

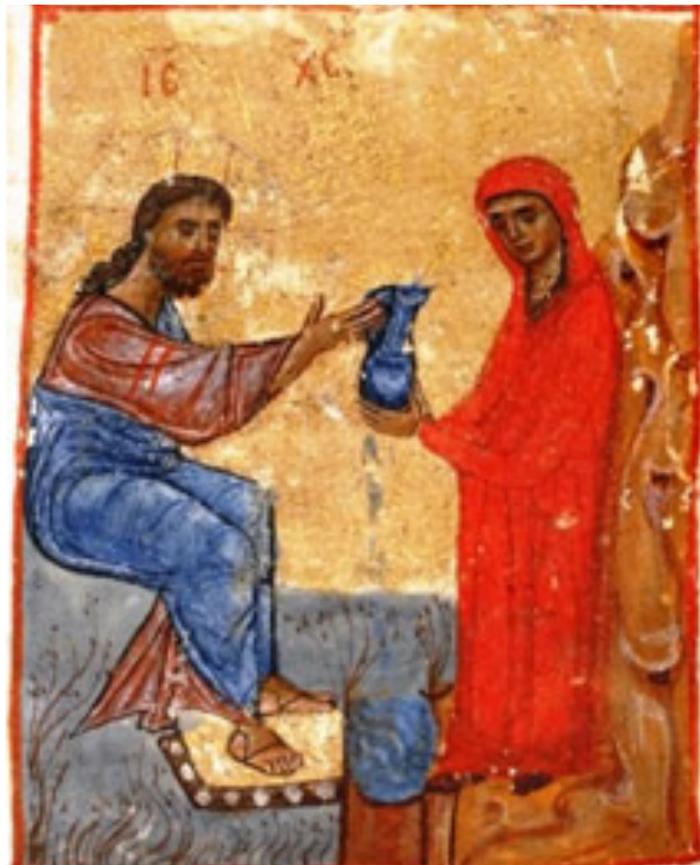


Presbyterian Mission
**Office of Christian
Formation**

You'll Never Walk Alone

UKirk Lenten Resource - Lent 4

By Rev. Rachel Hebert



[Jesus and the Samaritan Woman Illuminated manuscript](#)



Theme - Tune

Overview: Our theme words for this week are clean and tune from [Psalm 51:7-8](#). One of the most beloved hymns, “Come Thou Fount” speaks of “tuning our hearts” to God’s grace as we experience God’s never-ending streams of mercy.

*Come Thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount I’m fixed upon it
Mount of God’s redeeming love.*

The biblical passage that is alluded to in the reference “streams of mercy” is John 4:5-15. In this week’s lesson, we will reflect upon the connection between being cleansed and refreshed by God’s living water (streams of mercy), and tuning our hearts and lives to God’s grace.

Scriptures

[Psalm 51:7-8](#)

[John 4:15-30; 39-42](#)

Background

First and foremost, we have Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman, which is a significant cross-over between religion, culture, and gender. I could give you a massive history lesson here about how Jews and Samaritans came to disagree with each other, but for now, know that Samaritans are former Jews who married foreigners and adopted their gods, whereas the Jewish people were pure in religion and lineage throughout time. They are similar in that women were seen as property and among the most vulnerable of peoples. This is what makes Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman such a significant event—he’s crossing over an array of boundaries to interact with this woman.

Second, the Samaritan woman talks back to Jesus—she is no passive responder. She interacts with and even challenges Jesus in this passage at the well, seeing that he has no bucket and questions if he is greater than their ancestor Jacob?

Third, we have the role of water and its’ dual representation of Christ’s humanity and Christ’s divinity. Christ stops along his journey because he is literally thirsty but has no

bucket with which to draw water, so he is dependent upon another. Yet we also hear of Christ's divinity in providing "living water" to the woman upon which her salvation is dependent. This living water "[represents](#) a new quality of life infused with God's eternal love." A love that is a never-ending stream upon which the woman – and us – can draw to quench our spiritual thirst.

Finally, we have the woman's response as she takes this message of living water back to her village and she, as an outsider, invites them to enter this conversation with Jesus. Her heart – and many of their hearts – are "tuned" to hear God's song of grace and inclusion.

Explore

[Blessing of the Well](#)

by Jan Richardson

If you stand
at the edge
of this blessing
and call down
into it,
you will hear
your words
return to you.

If you lean in
and listen closer,
you will hear
this blessing
give the story
of your life
back to you.

Quiet your voice.
Quiet your judgment.
Quiet the way
you always tell
your story
to yourself.
Quiet all these
and you will hear
the whole of it:
the spaces
in the telling,
the gaps

where you hesitate
to go.

Sit at the rim
of this blessing.
Press your ear
to its lip,
its sides,
its curves
that were carved out
long ago
by those whose thirst
drove them deep,
those who dug
into the layers
with only their hands
and hope.

Rest yourself
beside this blessing
and you will
begin to hear
the sound of water
entering the gaps.

Still yourself
and you will feel it
rising up within you,
filling the emptiness,
springing forth
anew.

