

Bishop's Reflection, March 13th, 2020

Jesus' opening question: "What are you looking for?" is at the heart of John's Gospel. Each of the ensuing stories, beginning with the wedding of Cana and ending with the story of the empty tomb, begin at a different starting point. Despite their different starting points, the stories reach the same conclusion, Jesus is at heart of what we are looking for.

The story of the Samaritan Woman at the well is no different. Beginning with the basic element of water, we come to see that her thirst goes much deeper. It is a thirst she tried to satisfy in taking on a succession of husbands. It is thirst she has tried to satisfy so many times, but never with great success. It is a thirst not unlike our own.

"What are you looking for?" Jesus asks the same question to us. Be it new wine at a wedding (the story of Cana), answers to our questions (Nicodemus at night), Love and acceptance (the woman at the well and her many husbands), healing from what cripples us (the paralytic), new sight (man born blind) or release from bondage (Lazarus) Jesus is the central figure. In the end, all our earthly searching is a reflection of a deeper search within, a searching for our God.

John's Gospel seems to suggest as much and, as a result, the question changes in the end. Jesus no longer asks in "What are you looking for?" but "Whom are you looking for?" when he confronts the cohort sent to arrest him; he asks the exact same question to Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb. God is our ultimate source of desire, even though we try to fill the emptiness with so many other things.

"What are you looking for?" If you would ask the question today, I'm sure you would get answers like "happiness", "peace" or "good health". Some may even admit to wanting "success", "acceptance", "love" or even "prosperity". Only after further thought might we include "God", "reconciliation", "forgiveness" or even "eternal life". What ever the case may be, in prayer God asks us, "What are you looking for?" No matter our initial answer, may he lead to the answer that will truly satisfy our thirst.

"What are you looking for?" I have asked myself that question many times. So often catching myself pursuing various worldly ends, be it some marker of success

in leading a parish or in my own personal life. So often, I have drawn water at the well that doesn't fully satisfy. In the end, Only Christ, in his mercy, has the power to open our hearts to receive and the living water he longs to share with us.

"What are you looking for?" The question is as pertinent as it was back then. In answering the question, let us set your heart on the one who has the power to heal, to forgive, to comfort, to strengthen and to bring that which is dead to new life. In answering the question, let us not settle for what is fleeting, nor that which will require us to compromise ourselves. Let us set our hearts on the one who asks the question, for it is he who longed to enter into conversation with the woman and it is he who desires to enter into intimate union with each one of us.