**3 Lent, March 23, 2014; Ex 17:1-7; Ps 95;Rom 5:1-11; John 4:5-42; Rev Mary S. Trainor**

"Brain Games" it's called: a new show on the National Geographic channel. It's kind of like "Candid Camera" but is based on recent psychology research. With the TV camera, they interview people to illustrate something that has been learned about our behavior. This past week, I saw a show on how we make decisions about people we meet. It turns out that we make a judgment about person we meet almost instantly after we meet them. We seem to have an ingrained bias of who we consider to be good, trustworthy people, and those who are not. Now, we as Christians know and say that "**we respect the dignity of all people"** (BCP p. 305) and yet by our very nature we are instantly judgmental! So, being nonjudgmental, unbiased, loving, accepting of others like we are supposed to do is tough! So we are in a culture of people who have been judged unfairly, marginalized because of what they look like. Maybe you have experienced this. And, this has consequences: research shows that people who have been discriminated against can become bitter and unloving because of how they themselves have been treated.

Today, in our Gospel lesson, we see Jesus meeting someone who has been marginalized. There are two players: Jesus and the Samaritan woman. These two people saw each other from afar, as one was seated and one was approaching by foot. It was the middle of a hot day, and they had plenty of time to observe one another. Their judgment about one other was well formed even before they spoke to one another.

It was just another day for her, but this did not make it any less painful emotionally. She set out all alone on her chores. The other women in her community chatted with each other as they did their chores, but she did not have companionship of girl friends in her life -- she was marginalized. The way she had chosen to live included poor choices, and she was paying for them. She was also marginalized because she was of an ethnic group that was judged as inferior. [*It was kind of like the Palestinians and Israelis today: enemies*] So, the woman approached Jesus sitting at the well, and recognized His ethnic group. She knew that he would not lower Himself to interact with a person like her. She had to get the well, so she took the risk to approach. Jesus, sitting there at the well, knew all about her: her race, her poor choices. He spoke to her -- surprised her out of her wits, as a man such as he never spoke to a woman such as her! He said, "***Give me a drink.***" Hmm. Now what? She went for it and asked him outright "***How is it that you... ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?***" Oh my, did she receive an answer -- an answer that changed her life. Jesus said, ***"The water that I will give will become ...a spring of water gushing up to eternal life... I am he...truly the Savior of the world."***

People in other states call them drinking fountains or fonts, we call them bubblers here in Wisconsin. The old kind of bubblers had a continuous flow of bubbling crystal fresh water from the center at all times - you did not even have to turn it on! The font, the spring of living water gushes to us from Jesus to give us abundant life, in spite of who we are and the mistakes we have made. Jesus reaches out to us, as Paul said in our Romans reading today: "**But God proves his love for us in that** **while we were still sinners Christ died for us**....**we will be saved by His life**" Water, the living water of Christ, bubbling up for us, in us, is such a useful image to sustain us through our good days and our not so good days.

St. Teresa of Avila, who lived in the 16th Century in Spain, knew about being marginalized and knew about Jesus' bubbler for us: ***the water gushing up to eternal life.*** She wrote about it this way, **"my soul...overflowing with that divinity.”** Think of it this way: We live each day with our hands outstretched to Jesus with a big cup to receive the living water. We put that cup out there, and Jesus fills it with crystal clean, flowing water and we drink. It refreshes us, renews us, helps us start over a better way this time. The cup overflows, like a beautiful sparkling waterfall; the water is so abundant, so life giving. The only problem is that instead of going through our lives drinking constantly from that overflowing cup we get a little water and then get busy with other stuff -- and we pull back the cup. We drink again, but the cup goes dry (and we don't even notice until we have gone wayward). Today, we are taught to put out the cups of ourselves everyday all day for the living water of Christ....and never ever ever pull back. Our opening hymn today was "**Come thou font of every blessing.**" This refers to Christ's font of living water of Christ: God's bubbler just for us. This living water does not change -- as the hymn says, "**Oh fix me on it, mount of God's unchanging love....Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God; he to rescue me from danger**." There is never any drought with God, or charge for the water -- it is free for the asking, free for the taking, available.

Most of us can relate to how the woman at the well felt, as we have made mistakes in our lives, we know how it feels to be lonely and judged by others for who we are. Today's question is: "**Will we be like the Samaritan woman was at first, not getting it?"** (i.e., being skeptical, keeping our distance, and therefore not holding out our cup for the living water). Or, will we be like the Samaritan woman became, getting it: understanding and then receiving the living water gushing up to eternal life? We are told, "**the woman left her water jar and went back to the city....Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony....we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."**

Jesus is meeting you in the midst of your life today, and offering you the gushing living water. Will you choose to let that living water into your life? That living water will not only strengthen you so that you do not judge others but rather treat them with dignity, but will also assure you beyond a shadow of a doubt of God's redeeming love forever and ever! Will you choose to live drinking all the time from Jesus' bubbler? "**God's love has been** (and is being and will be) **poured into our hearts.**" Amen.