Sermon Title: Deep Water
Text: John 4:5-42
By: Rev. Terry Carty
Date: 03-27-11
Place: Kingston Springs UMC
Season: Third Sunday in Lent

Main Point: God uses unexpected evangelists to offer Living Water. We are called to deep wells so we can receive freely and humbly invite others to share what we have received.

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Who would have thought that an outcast Samaritan woman who came to the well in the middle of the day to avoid her neighbors' glare, would have become an evangelist for Jesus?

Who would have thought that a 15-year-old alcoholic would become an evangelist for Jesus? I will call him Ben. When I started as a volunteer with the youth ministry at the church, I knew nothing about working with teenagers. Early on, I noticed Ben. His hands shook all the time. He was wonderfully self-giving and seemed to think nothing of himself. I soon discovered that he went for long walks in the woods where he had a hideaway stocked with beer – he slipped the beer out of the house at every opportunity. Ben had a problem that I did not know how to help with. After all these years, Ben still has a problem that I do not know how to help with.

We became as close as I have ever been with one of the youth in my ministry. I somehow understood his struggles and his coping methods. I became one of a very few who he would call when he wanted to talk something out and didn't want to feel judged.

Ben's greatest hero and role-model was his grandfather who was self-taught and brilliant. Ben wanted to be like him, so he became a student of life, often learning vicariously through the wisdom of others. He never went to university, but like his grandfather, he learned living.

Ben was a person of few words. In our youth ministry we taught some lessons about being able to read body language as a means of understanding how a person was reacting beyond the words that are spoken. Ben began to be conscious of his own body language and he used it to project meaning to those of us who had taught him about it. I can remember a number of occasions when he was displeased with something that I had done and I said, "why didn't you tell me, Ben?" He said something like, "I had my arms crossed in front of me, I turned and didn't face you and I avoided eye contact. How didn't you know that I didn't like what you were saying?!"

Ben especially learned from some favorite scripture passages. We did a youth musical in which there was a song that quoted John 13, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, so shall you love one another." It became his personal scripture passage. It became a mantra. Christ wants me to love others like Christ loved. Ben carried his cross everywhere he went. He gave extravagantly to those he loved, and he gave selflessly to those who were in need.

He didn't just give materially. He gave himself. He once married a young Japanese woman who was about to be deported so she could stay in the USA. There was love, but not married love – it was sacrificial love in the truest sense that Ben could understand.

Ben was a quick learner and could cook, run a business – well a non-profit business, could build anything as long as someone could explain how it needs to be built. He spent most of his life working as a servant in a mission organization that we began when he was a senior in high school. He worked for meager wages and gave all he earned away until just a few years ago when they had to terminate him because of his alcoholism.

Ben's selflessness and sacrificial love has been a witness to hundreds of people. He knew that Jesus knew him for what he was at his very core and loved him unconditionally. Jesus is Ben's Messiah and Ben has told everyone he has ever met – usually by non-verbal communication – as Christ loves you, you should love one another.

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Ben and the Samaritan woman at the well are both the most unlikely of evangelists. Both go into the world in their weakness to share the strength of the salvation that Christ brings. And they probably didn't even know that they were evangelists.

How many of us are like this woman or like Ben. We have situations or circumstances in our lives that cause us to think that God couldn't or wouldn't possibly use us to share the Good News to others. Think again. Ben and the woman are just two examples that tell us that God does not call the equipped – God equips the called.

We are being called daily to minister to others from our places of weakness. If Christ gives Living Water to those who are weak, then our wells are deep.

Several weeks ago I told you to take a little time on your Mountain of Transfiguration. I said "Don't just do something – stand there." If you have stood there and begun to see yourself being transfigured by the loving grace of God thorugh Jesus Christ, then it is now time to do something.

Only you can recognize the times of calling. It may be a person selling one of those street newspapers at the intersection. It may be a quiet person who never makes eye contact at school. It may be a cause somewhere across the globe. It may be a family down the street. Do something and you will find yourself strangely equipped for the task. Your well of Living Water is deep.

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Many of you are familiar with the great prayer of St Francis of Assisi known as the Serenity Prayer. Another quotation of St Francis is particularly meaningful as you ponder your well of Living Water, "Preach the gospel at all times – if necessary, use words."