From [A Circle of Grace](#) by Jan Richardson
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The theme of life-giving water shows up in scripture often. It cleanses, it restores, it nourishes and refreshes, it is a metaphor for life. In addition to the woman at the well in John 4, one of the most well-known references is in [Psalm 23](#), “he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.” (verses 2-3). Imagine yourself “resting beside the blessing of God’s renewal, grace, forgiveness, safety, and restoration, and it filling you through the gaps of your life.

Discuss

1. What does it mean for us that Jesus, God-with-us, crosses boundaries and engages in conversation with the most vulnerable (a woman)? An outcast (Samaritan)?
2. How do you think this woman's life changed after Jesus left her town? Do you think the other villagers saw her differently because of their encounter with Jesus? Did their lives change after Jesus left?
3. Why do you think we are called to interact with others of different beliefs, views, genders, and ethnicities?
4. [Water](#) serves as a physical and spiritual necessity. What connections between your physical and spiritual life do you also see as being a necessity?

Reflect

1. When was there a time in your life in which God showed up unexpectedly?
2. Who in your life do you need to cross boundaries for to cultivate a relationship?
3. What is it that you thirst for from God?
4. How are you going to be someone who offers "living water" to others?

Engage

- ❖ Robert Robinson wrote the hymn "Come Thou Fount" in the 18th century when he was around 22 years old. After encountering a sermon at the age of 17 that he credits with his conversion to Christianity at the age of 20, it is said he wrote the hymn for a Pentecost service he was leading as a pastor. There are various versions of Robinson's biography, yet they all point to the seeming autobiographical nature of the song, especially, that he was prone to wander from God's grace. (below are various versions of Robert Robinson's biography and the hymn). One of the stories that is widely shared occurred towards the end of Robinson's life when he was on a stagecoach with a woman who was singing "Come Thou Fount" He is said to have exclaimed, "Oh, how I wish I still felt the same way I did when I wrote that hymn!" She is reported to have replied gently, "Sir, the 'streams of mercy' are still flowing."
- 1. If you have time, watch the short video [video on The Story Behind The Hymn: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing](#), or share Robinson's story (below or in your own words)
 - An [inclusive biography](#) of his **early life** including the death of his father, his **indentured servitude** as a hairdresser's apprentice, his **conversion** to the Christian faith, and his extensive, successful **career** as a pastor in Cambridge, England.
 - [St. Augustine Record](#) includes the story of Robinson's later life (similar to the video)

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2. Discuss what leads us to “tune our hearts to sing God’s grace” and what tempts or leads us to wander from God.
 3. How do we – or can we – find cleansing and living water again when we come to recognize we have wandered?
 4. What words can we offer to remind others about God’s streams of mercy?
- ❖ Like the writer of Psalm 51 and the Samaritan Woman, many who follow Jesus have their own (sometimes hard) experiences of being “tuned” by God – when joy and gladness have been put in their lives (or back into their lives) after a difficulty. Write down or share with a friend an experience of feeling “tuned” by God, when joy and gladness have been put into your life. What was going on? How did it feel? What did you learn? How did it help you embark upon your own new beginning?
 - ❖ Suggest to members in your college group to find their own songs of renewal, then as a community, listen to each other’s songs and why they selected their particular song(s). Perhaps you even create a Spotify playlist for your group of everyone’s songs, so that whenever someone is feeling particularly out of tune with themselves, God, and/or the community, they have a whole playlist of songs they can listen to and be reminded of God’s renewing presence.

Going Forth

- ❖ Listen to one or more versions of the song [“Come Thou Fount.”](#) several times this week.
- ❖ What is a song that makes you feel renewed? Like you’re back in tune with yourself? Author Rachel Hebert confesses that hers is [“Woman” by Kesha](#). She says, “When I start to feel out of tune with myself and with who God has created me to be, “Woman” never ceases to make me feel empowered and renewed.” As a personal spiritual practice, find a song that makes you feel renewed. You can go on a walk and listen to it, find a place that feels like home for you and listen to it, etc. The purpose of this practice is to “re-tune” yourself and be “cleansed” through music.
- ❖ If the weather permits, go outside and spend time next to a flowing body of water. (If weather does not permit, you can find something online, or even turn your faucet or shower on). Imagine the water washing off all that you are experiencing that is weighing you down, and God taking it away with the flow of water. Say a prayer of gratitude to God for cleansing, healing, and new life.

Prayers of the People

God, you who are love and grace incarnate,
We offer our prayers to you....
 for ourselves,
 our community,
 our school,
 our neighbors, and
 our world.

There are so many of us
Who do not have a song of joy and gladness in us.
Who know what it feels like to be ignored.
Who know what it feels like to be broken.
Who know what it feels like to live in a world
Where the vulnerable stand alone,
And the outcast are “other-ed.”

Yet you are the God who crosses boundaries.
The One who comes to us all!
Comes to replace
Our songs of sorrow
Into tunes of joy!
Who gives us a new song to sing
And the ability to harmonize with you.

As we sing, may your Spirit cleanse our souls
Of all that sticks to us from the past,
That tries to break in with a different, contrary, song.
Set us free to live,
To sing,
To dance,
To be glad
That You are our God
And we - all - are your beloved.
May this be the song our ears and our lives are tuned to hear.
May this be the song You sing to us so much
That our hearts and our lives sing along with You
Each
And
Every
Day.
In Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.