

God Helps Those Who CanNOT Help Themselves

† God seeks (vv.4-6)

† God calls (vv.7-9)

† God enlightens (vv.10-15)

† God sanctifies (vv.16-26)

In the name of Jesus, Friend of sinners, dearest Friend to me, fellow sinners-helped by God:

Maybe it's the time of year, maybe it's the basic busy-ness, but the excitement of getting out of cabin fever in the Minnesota springtime has an effect on how I do things. Do you ever find yourself so eager to get outside you rush through things you're supposed to be doing? For pastors and Sunday School teachers, or just Christians trying to have a little prayer time with the Lord, you easily end up going through the motions, treating God's Word professionally, instead of devotionally with all your heart.

It's one of the reasons I'm so grateful to God for our Midweek Lenten services. Sunday mornings we're always celebrating Christ's resurrection Easter Sunday. And that's good. But Wednesday worship (7:00 PM) helps us stop and consider the awesome price our Lord paid for our souls. In His suffering and death, His bloody Passion, we find the power and motivation to repent of our sins and please our God. We are reminded how true it is that **God Helps Those Who CanNOT Help Themselves**.

† God seeks (vv.4-6)

That's why we must add a verse to today's Gospel Lesson: *"Now [Jesus] had to go through Samaria."* At least nineteen times in Luke, ten in John, more in Matthew and Mark, the Holy Spirit inspired this expression, *"He had to / must...."* It's usually about Jesus, as in, *"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."* (John 10:16 NIV84) Jews generally walked way around Samaria, a land of imported idolaters, half-breeds to Judaism. They hated each other. But Jesus *had to* see a Samaritan.

You can bet the Samaritan woman from Sychar did not get up that morning thinking, "I'd like to talk to God today." She was living an immoral life. She knew it. The rest of the women in town knew it. Most likely that's why she went out to the well about noon when no one else was there – every day except that day, because Jesus *"had to go through Samaria."*

The woman was like us, just the way the Holy Spirit talks through Paul and the prophets about all people: *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."* (Romans 3:10-12 NIV84) For Christian preachers and priests today to act as if people can make a decision for Christ is totally wrong. We don't find God. **God seeks** and finds us.

† God calls (vv.7-9)

Personally, I'm glad about that. When I look at my own waywardness, the fact that my parents had to discipline me into the habit of going to church, and my professors had to discipline me to do my best for God – I would have been an outcast at the well just like this sinful woman. Can you relate? Can we be honest? Look at how gently God makes the connection. **God calls** us when we want Him not.

So simple the words sound when Jesus asked her, *"Will you give me a drink?"* But this was strange for a man to speak to a woman in their culture. Even more strange, Jews did not talk to

Samaritans. But for a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman? It shocked her. ***“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”***

Could it be sometimes when we’re asked to usher or help out at church the Lord is calling us back to His side? Jesus could make His own water without drawing from the well. He doesn’t really need our help. But **God calls** with needs in church and family to help us see our need for Him. **God calls** and...

✠ **God enlightens (vv.10-15)**

The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well did not know. Jesus had to show her need. This is where the miracles of God’s love start piling up. When He turns the lights on inside your soul, you literally begin to see things differently than before. He enables you to think about yourself and God, God’s way. Things start to fall into place that were so out of joint before. With God’s light comes God’s peace.

Here again the sinful woman wasn’t asking for it. God was graciously giving it. **God enlightens** even when we’re like the bugs who would rather hide in the darkness. But God is determined to turn the lights on. That’s how deeply God loves. ***Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”***

In that part of the world most water was caught in cisterns from what little rain they had. It could get stagnant, unlike the water from springs in the mountains that flowed clear and clean out of the ground and over the rocks. That was “living water” which made everything around it live. She really wanted to know how Jesus could manage that. Can’t you hear a kind of condescension in her voice? She tries to cover by politely addressing Him: ***“Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”*** Her answer obviously was, “No way!”

The dimmer switches are coming up in Jesus’ skillful hand. He is the Master Electrician of our souls. Not too much at once, but just the right light to help her new eyes adjust. It’s hard to go from darkness to light, from thirsty need to grace-quenched thirst. ***Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*** As kids we would drink clear fresh water from mountain streams. But in just a matter of minutes, we were thirsty again. Jesus was saying His ***“living water”*** is like an artesian well that cannot be stopped. “Give me a drink of that!”

✠ **God sanctifies (vv.16-26)**

Jesus gives her ***“living water”*** by preaching law and gospel. When He told her to bring her husband, He knew she was living in sin like so many unmarried couples living together today. Jesus had to point this out because ***“living water”*** cannot penetrate a hard heart unless God first makes a hole. Jesus was kind, but firm: ***“You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”***

She knew it. But to change the subject she launched into a denominational argument: Jews versus Samaritans. Jesus would not fall for it. He is busy sanctifying her soul. She needs to admit her sin in order to see her Savior. So Jesus tells her, ***“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth.”*** She tries again, ***“I know that Messiah is coming....He will explain everything to us.”*** That’s like, “Don’t bug me with that.” Imagine her surprise when Jesus said literally, ***“I AM”*** the Christ.

God seeks. God calls. God enlightens. God sanctifies. All this He does as **God Helps Those Who CanNOT Help Themselves.** Everyone could see she was sanctified. She left her water jar, ran into town, publicly confessed: ***“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.”*** She applied God’s law to herself, then gave them the Gospel: ***“Could this be the Christ?”*** By one visit to one sinful woman God got a whole village of sinners sanctified by faith in Jesus as their Savior. How can God help you this spring through His Word and sacrament? God help us all to admit our sin and see our Savior! Amen.