before you even know it. How under the scorching desert sun, even when it's bitterly cold outside, the desert will make you thirsty. In that place, your body can betray you. Those cartoon images we have of mirages in the desert, I discovered that year that those are real. And the physical feeling of thirstiness, once you feel it, they say you're already dehydrated. If you've ever felt thirst like that, you know how welcome the water feels as it touches your lips. Your body thanks you as you gulp it down greedily. Maybe you've never been that thirsty for an actual drink, but I bet you've been thirsty for something. Maybe you felt the thirst grow little by little, as you yearned for something you didn't have or worked towards something. Maybe you didn't even know how thirsty you were until you gulped down that water and felt a revival that you didn't even know you needed.

This Lent, we've been exploring the theme of seeking, meeting people throughout the Bible who sought Jesus out with their questions. Last week we met the Pharisee, Nicodemus, and Pastor Camille suggested that rather than shame propelling him to seek Jesus at night, it was his desperation. This week, it's the Samaritan woman. The Rev. Karoline Lewis calls these stories a tale of two disciples, they are so opposite in their identities and approaches-one powerful, another one marginalized, one, scenario under the cover of night and the other in broad daylight in the public sphere. But what connects them is their pursuit of answers, for meaning, something more: a new beginning, living water, a new life. The process transforms them. What's jarring about the Samaritan story, is that it's Jesus who asks the initial question: will you give me something to drink? Throughout his life, Jesus reminds us that it is ok to be vulnerable, it's ok to ask for help, it's ok to receive and not just give. Jesus' question builds a bridge, across cultural, gender, religious, and social lines- showing that even he can't make it on his own- we need each other.

Of course, in these stories, there's a question we're bold enough to ask-and a deeper, more vulnerable one that lies beneath it. The Israelites cry out to Moses, "Won't you give us water to drink?" But the Rev. Danielle Shroyer points out that what

they could have asked was, “God, have you abandoned us?” Underneath our polished facades, our self sufficiency, our pride, in the parched places of our souls, there’s something more that we yearn for-what are you truly thirsting for? Whatever you are searching for-forgiveness, a second chance, to be truly seen for who you are, for meaning, for justice, for purpose, to not be alone, we are invited to the well, to find living water that will quench our thirst and make us whole.

Drew and Lucy have been asking their own, holy questions during their YAV year, searching for answers, making their own journeys to the well. They’re here to share a glimpse into what this year of service has been like for them, what they’ve discovered about themselves, about God, about the world. We give thanks for our holy book of stories and for the stories God is writing in their lives, and in our own lives every day.